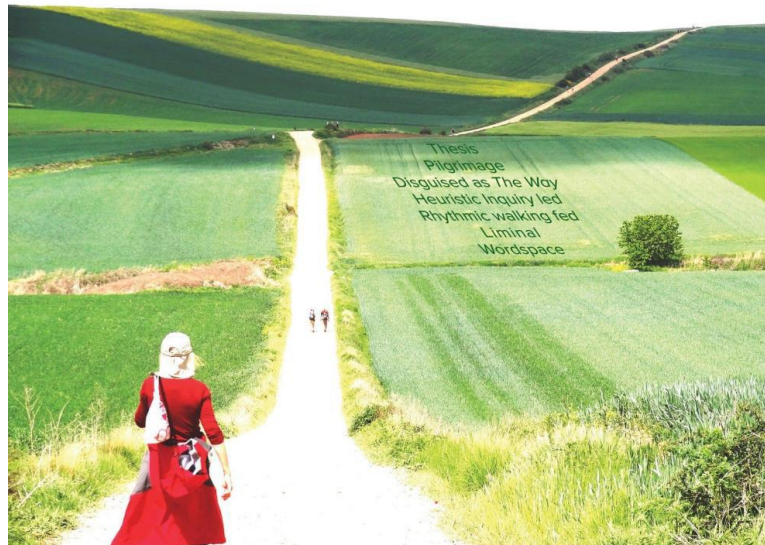


The mindfulness of seminaria:

A heuristic inquiry with teachers and leaders

uncovers a poetry path to wellbeing



by

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Contents

Contents	ii
List of figures and tables	vii
Figures.....	vii
Tables.....	vii
Abstract	viii
Declaration	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Prelude to a poetry pilgrimage	1
The child-learner self	1
The teacher-learner self	3
Personal–professional research context	5
Teachers’ professional learning—shining a light on the inner landscape	6
Overture to seminaria: A threshold discovery	11
The call.....	12
Thesis chapter outline	18
Chapter one Introductions	20
<i>Heeding the call to heuristic inquiry, first phase: initial engagement</i>	
1.1 Introducing the mindfulness of seminaria: Research question, aim and objective	20
1.1.1 Seminaria poetic form or construct.....	20
1.1.2 Mindfulness as a practice	22
1.1.3 Seminaria as a mindfulness practice.....	24
1.1.4 Why this study is located in teaching and its leadership.....	26
1.2 Heuristic inquiry as the optimum design choice for the research question.....	29
Research as pilgrimage	33
1.3 The organisation of this thesis as pilgrimage through six heuristic inquiry stages	33
1.4 Introducing Moustakas’ six heuristic stages; identifying their tasks	37
Chapter two Literature review	39
<i>Locating the Untrodden Path, finding my ‘Songline’</i>	
2.1 Introduction	39
Introduction to the literature through heuristic stages of inquiry	40
2.2 Mindfulness research—The literature	41
2.2.1 Mindfulness: A natural human capacity	42
2.2.2 Mindfulness: Core concepts, history and context	43
2.2.3 Mindfulness: Different approaches	45
2.3 Mindfulness in teacher education—Overview and context	46
Two main types of mindfulness in education	46
2.3.1 Mindfulness and meditation, the terminology	48
2.3.2 Mindfulness meditation and teacher well-being.....	48

2.4	Teachers as reflective practitioners	50
2.5	Seminar form, origins and scholarship	52
	Seminar form: Three scholarly origins	53
2.5.1	Seminar form: Three scholarly origins	55
2.5.2	Seminar form: Three scholarly origins	57
2.6	Writing poetry as practice-based research: Sociopoetic scholarship.....	58
2.6.1	Summary of the significance of this study	61
2.7	Significance of this inquiry for teacher education	63
2.8	Summary	64
	In reviewing the literature	65
Chapter three	Research design	67
	<i>Building an authentic research road</i>	
3.1	Introduction	67
Part A	Methodology	68
	<i>Mapping the meaning</i>	
3.2	Heuristic inquiry phase three: Incubation	68
3.3	Theoretical perspectives and qualities of heuristic inquiry	69
3.3.1	Heuristic and traditional phenomenological research distinctions.....	70
3.4	Ontological and epistemological orientation of the researcher.....	71
3.5	Exploring and answering the question.....	75
3.5.1	Characteristics of the heuristic research question	75
3.5.2	Formulating an effective question.....	75
3.6	The role of the self in heuristic inquiry	77
3.6.1	Core cognitive processes of the heuristic inquirer	77
Part B	Methods	79
	<i>The roadworks—constructing clarity</i>	
3.7	Teacher–participants as co-researchers	79
3.8	Methods for gathering data	80
3.9	Methods for organising and synthesising the data.....	81
3.10	Ethical considerations	82
3.10.1	Sociocultural sensitivity	82
3.10.2	Sensitivity to vulnerability.....	83
3.10.3	Mitigating risk of identity.....	83
3.10.4	Contact and recruitment.....	84
3.11	Participant profile	84
3.12	Summary	86
Chapter four	Co-researcher narratives as data	87
	<i>Illuminating the mindfulness of seminaria</i>	
4.1	Introduction	87
4.2	Heuristic inquiry phase four: Illumination	87

4.3	Participants as co-researchers: gathering depictions of experience.....	87
4.4	Co-researcher Hope	89
4.5	Co-researcher Gordon.....	101
4.6	Co-researcher Maree	115
4.7	Co-researcher Mikaela	130
4.8	Co-researcher Murray.....	146
4.9	Co-researcher Olivia.....	162
4.10	Summary	175
Chapter five	Exemplary portraits.....	177
	<i>Explicating patterns of connectedness from a portrait gallery</i>	
5.1	Introduction	177
5.2	Heuristic inquiry phase five: Explication	178
5.3	Hope recovers the birth of her self-awareness and transforms self-consciousness....	181
5.4	Maree uncovers a sense of belonging beyond normally acknowledged boundaries ..	185
5.5	Mikaela accesses ‘the food of new impressions’ to counter aging	190
5.6	Murray finds food for renewal beyond the hegemonic ‘carrot on a stick’.....	193
5.7	Olivia and Gordon explore what the next generation is asking of its teachers.....	197
5.8	Rudie’s dream of escaping a leopard leads to a poetry secret.....	198
5.9	Gordon more than a year later finds he is still walking the talk.....	202
5.10	Summary	206
Chapter six	Explication, interpretation, analysis as synthesis.....	208
	<i>Forging substance from a diamond word form; realising its social resonance</i>	
6.1	Introduction	208
6.2	Interpreting the data in heuristic research	208
	Continuing to explicate the phenomenon.....	209
	Harvesting meaning from the fieldwork.....	210
6.3	Heuristic inquiry phase six, creative synthesis.....	212
6.4	Explicating the themes and patterns	213
	Surprising—delightful, unexpected, enjoyable.....	213
	Calming—peaceful, grounding, slows the pace.....	214
	Refreshing—enlivening, alert awareness, energising, being in the flow energetically	214
	Transformative for wellbeing; a healing art	215
	Purposeful—significant, meaningful.....	215
	Creatively insightful, realising, recognising, reflective, therapeutic witnessing.....	216
	Accessible—simplicity of form, infinite possibilities.....	216
	Containers—for process with completeness or closure	216
	Opens up—consciousness, perceptive awareness	217
	Connects me more fully with myself/higher self/students/nature/the ‘Great Mystery’	217
	Fulfilling—a sense of completion, feeling resolved	218
	Suspends time—creates space, outside linear time.....	218

Mystery, potency, presence, opening	219
Seminaria's creativity encouraged continuity	220
Postpractice 'confessions,' a reliability check.....	220
Seminaria as a self-rewarding process.....	221
Taking stock at Lookout Point: Preparing to enter the next research phase	222
6.5 The findings	222
I From a broad mindfulness and teacher education perspective:	223
II The nature and being of seminaria's form as experienced by the participants:.....	225
III Engaging with TMoS as a regular practice, participants found it characteristically:.....	226
6.6 Forming the creative synthesis	228
6.7 Creative synthesis	231
6.8 Summary: Glancing back, taking stock before the final frontier	232
Chapter seven Discussion, implications, future directions, conclusion	234
<i>Building a bridge to the theory while walking across one step at a time</i>	
7.1 Overview	234
7.2 Discussion of the findings	234
(A) TMoS revealed a novel form of mindfulness.....	234
(B) TMoS supported teachers and leaders as reflective practitioners.....	237
(C) TMoS embodied three mindfulness axioms and three domains as ways of knowing ..	239
(D) TMoS 'worked' without special beliefs, breathing techniques, body positions or mantras	241
(E) TMoS functioned as a diamond-shaped receptacle with midline transition point and mirroring device.....	244
(F) TMoS incorporated a lemniscate movement as a symbol of revitalisation	246
(G) TMoS transformed challenging feelings via stress reduction.....	248
(H) TMoS illuminated key differences between haiku and seminaria	249
(I) TMoS was both physically grounding and led to a heightening of awareness.....	251
(J) TMoS was meaningful, fostered new meaning-making, connectedness and experiences of self-realisation	252
(K) TMoS was transformative with potential for 'Aha'/flow experience/existential profoundness.....	254
A flow of existential profoundness experienced as subjective wellbeing	256
Origin of wellbeing, its transformative potential.....	257
Potential for love to become 'a way of knowing'	258
7.3 Implications and future directions	259
Implications:.....	259
Future directions:.....	260
Off campus, on campus	261
A potential wellbeing focus for schools	261
7.4 Research limitations.....	262
Fulfilling the heuristic inquiry process	264

	A possible addition to the heuristic inquiry methodology	266
	Validity	267
7.5	Summary	268
	Discussion of original contribution	270
	Significance for educators.....	270
	A simple tuning-in device.....	270
	Sensing time’s telling	271
7.6	Conclusion	272
	Building a bridge to the theory while walking across it.....	272
	To Know Yourself	274
	Coda	275
Appendix A	Invitation to participate.....	277
Appendix B	Participant information sheet.....	278
Appendix C	Consent forms	280
Appendix D	Semi-structured interview one schedule	283
Appendix E	Sample and guide to seminaria practice.....	285
Appendix F	Participant profile (Demographic data relevant to selection criteria).....	289
Appendix G	An exploratory interview with M.R., November 20, 2014	291
	References	296

List of figures and tables

Figures

Figure 1. Teachers’ Mindfulness Meditation: Investigating principles of a practice-based research	11
Figure 2. Poetry fieldwork: Towards a pilgrimage of discovery	12
Figure 3. Pastel rubbing, morning light at Tora	14
Figure 4. Photo: Eastern horizon, Tora with seminaria	16
Figure 5. Conceptualising the seminaria pilgrimage.....	22
Figure 6. Annual mindfulness research publications, from zero in 1980–81 to 692 in 2017.....	41
Figure 7. The seal of co-researcher Hope	184
Figure 8. A journal excerpt of co-researcher Maree.....	186
Figure 9. Co-researcher Maree’s seminaria become diamond-shaped ‘squiggle-writing’.....	189
Figure 10. The seal of co-researcher Maree	190
Figure 11. The seal of co-researcher Mikaela	192
Figure 12. The seal of co-researcher Murray.....	196
Figure 13. The seal of co-researcher Olivia, an amalgam of journals, flanked by Gordon’s blue seal	198
Figure 14. The seal of researcher Rudie.....	201
Figure 15. The seal of co-researcher Gordon	205
Figure 16. Poster, seminaria mindfulness, a creative synthesis	231

Tables

Table 1. Six stages of heuristic inquiry.....	37
Table 2. Summary of the core cognitive processes of the HI researcher	78

Abstract

This heuristic inquiry into ‘the mindfulness of seminaria’ (TMoS) qualitatively explores the nature and being of a seven-line, 27-syllable form of poetry. Designed as ‘seminar form or verse’ by J.-P. Linde in 1988–89, from the scholarship of three seven-step processes, from 13th century Aquinas’s *Quaestiones* to the rudiments of 21st century Scharmer’s (2009) *Theory-U*, TMoS was adopted by six classroom teachers and educational leaders employed in state and independent settings from early childhood to higher education in New Zealand and the UK. Integrating it into their existing mindfulness, contemplative practices daily for three weeks, they found the mindfulness of seminaria to be surprisingly creative and grounding. Its key benefits—meaningfulness and self-realisation—highlighted the versatility, vitality and potential of this mindfulness practice for attaining subjective wellbeing.

Though introduced to its theoretical construct, the research participants were encouraged, in practise, to explore it in enjoyable ways that suited their personal and professional needs. From a standpoint of ‘teacher as reflective practitioner,’ possible applications included: recording events, processing feelings, problem solving, child study, contemplative inquiry, ‘bookending’ the day, and planning ahead.

Moustakas’s (1990, 1994) ‘heuristic inquiry’ is transpersonal and phenomenological. Participants become co-researchers because the essence of the phenomenon under investigation is derived from their perceptions and experiences regardless of the interpretation of the researcher whose lived experience remains focal. Therefore, this study reveals the prefatory experience phenomenologically evoked in the author by a month of walking mindfully across Northern Spain, followed by soundings in the Great Pyramid, and participating in an Alamandria Art of Mindfulness event where—introduced informally to the form of seminaria—the genesis of a new mindfulness practice for teachers was ignited. Heuristically, whilst a walking-sounding-thinking integration undergirded the quest of the primary researcher, seminaria was independently investigated by each of the other six educators. From the strongly coherent themes they highlighted, a creative synthesis of findings illuminates the vitality of the nature and being, use and potential of the mindfulness of seminaria, whether for personal–professional direction, emotional understanding, or cognitive enrichment.

Support was found for the protective effects of TMoS in reducing occupational stress, and the value of mindfulness meditation practices for teachers' personal and professional wellbeing. Thus, the mindfulness of seminaria builds on and contributes to mindfulness research in initial teacher education (ITE), and to professional learning for experienced teachers and leaders alike. Significantly, all participants in this study were themselves long-term mindfulness/meditation practitioners who, without exception, attributed to their practice of seminaria a capacity to connect more consciously with other aspects of themselves, thereby restoring a sense of vitality through self-realisation and meaningfulness—recognised by the OECD (2013) as key subjective wellbeing indicators. Seminaria, with its transformative potential for teacher wellbeing—its original contribution to knowledge—was deemed accessible, companionable and energising. Moreover, marking it worthy of further investigation, is the discovery of its use as a simple tuning-in device—like a poetry app. to which teachers and leaders could turn and return for solutions when stressful feelings mitigated against their concentration, calm, and creativity.

Declaration

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

Gaylene Denford-Wood

21 June, 2018

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My thanks to the team at Flinders University. Professor David Giles for his interest and encouragement; the Flinders Research Centre's Student Wellbeing and Prevention of Violence (SWAPv), and the Mindfulness Research Special Interest Group led by my principal supervisor, Dr Leigh Burrows, who together with Associate Professor Kathy Arthurson, in mindfully supervising this study, 'shrank the ditch' and difference in time zone. I gratefully acknowledge too, the support I received from an Australian Government Research Scholarship.

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I deeply honour Emily Fletcher's graphic ability to help me ground my intuitive imagery.

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Simon Hay copyedited this thesis, checking the accuracy of each word, sentence, paragraph and referencing.

As within, so without

This morning when she woke
And the sun's strong warmth
Enticed her feet to rest
Above the bedclothes,
She was shocked to see
How veins and arteries
And even tiny capillaries
Stood up from the surface of
Who she believed herself to be
Running intricate networks
Across their own land mass
An unexplored map she had
Carried within herself
All these years now
Coming out to show itself
At the crossroads of life
Between a colour-rich past
And unexplored future,
The ticked off and the still-to-do;
Is this some sort of threshold
She asked herself . . .
Defining the known from
Exciting possibilities ahead?
At that precise moment
She heard the crisp drop
Pounding rhythm of a passing
Jogger on the road outside
Stepping his uphill way to a
Fitness level her own aging
Body could only now imagine
Yet, in her heart's own sudden
Thud, thud response the tell-tale
Quickening . . . spelt out plans
She was quick to grasp
Of a northern Spanish map
She'd walked before but
Long ago and was this route
Of her own lineage or yet
Some fragment of a Collective
Unconscious? Whichever—
No matter! Now
This was hers to walk
With right resolve.

(Author, January, 2012, unpublished)

Prelude to a poetry pilgrimage

What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.¹

Reflecting on such patterns of connectedness found in the complexity of one's biography is a requirement of undertaking heuristic research in which 'internal search' reflexivity² is an essential element (Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Worth, 2012).

No stranger to the notion of surveying the interior for guidance and deeper *raison d'être* for work, I know that when these experiences are recounted in context, as foremost heuristic researcher Clark Moustakas (1990, 1994) explains, the reader's understanding of the research foundations can be strengthened.

In this vein, three biographical sections foreground this study. The first, in the form of five vignettes, provides a window into the formative early-years experience of the 'child-learner self.' The second, and longest, marks the personal–professional path of the adult 'teacher and learner,' and the third concerns how this heuristic inquiry was sparked into life as the mindfulness of *seminaria* which, itself, begins at Chapter One.

The child-learner self

The following biographical vignettes are five of a number influential in awakening me to the value of nurturing the inner life, that later would influence my work with teachers, encouraging them to nurture theirs as a core dimension of their personal–professional purpose. The last of these vignettes bridges their biographical sequence into adult life and work, out of which this study has been forged.





arrowing nightmares periodically plagued my preschool years. Terrifying tsunamis engulfed our homelands, and war-torn scenes and sounds of savagery. 'Man's inhumanity to man' was played out graphically. Sometimes angels sounded to the rescue. Sometimes I negotiated with the

¹ This quote, attributed to Emerson, has a controversial provenance (see O'Toole, 2011). However, it is the essential meaning of the quote that is important here.

² 'Reflexivity, the ability to self-reflect is viewed as occurring in context. A narrative lens is used to integrate the importance of working with lived experience while recognizing how we are influenced by our past and present social interaction with others' (Norton, 2017, Abstract).

military, eventually reaching agreement to spare lives including my own. Other times, we all perished. How could I have seen and known so viscerally? Pretelevision, it was not of this life. As the first born to strong, happy, hard-working parents, growing up was otherwise serene in the green, wide open space of the Taieri³ where the daily and seasonal rhythms of farming life fortified a child's very foundations. Maungatua,⁴ 'my mountain' strong in its mauve cloak, stood sentinel over the plain. Looking east, Saddle Hill, named by Captain Cook (presumably through his horse rider's rather than oceangoing lens), brought the sun to rise on each new day. Life was simple and secure, in stark contrast to my 'end-of-the-world' episodes which caused me, terrified, to grope my way through interminable darkness to the safety and warmth of my parents' bed.

onversely, in that golden Raphaelic light of a late summer afternoon, I—a three- or four-year old—was given another of many wake-up calls from another place (across some threshold).⁵ Wandering along the poplar tree lane that served as a race for the cows to be herded in for milking, turning over the bridge down past the bull paddock, I suddenly heard from the heights an arrestingly beautiful voice speak the name of someone I instantly knew would be important to look out for in life. Harboring the name close to my heart, I would always know when others of the same name did not match the identity of the one whose name I had heard. It would be 26 or 27 years until we finally met, and 'reunitingly' life changing.

etween the ages of 10 and 12, schoolyard tennis—doubles or singles—was 'ace!' When we ran out of balls, it was a matter of retrieving them from the boundary hedge. Kept trim, this huge macrocarpa hedge harboured hidden rooms treasured for solitary play or the various 'clubs' that came in and out of fashion. Ball hunting was legend for its trophies. When friends called, 'come on, Gay, we've got them all!', I would sense there were more. By becoming inwardly still, and softening my focus, I could cross spatial boundaries, whereupon out of hiding more balls would appear and I would see differently, the 'in-between spaces' that revealed the subtleties of their camouflage. Intrigued friends asked how I did it, and inwardly, I asked myself; now I am convinced that my lifetime interest in phenomenology was kindled in the Outram School macrocarpa hedge.

³ In Māori, 'fertile plain.'

⁴ In Māori, 'mountain of the gods'; in my youthful monotheism, 'mountain of God'—my turangawaewae or 'place to stand.'

⁵ An element of organic research (Clements, Ettling, Jenett, & Shields, 1998) tacit within my heuristic inquiry.



recurring dream in which I could fly was accompanied by a wonderful feeling of freedom and empowerment. All I had to do was select a certain Lombardy poplar or silver willow stick,⁶ seat myself on it (as one might perch on a rail) and takeoff at will. Full directionality after liftoff was a simple mental process that afforded clear views over the fields and farm house roof. There was a perception of inner geometry that matched the outer spatial awareness. How affirming it was in real life then, when considered old enough to be allowed safely up onto the roof to check the chimneys with my father, that I already knew from these conscious ‘night flights’ the precise detail of what existed there.



ne liminal⁷ dream at the age of nine (the year I conquered Maungatua solo to stand strong among the song of skylarks and gaze out to a distant sea; and the age at which I knew when I grew up I would become a teacher), was deeply perplexing. In it, I walked out of our house one clear morning to stand in awe and wonder in the front field facing north. As a warm breeze brushed my face, heralding the gathering of an eerily mysterious sky, a cloud of cumulus curled itself into an alarming red number nine.⁸ Haunted by what I took to be a harbinger of the end of the world (a legacy from the earlier nightmares), I told no one but fully prepared myself for the worst at the age of 18. As it turned out, not only did ‘the’ world or ‘my world’ *not* end, its horizons broadened and brightened, expanded and lightened. I felt no moral obligation as the oldest to stay home working, my birthright, eventually, to inherit the farm. Set free by my gender, I left home for the University of Canterbury on the way to becoming a teacher, declared till this day among the best years of my life.

Our biological rhythms are the symphony of the cosmos, music embedded deep within us to which we dance, even when we can’t name the tune. (D. Chopra, cited in Ramsden & Hollingsworth, 2013, p. 36)

The teacher-learner self

Thresholds of consciousness evoked my need to read the works of Carl Jung (1875–1961) in order to better understand the relationships of inner and outer experience and the movement between

⁶ Populus Tremula, ‘whispering tree’ in a breeze, its leaves tremble like human hands in a Māori wiri.

⁷ Situated at a sensory threshold, a transitional place, as in the liminal zone between sleep and wakefulness.

⁸ Growing up with a farmer’s eye for observing the sky, we learned the aphoristic, ‘Red sky at night, the shepherd’s delight; red sky in the morning, the shepherd’s [and sailor’s] warning.’

them. Jung wrote, ‘Spirit is the inside of things and matter is their visible outer aspect’ (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 2).

Of the various philosophers who accepted a spiritual and collective dimension of the psyche, those elements are clear in four aspects of Jung’s thought: his interest in psychic and religious experience; his definition of true science and refutation of materialism; his concept of consciousness; and his defence of the validity of spiritual experience (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 2). (It was validating and ‘normalising’ for this young searcher who had seen dream trauma.)

Other nourishment at this time was found through reading the work of Harvard psychologist William James (1842–1910) who—having embraced and articulated the main principles of transpersonal research, and justified them metaphysically and empirically—made the first recorded use of the term ‘transpersonal’ in 1905 (Ryan, 2008, p. 20), although transpersonal psychology as a movement did not emerge until the 1960s. Aptly, the term *transpersonal*, from the Latin *trans* meaning beyond or through, and *personal*, meaning mask or façade, I use here to reference a field of research and scholarship that lies beyond or through the personally identified aspects of self. Braud and Anderson (1998, p. xxi) define it as seeking to honour ‘human experience in its fullest and most transformative expressions.’

Providentially, any subsequent noetic experience, unlike the ‘Cloud Nine,’ required no conscionable or cautious interpretation.⁹ By now, as an almost fully qualified beginning teacher, an acknowledgement of inner depth by our lecturer at the end of a tutorial became a further stepping stone on my path of interest in the interiority.

What does lie within? To ask one’s self ‘who am I?’, accessing that place Rumi (2004, pp. 112–113) deemed ‘an inner wakefulness, that . . . will eventually startle us back to the truth of who we are,’ I contend, is at the heart of educational wellbeing—so that what it means to really ‘know yourself’ may be one of the greatest challenges facing teachers today. This idea is key to my thesis. It could

⁹Noetic quality (James, 1902/1985, p. 293) is one of four key features of mystical experience. Like a state of feeling, but described as a state of knowledge and insight (not discursive intellectually; often ineffable), noetic experience includes illumination and revelations, full of significance, importance and long-term authority for the experiencer. Defined as ‘awakening experiences’ (Taylor & Egeto-Szabo, 2017, p. 45), the ‘noetic’ includes awareness of: unity with an absolute; immortality of the soul; great truths; transcendence of time and space.

be said to sound its archetypal voice through the heart of this heuristic inquiry into the mindfulness of seminaria.

Personal–professional research context

What relevance has this present study for teachers? Just as this Prelude provides personal *raison d'être*, I now provide the background for this study's teacher education focus.

In keeping with Moustakas's heuristic inquiry (HI), (1990, 1994), further personal and professional purpose for undertaking this study into the mindfulness of seminaria is outlined, about which more depth is provided in the coming chapters.

'We teach who we are' according to renowned author and educator Parker Palmer (1998, p. 1). His introduction to *The Courage to Teach* opens with the notion of 'teaching from within' and closes with the question, 'Who is the self that teaches?' (p. 7):

I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illumined by the lightning-life of the mind—then teaching is the finest work I know (Parker Palmer, 1998, p. 1).

Starting out to become an educator, then, the focus is on the development of your own identity as a teacher and as a member of the profession. As Korthagen (2004, p. 80) asserts, 'teacher education must begin by exploring the teaching self.' Manning-Morton (2006) takes the imperative a step further making it clear that, while knowledge is power, self-knowledge is empowering. Although little of this ilk exists on the New Zealand Ministry of Education website [at the time of writing, October 29, 2014], the fact that Parker Palmer's work is appreciatively referenced suggests that within neoliberal hegemony, a trend towards valuing the synthesis of teachers' inner and outer work may yet be in development (see, for instance, Ministry of Education NZ, 2014a).

Just as self-knowing 'is a continuous process' without end (Randall & McKim 2008, p. 223), in education the process involves communities of others. By building inner resourcefulness for encountering the world, teachers can become agencies for change that are transformative for social justice (Reed & Black, 2006) as they nurture this movement from inner to outer life, from contemplation to action, resiliently (Burrows 2011; Denford-Wood 2004, 2014; Palmer 1998). If the self, as Polkinghorne (1988, p. 154) asserts, is 'a narrative in process,' then self-knowing is a

continuing process in which teachers strive toward coherence of personal–professional integrity that provides meaningfulness. One means to this is mindfulness meditation, that which scientist, teacher, and past president of the Mind and Life Institute, Arthur Zajonc (2009, p. 46), defines as ‘a schooling for experiencing life from the inside.’

Mindfulness meditation¹⁰ as a key component of teachers’ reflective and contemplative practice has been an enduring research thread throughout my teaching and practice-based research work in tertiary and higher education (Bacchus, Denford-Wood, & Hancox, 2002; Denford-Wood, 2003, 2004b, 2005, 2006, 2013, 2014). Thus, this new evolving strand of the work since March, 2013, explores how the mindfulness of seminaria—working contemplatively with a particular poetic form—potentially might contribute to this changing professional learning landscape. Could the simple creativity of a particular ‘play on words’ assist teachers in their development? Similar such questions had long occupied my attention. First, through a New Zealand Ministry of Education initiative in the late 1990s, for a better prepared pool of relief teachers, the two six-week preparatory courses I led in the Wellington region anecdotally strengthened classroom competency by requiring recruits, in their course work that included the Arts, to demonstrate meaningful integration of inner and outer work.

Teachers’ professional learning—shining a light on the inner landscape

At the turn of the millennium, tasked by two New Zealand universities (in turn) to write and teach BEd then postgraduate courses for their in-service and pre-service teacher education programmes, I included core content for teachers on the value of developing their ‘interiority’ as an active, key component of reflective practice for their professional work.

However, even a decade ago, the notion of a first-person meditation focus in a mainstream undergraduate course had complex ontological and epistemological implications. Unless unanimously sought by the students themselves, practising meditation, in class, would have contravened individual freedom. Increasingly though, the benefits demonstrated by neuropsychological research and the secularisation of meditation—primarily through the

¹⁰The term mindfulness meditation is defined in section 2.3.1.

popularisation of mindfulness—continue to influence attitudes and understanding of its health and social benefits (University of Oxford Mindfulness Centre, 2016).

A call for the renewal of higher education through an integrative approach grounded in conversation, contemplation and interconnectedness among students and staff has been advocated for its transformative potential (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010a), and on campuses worldwide, mindfulness and meditation practices are increasing (Bush, 2011; Plante, 2010). However, such growing institutional mindfulness practice evidences need for qualified responsibility in this area of education still in its infancy (Albrecht, Albrecht, & Cohen 2012, p. 11). Conversely, in school settings, any sense of coercion from school employers or managers for staff to participate in mindfulness practices in the workplace, as Purser and Loy (2013) point out, could raise suspicions. It could be construed as a method for ‘subduing employee unrest, promoting a tacit acceptance of the status quo, [or] as an instrumental tool for keeping attention focused on institutional goals,’ rather than addressing policies and practices that may be causing stress that the practice of mindfulness is expected to ameliorate.

Further, as neuroscientist, psychologist and researcher Willoughby Britton (2014, p. 13) argues, ‘without adequate knowledge of the range of possible meditation-related experiences, there is a risk that in the secular applications—where meditation training is divorced from its traditional . . . social, and cultural contexts—these experiences could be misunderstood, pathologized, or improperly managed.’ A paucity of research into the triggers of trauma in contemplative practice highlights the need for trauma-sensitive mindfulness (Britton, 2014; Burrows, 2018; Lindahl, Fisher, Cooper, Rosen, & Britton, 2017), particularly, for example, in secular teacher education settings. Thus, there is an established need for safeguarding mindfulness (Burrows, 2018). As Purser and Loy (2013) point out, ‘to become a genuine force for positive personal and social transformation, the mindfulness movement must reclaim an ethical framework and aspire to more lofty purposes that take into account the well-being of all living beings.’

All these factors considered, I contend that, ethically, inner practice needs to remain the domain of free choice.¹¹ Therefore, in my teacher education classes, although the contemplative content was embodied in the literature, addressed in lectures and discussed in tutorials, it was considered

¹¹ Synchronously, *A mindful choice* is the name of a documentary on mindfulness (Hopkinson, Lewis, & Simpson, 2016).

primarily the domain of 'private practice,' something some students took seriously enough to engage in outside of class and thereby addressed authentically in their assignments.

What I could offer generically was considered a 'middle ground' of reflective, contemplative exercises. These included, variously, movement; understanding of the role of visualisation, breathing, and colour; concentration exercises; body scanning; observation; practice of Goethean phenomenology (usually in relation to the science curriculum or pedagogy); and focused thinking exercises. In support was the keeping of a research journal/visual diary of responses to questions of theory and practice, and creative responses to their inner and outer work (noting Jung's reference to 'spirit and matter' as previously mentioned). These activities varied depending on student interest, course content requirements and assessment criteria. Students selected, from their research journals, the required number of passages for an assessment of 'surface,' 'adequate,' or 'deep' processing of the study questions from course content. As a mindfulness colleague later observed, 'It's like you are giving them a toolkit from which they can choose (or not), what they feel they need; that is, what is appropriate and works for [each of] them' (C. Gibbs, personal communication, March 21, 2007).

The aim was to support students' awareness and self-development, and to support their understanding of metacognition and reflective practice in professional life. Academic courses were written in a way that placed the student teacher at the centre of his or her learning in order to more easily connect their inner life with their outer world realities as preparatory teachers. Course content sought to transform teaching and learning into strongly meaningful, connected lived experience that strengthened their own 'I am' self-awareness (inner observer and knower). To support the consciousness of consciousness was the overarching aim, and mindfulness meditation was one means through which this could be developed.

Now that the science and practice of mindfulness is making its mark (Black, 2015), mindfulness meditation in contemporary teacher education is no longer considered 'fringe' (Arthurson, 2015), although as Ditrich, Wiles, and Lovegrove (2017), and Mazza-Davies (2015) point out, the role of the teacher in mindfulness programmes to date has received relatively scant scholarly attention. *Ipsa facto* this present study, 'the mindfulness of seminaria,' is an original contribution to what Ditrich and her colleagues highlight (Ditrich et al., 2017, p. xii) as an under-researched area.

Boundaries continue to change. Since 2002, when I first taught about contemplative practice in pre-service and in-service teacher education in New Zealand universities (Bacchus et al., 2002; Denford-Wood, 2003, 2004b), there has been growing consensus among researchers, practitioners, scholars and students in the contemplative fields to examine the best ways of implementing contemplative practices that may lead to valuable insights, enhanced cognitive and emotional functioning, increased social harmony and increased health and wellbeing. The ontological and epistemological implications mentioned above, that were constraints to mindfulness meditation in class, are dissolving, in that, due to the burgeoning research literature and increase in personal and group practices, hegemonic change is occurring. Today, there is more whole-hearted ‘buy in’ from students and staff alike. As Rix (2017, p. 104), for instance, points out, *Mindful Aotearoa* ‘is an initiative of the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (MHF) with a goal for mindfulness to be understood, valued and practised . . . to reduce psychological distress and increase wellbeing for all people . . . towards creating a society free from discrimination, and where all people flourish.’

Literature has laid firm planks with which to bridge the perceived divide between quantitative and qualitative research (Hiles, 2001b) wherein space is made for newly inspired directions:

It has become clear that a multidisciplinary integrative approach is critical for understanding the mind and its relation to health, ethical behaviour, and society at large. The ISCS [International Symposium for Contemplative Studies] seeks to encourage and help shape a cohesive interdisciplinary field of contemplative studies in which basic and applied science, scholarship, education, the arts, and contemplative traditions collaboratively develop an integrated way of knowing (Zajonc, 2014, p.1).

As Arthurson (2015, p. 28) points out, mindfulness and contemplative approaches to secular education are not new. The philosophies of education theorists such as Maria Montessori (1870–1952) and Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) represent two of a number of holistic forms of education increasingly becoming mainstream (Barback, 2012) that encourage teachers to foster their own inner as well as outer development as an important aspect of their professional learning (Denford-Wood, 2004a, 2005).

The authentic self is the soul made visible. (Sarah Ban Breathnach, cited in Ramsden & Hollingsworth, 2013, p. 132)

A notion of teacher authenticity as ‘personal + professional life and ethics = integrity’ was still in the vanguard of pre-service and in-service teacher education early last decade (C. Gibbs, personal communication, March 21, 2006). Professor Colin Gibbs—highlighting participants’ perception of such a finding in my Masters thesis (Denford-Wood, 2005, pp. 126, 145, 202)—was the catalyst for

my research on 'Teachers' inner knowing and its transformative effect on their personal and professional life.' Polanyi's (1962, 1964, 1969) elucidations of the tacit dimension, with his notions of indwelling and personal knowledge, were seminal to this work, and alongside practical teaching and learning I continued to be a participant researcher in contemplative inquiry and phenomenology. Mindfulness and meditation, two of my research interests with their own nexus,¹² and access to inner knowing led to the following poster design in 2014. As a conceptual framework for my inquiry in this discourse, it highlighted unanswered questions that laid a basis for this new exploration of 'the mindfulness of seminaria' that this thesis investigates.

¹²Jon Kabat-Zinn (2014), an international authority on the subject, explains how the practice of *contemplative* mindfulness is a form of meditation.

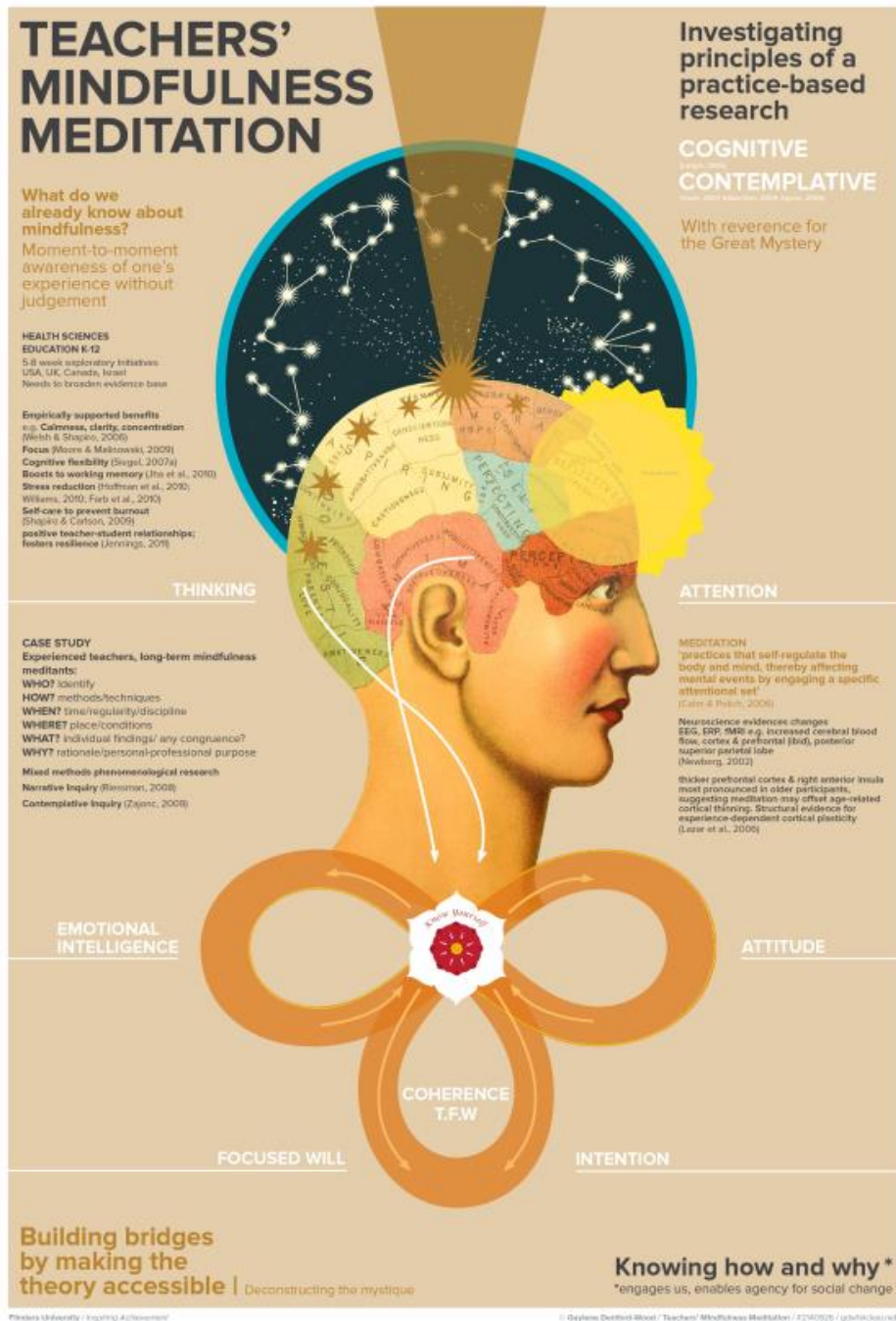


Figure 1. Teachers' Mindfulness Meditation: Investigating principles of a practice-based research

Overture to seminaria: A threshold discovery

This overture to semin'aria' honours the name that came from a sounding inside the Great Pyramid twelve days after completing the Camino Santiago de Compostela. It seems that seminaria, biographically and ontologically considered (Moustakas, 1990), 'found me' as much as I, it—when nine months later, almost to the day, I heard its call.

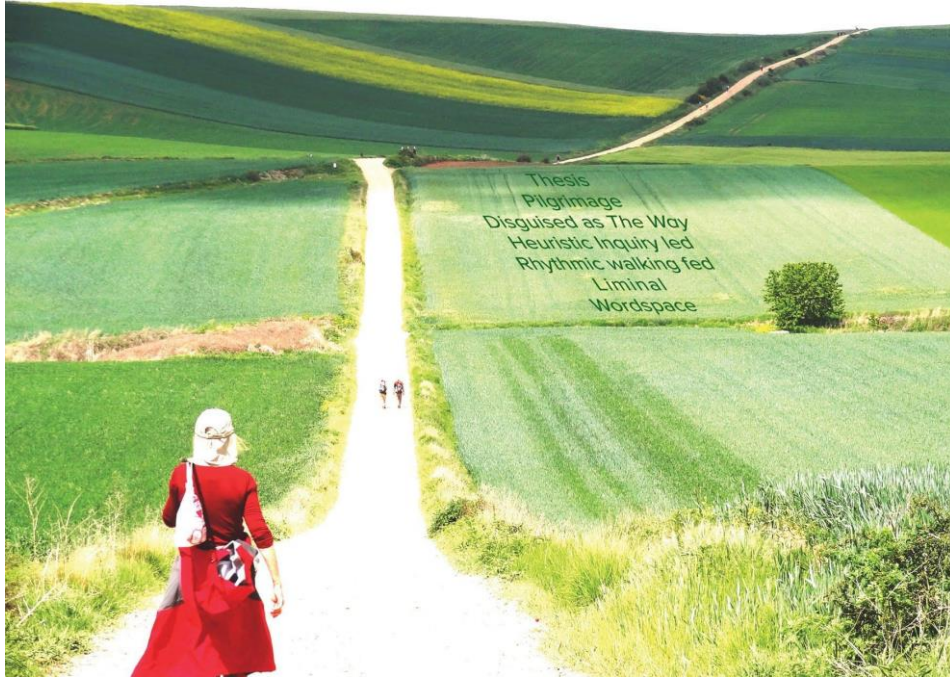


Figure 2. Poetry fieldwork: Towards a pilgrimage of discovery

The call

Echoing the preceding walk, this research ‘pilgrimage’ began before dawn in the Wairarapa¹³ settlement of Tora, a wild, wind and wave-worn coastal retreat renowned for its isolated, raw beauty. The air, though cool, was breathlessly still. Emerging from our respective rooms, my musician friend, Mariel, journal in hand, showed me the unique form of poetry she writes. Reaching across to see it in the half light, I felt the moment presented with a purpose. Beholding her process, I was alive with ‘aesthetic chills’ (Colver, 2016), a tightening scalp and moistening eyes—the sort of rare body response I knew not to ignore.

Compared to what we can usually think and feel, what comes from the bodily sensed edge of awareness is characteristically more intricate and multifaceted, and yet also more open to new possibilities. We are not bound by the forms of the past, but contrary to what is often said today, we cannot ‘construct’ just any narrative we like, either (Gendlin, 1996, p. 2).

Resident on the first Alamandria¹⁴ Art of Meditation and Mindfulness event, we had both been drawn there by the offering of ‘original, creative processes to facilitate personal discovery and

¹³ In Maori, ‘glistening waters.’

¹⁴ www.alamandria.co.nz

cultivate depth of perception whilst providing a perfect balance of meditative practice, stillness, movement, play, creativity and the opportunity for solitude.’ Our poetic exchange was curiously heightened by this seaside setting as though fertile for creative germination. The deep colours of that day’s dawning and the words of my first seminaria poem, although also raw, are memorable for their emergence.

Hence a flame was ignited for this sociopoetic form soon to develop into a disciplined daily practice (different from Mariel’s). Incorporating it into my early morning practices was enlivening as though from the wellspring of my Spanish pilgrimage—with its walking-sounding-thinking integration—now metamorphosing into a question of purpose. Since meeting the poetic form, the mystery of its potency had struck deep. Coursing through me, I had a feeling it was a research gift to which I could say ‘yes’ or freely decline—ringing true to Polanyi’s (1983) observation that all such inquiry begins with unsettled, enigmatic groping, and Jung’s consideration:

When coincidences pile up in this way one cannot help being impressed by them—for the greater the number of terms in a series, or the more unusual its character, the more improbable it becomes. . . . In these cases, it would be incongruous to speak of ‘chance’ happenings. It is rather a question of meaningful coincidences. (Jung, 2005, pp. 91–92)

Curiously, next, upon enquiring of its origin and learning the name of the Scottish resident who had designed it for his contemplative and social use, I decided it would be useful to make contact with him to enquire further. Strangely, before doing anything tangible, his name suddenly appeared on LinkedIn as though by ‘divine prompt.’ Summoning courage, I made the approach. It was met with polite encouragement and—hearing the nature of my quest—nurturing of my naïve attempts to work more adeptly with his seminar form. When I explained that prior to embarking on a research proposal with this work in an education context, I would first trial it with others as my own reliability check for academic trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), he emailed me his self-published *A Seminar on the ‘Seminar’* (Linde, 2013) to assist in the process.

Gratefully, I replied:

Thank you
Jens-Peter
Your Seminar gift
I shall tenderly safeguard
That others may find
Creative
Insight.

To which he responded in light-hearted analysis:

What a surprise—a Thank You in Seminar Verse! For our thankfulness can only become possible with 'insight.' Jens-Peter means Dove-Rock = Heaven-Earth: polarity becomes 'creative.' And gifts one can find if one sees in the 'you' all the 'others' and a formal seminar is allowed to bear the potential of your 'may,' and the centre line: The 'I' expresses itself in the future tense which is safe and tender at the same time— lovely! And how nice that the angels are 'up-to-date' and can use the internet to give signs!

In turn, I wrote:

I so valued your interpretative response, evocative of those polarities we live between and through and embody; recollective of the scene where I first encountered the Seminar Verse. Pre-dawn, a starry sky gradually lightened to daybreak, with the preparatory dulling before the brilliance of sunrise (no light pollution out there on the coast). Here is a pastel rubbing I made though the memory picture is more substantial.

Blessed
The daybreak
Earth: red, orange, gold
Heaven: aqua, indigo
Between time and space
This sacred
Union.



Figure 3. Pastel rubbing, morning light at Tora

His response:

Thank you very much for sharing your poem and picture. I was wondering what colour and font one could use to put the poem into the light space in the middle, but then realised it could not be the poem you wrote about the sunrise as it then would be doubling up, 'too much of a good thing.' So I wrote another one with a similar gesture:

I find
Myself called
Between sun and sea,
Bearing up, allowing down,
Weaving air and earth;
Sensing time's
Telling.

Or s'th. like this. . .'

Responding later, I wrote:

The thought that you sometimes turn the lay-out left to right 'backed' (as you wrote last time) prompted me to try it and I saw how much more there is to be discovered and to work with. The phenomenon of our 270-day human gestation occurred to me, and I began to wonder . . .'

Is there
A secret
Law of gestation
Twenty seven syllables
Of the Seminar's
Organic
Forming?

Thus our correspondence 'to'd and fro'd' while I grew more practically and contemplatively familiar with seminar form and found affirmation in my direction with it through corresponding with its 'master' (J.-P. Linde, personal communication, August 28, 2013–November 11, 2013).

Meanwhile (pre-Flinders), a retired senior colleague and I continued conversing. This email (subject line: 'ontological angst') is from around the time I made the decision to 'go with the mindfulness of seminaria':

Testing whether my new focus is on track or not . . . sensing and sifting, weighing and waiting; then deciding and knowing it's the right next step. It involves a piece of the jigsaw we did not have time for at *Salvation* [cafe near the university] last week. Its springboard is your encouragement to submit to the socio-poetic competition and the subsequent delight in having *To know its wave* published and what has evolved. On that course at Tora, I was introduced to a poetic form and have been working with it daily. Through luck or destiny, its originator turned up on my network so I contacted him (Aberdeen) and he's been critiquing my work. When I told him of my intention to run three workshops on the introduction and practice of it as an art, he sent me his self-published booklet on its design. I had 15 participants in each workshop including at least five teachers whose responses to working with it sharpened my question, Can I work mindfully at doctoral level on a new aspect of teachers' reflective practice (possibly still under the umbrella working title, 'Teachers' inner knowing etc.')? I'll show you what I've written preparatory to a proposal. Go well, G. (T. Willing, personal communication, October 26, 2013)

Her response, immediate, was a gender-amended Hammarskjöld quote:

[S]he broke fresh ground—because, and only because [s]he had the courage to go ahead without asking whether others were following or even understood. [S]he had no need for the divided responsibility in

which others seek to be safe from ridicule, because [s]he had been granted a faith which required no confirmation—a contact with reality, light and intense like the touch of a loved hand: a union in self-surrender without self-destruction, where [her] heart was lucid and [her] mind was loving. (T. Willing, personal communication, October 26, 2013)

My inner direction towards saying ‘yes’ to seminaria as a mindfulness research focus was meeting a wave of affirming signs. By living the question, I sensed an inkling of becoming-at-one-ness with an answer. All I must do was stay on its path. Like an echo of the Camino pilgrimage, I knew to trust the inner and outer processes, discerning between the true and the irrelevant for which, by now, I was developing a reliable sensory ‘detector’ (Frick, 1983, 1987). As Jung famously stated, ‘Man's task is to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious’ (as cited in AZQuotes, n.d.).

In concluding the Prelude to this study, I note that just as the focus in a heuristic quest is on recreation of the lived experience (Merrell-Wolff, 1994; Pagnucci, 2004; Van Manen, 1990), it is, in this case, predominantly through writing (Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Pelias, 2004; Richardson, 2000, 2007), and with full depictions of the experience from the researcher’s frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990, p. 39). Therefore, I have identified biographical points that mark significant thresholds, forks in the road, or turning points on this ‘pilgrimage path’ to investigate with teachers and educational leaders the ‘mindfulness of seminaria.’

Heuristic inquiry is a research process . . . best described as following your nose, but at the same time requires the highest degree of rigour and thoroughness . . . [and] should not be undertaken lightly (Hiles, 2001a, n. p.).

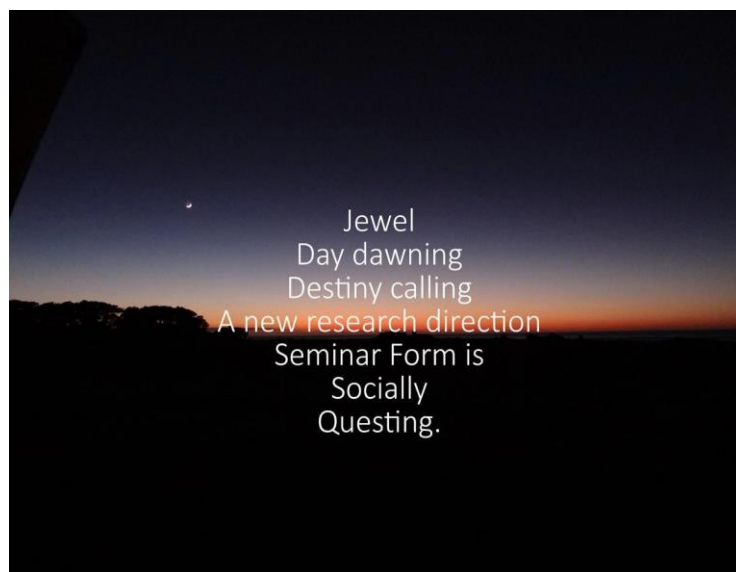


Figure 4. Photo: Eastern horizon, Tora with seminaria

When a formal proposal was accepted and ethics approval was granted on June 17, 2015, my heuristic inquiry led, pilgrimage-like, to the discovery of this way with words that left me wondering what it was trying to exact from me. . . .

To know its wave

When you ask me if I bought myself a scallop shell
In St Jean Pied de Port I tell you
No, I took the one left on my plate
From Carey's Bay a month before I left
For France full knowing that the talisman
It held was clean-edged with a golden coloured wave
Reflective of the Aotearoa light, would find its
Own strong rhythm 'neath a Spanish sun
Glinting as it dangled from my pack
Dancing at the back as I strode *The Way*
Its biography still spoke of Port Chalmers
Harbour edged, wave of Hotere's corrugated
Iron black as night until the full moon's harvest
Nets its bounty – Pipi flounder scallop clam
And within each pearly secret
The pattern of its being
Is testing our recognition
So that gracefully, paused at my evening plate
When a German pilgrim winks, '*Clue: it was hooked*
By Schubert' Oh the trout! I delight as much for knowing
The answer as appeasing a peregrino appetite
Though phenomenology was the very
Point and I did not know just as later
I could not work out the mystery of all the
Sombre Spanish women wearing thin crosses
And reaching up with tall brooms at black windows
In a way that Hotere might now see his sky over Carey's Bay.¹⁵

(Denford-Wood, 2013)

¹⁵ Wavy right margin evocative of the scallop shell, Hotere's trademark materiality, and the poem title.

Thesis chapter outline

Each chapter represents one of the six phases of Moustakas's (1990) Heuristic Inquiry (see also Table 1), noting that there are two 'data chapters' (four and five) whose explication continues through the fifth and sixth.

Chapter One introduces the mindfulness of seminaria as a poetic construct and as a mindfulness practice. It provides the rationale for, and significance of, its research aim and objective in teacher education. A brief introduction to the methodological design suitable for the research question, and the organisation of this thesis as a pilgrimage through a process of a heuristic inquiry (together with the preceding Prelude)—reflect substantial *Initial Engagement*.

Chapter Two, a literature review, evidences *Immersion* by reviewing the literature in the fields of scholarship relevant to this study. Particular focus is given to: mindfulness as a natural human capacity for wellbeing; mindfulness in teacher education; teachers as reflective practitioners; the roots of seminaria; self-written poetry as research and the origin of sociopoetics. Critical to the value of this thesis are the identified gaps in the literature.

Chapter Three addresses the methodological foundations of heuristic inquiry in general and of this study in particular. The research question, ethical considerations, methods for the gathering, organisation and synthesis of the data, are explained, including how the substance of the research is incubated, i.e. contained within a phase of *Incubation*.

Chapter Four examines the role of the research participants as co-researchers of the mindfulness of seminaria, and introduces all six in a comprehensive differentiation of their depictions of their lived experience, as *Individual Portraits*. The data thus gathered form the basis of *Illumination*.

Chapter Five adds another dimension of lived experience. *Exemplary Portraits* of the co-researchers are presented in an imaginary event, a portrait gallery opening. It is an *Explication* of the co-researchers' and primary researcher's experiences of TMoS.

Chapter Six explains the purpose of the *Creative Synthesis*, and explicates the themes and patterns of connectedness in the data which, within a heuristic inquiry, means to 'render intelligent and clear' the interpretation, analysis and synthesis of that data, by unfolding additional layers of meaning, including the study's main findings. It concludes with the *Creative Synthesis*.

Chapter Seven discusses the main findings in relation to the research question guiding this study, and their relationship to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. It discusses implications of the findings for educators and suggests possible future directions. Limitations of this study are addressed, including a review of the heuristic inquiry process, before a final summary and conclusion. This concluding chapter fits a *discretionary* heuristic inquiry phase of **Validation**.

A poet's work is to name the unnameable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world and stop it going to sleep. (Salman Rushdie, as cited in Malik, 2012)

Chapter one Introductions

Heeding the call to heuristic inquiry, first phase: initial engagement

1.1 Introducing the mindfulness of seminaria: Research question, aim and objective

The title of this thesis, *The mindfulness of seminaria* (TMOs) exemplifies my first objective: to investigate the relationship of seminaria and mindfulness, and, within their nexus, to discover the essence of seminaria when practised as a dynamic poetic form.

Thus, my opening research question is: What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice? The route I took, to explore my research question with teachers and educational leaders, forms the central path of inquiry through this thesis.

- First, then, *what* is meant by ‘the mindfulness of seminaria’?
- Second, *why* locate this study in teaching and its leadership?
- And third, *how* will its scholarship inform the literature?

Each of these questions, which I address in turn below, forms the introductory basis of this thesis. First, in addressing the prime question, What is meant by ‘the mindfulness of seminaria?’, an overview defines ‘seminaria’ and ‘mindfulness,’ and then provides an explanation of their nexus as justification for my term ‘the mindfulness of seminaria’.

1.1.1 Seminaria poetic form or construct

‘Seminaria,’ adjectival noun, actively verb-like, singular and plural, from the Latin ‘seminarium,’ meaning ‘breeding ground,’ is the name I have given to the mindfulness research context of this seven-line, 27-syllable word construct or poem. Created by Jens-Peter Linde in late 1988, he gave it its first public expression in 1989 as *Seminar Form*, synonymously, *Seminar Verse*. In form, it is simpler and more compact than the Sonnet, and longer and arguably more comprehensive than the 17-syllable haiku (Linde, 2013, p.5).¹⁶ Seminaria (Linde’s seminar verse) differs ontologically (in form

¹⁶ Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry that expresses a single feeling or impression mostly in three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables, noting well Raine’s (2016, p. 3) outdated ideas and misconceptions of haiku.

and in intent) from the 17-syllable, mostly three-line haiku in ways critical to this present study. For example, seminaria conclude with a meaningful gesture of closure (accentuated by the use of a fullstop), whereas, according to Lucas (2001) among others, the haiku form should be left 'open-ended.' Furthermore, seminaria as a construct 'mirrors back' on itself, a meaning-making function antithetical to the spirit of haiku (Denford-Wood, 2015; see also Lucas, 2001, p. 56; Co-researcher¹⁷ 'Gordon'; Mariel, Appendix G).

Linde (2013, p. 3) defines the nature and function of seminar form's line construction:

First line (two syllables) introduces a subject, premise or statement.

Line Two (three syllables) as a second step, gives the subject depth, colour, and life through an example, or picture.

Line Three (five syllables) throws the content of the previous two lines into question by contemplating consequences or implications. The third line involves emotional intelligence. A tension is felt.

The fourth line (seven syllables) resolves the tension with a decision and action. It provides a turning point and by the seventh line, a resolution.

For example:

(2)	Listen
(3)	With your heart
(5)	As well as your head
(7)	Learn to hear your middle space
(5)	Warmth pulsed, radiant
(3)	Plus gut truth
(2)	Trust it!

I explain the origin and construct of seminaria as seminar form (Linde, 2013), with reference to the literature in Chapter two (2.5).

Examples of seminaria poems (as above) are interspersed throughout this thesis. Unless otherwise attributed, they are the words of the author.

¹⁷ 'Heuristic inquiry,' a methodology pursued in this thesis, regards research participants as independent 'co-researchers' (Moustakas, 1990).

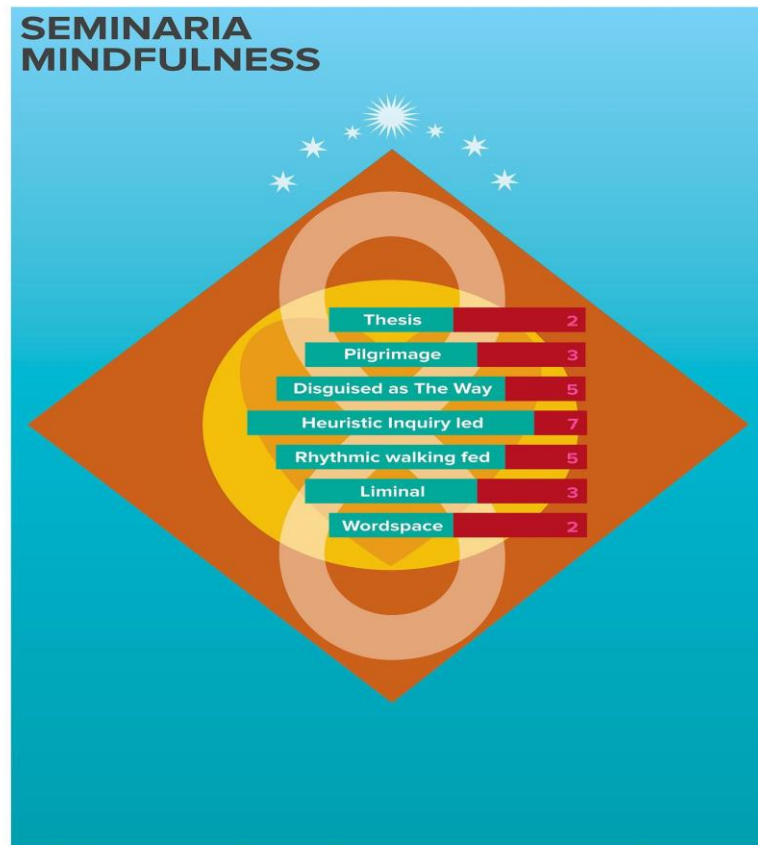


Figure 5. Conceptualising the seminaria pilgrimage

1.1.2 Mindfulness as a practice

Mindfulness, the antithesis of mind/essness, means to operate with conscious awareness, rather than on ‘autopilot’ (Solem, Thunes, Semb, Odin, Hagen, & Wells, 2015, p. 2). It is an intentional way of being attentive to the present moment experience of life, with heightened sensitivity to one’s thought patterns, and feeling relaxed, open and free from the reactivity that is automatically triggered by thoughts and emotions.

To *practise* mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and surrounding environment, non-judgmentally, that is, with the attitude of an impartial witness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2009b; Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).

Why is the *practice* of mindfulness considered an important distinction from simply the conceptualised understanding or sporadic experiencing of it? Firstly, there is ample evidence that—just as physical exercise, for example, results in muscle fitness—the practice of mindfulness builds another set of capacities sustained by regular practice (Lazar et al., 2006; Shapiro, 1992a; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Zajonc, 2006a). Further, growing evidence that quantitative research holds

huge potential for learning more about the neurophysiological processes of mindfulness meditation and the benefits of its long-term practice on the brain (Davis & Hayes, 2011), is forging new relationships between cognitive and contemplative research (Zajonc, 2014). For instance, Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) are among many reporting that research on neuroplasticity is beginning to explain relationships among length and quality of mindfulness practice and the developmental stages of meditants.

The nature of this study of seminaria is not to seek quantitative evidence in this way but rather to explore its contemplative¹⁸ potential. An important rationale for locating seminaria in the field of mindfulness, I maintain, is the congruence of its fit—as I found in the following ways. These include its:

- focus in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)
- contemplative quality (Hanh, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2009; Zajonc, 2009)
- cognitive elements, viz. engagement, production and novelty seeking (Langer, 2009)
- intentionality (Williams, 2012)
- cultivation and practice involves both movement and stillness, (see 2.2.1) as well as
- ‘presencing’ capacity (Brown, 2005; Scharmer, 2009; Senge et al., 2005).

Whilst these six characteristics of seminaria indicate fit for a mindfulness framework, it would be the later descriptions of participants at an exploratory teaching workshop on seminaria (see 1.1.3), as well as my own ongoing observations of its potency within an established contemplative practice, that would reinforce its authenticity as ‘the mindfulness of seminaria.’ Exploring its potential as a useful practice, I found the simplicity of William Glasser’s criteria for a disciplined practice to support individual human growth congruent with what I had so far found with TMoS.¹⁹ Six key requirements are usually necessary, namely that the practice is:

- easy to do without requiring much mental effort
- noncompetitive and done mostly alone
- a practice that doesn’t rely on others

¹⁸ Contemplation, from the Latin, ‘contemplatio,’ involving or given to deep silent prayer or meditation, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>

¹⁹ William Glasser (1925–2013): prominent psychiatrist and author (William Glasser Institute—US, 2018).

- done regularly about an hour each day or twice daily in equal measure
- done without inordinate self-criticism or comparison to another's progress
- something the practitioner believes will improve her or his mental or physical state, and
- should help build self-sufficiency.

The relevance of the mindfulness of seminaria is now explored in depth below, as well as later, with reference to the literature, in Chapter two. The general rationale for mindfulness, however, is exemplified by Harvard research psychologists Killingsworth and Gilbert (Bradt, 2010), who found in their 2010 study (N=2,250) that people commonly spend almost 47 per cent of their time thinking about past and future events and those that may never happen. Mind wandering, they claim, typically makes humans unhappy and appears to be the human brain's default mode of operation.

A human mind is a wandering mind, and a wandering mind [can be] an unhappy mind. . . The ability to think about what is not happening is a cognitive achievement that comes at an emotional cost (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010, n. p.).

Therefore, mindfulness in the context of this study about teachers' personal–professional reflective practice I contextualise and explain in 1.1.4 following this rationale of seminaria as a mindfulness practice.

1.1.3 Seminaria as a mindfulness practice

What is mindful, then, about the practice of seminaria? And how did seminaria become a mindfulness practice? These questions require the context of a brief return to the genesis of this work.

From my own introductory experience of seminaria, more 'epiphanous' than an 'Aha moment' (Frick, 1983; Vaccarino, Kavan, & Gendall, 2011), came the kind of question that would not leave me, and consequently became the quest-like focus of my contemplative inquiry. As a still, small voice within, its 'aria' sang of a purpose that needed heeding: Might the potency and potential I felt from engaging with this poetic form possibly provide a purposeful practice for others? Considering this question as a doctoral proposition for teachers, it felt 'alive' with possibility (despite my rational mind's reservation). Curiously, too, with clarity of hindsight, it was as though the stream of circumstances leading to that point had been 'joining the dots,' building context, marking time for the mindfulness of seminaria to announce its arrival as described.

To determine its research worthiness (Tracy, 2010) and my capacity to carry it, I knew I must first explore seminaria with others. Would they sense the same energetic ‘spark’ I had discovered by employing it as a daily mindfulness practice? Fortuitously, I was invited to facilitate three conference workshops with an art and conversation focus, enabling me to teach and explore seminaria with fifteen men and women of whom a third were teachers. After three 90-minute sessions spread over three successive days, I was somewhat able to gauge its effects. Shared reviews of the experience reinforced my observations. Feedback matched well the criteria listed above. That is, while focused mindfully with the writing of, and reflecting on, seminaria—whether in groups, pairs, or individually—the experience was commonly described as mindful, helpful, and contemplative.

The workshop participants’ feedback, despite the brevity of their lived experience (Moustakas, 1990; van Manen, 1990), reinforced my resolve to explore the phenomenon of seminaria formally at postgraduate level. I heard their resonance of topic worthiness, credibility and meaningfulness (Tracy, 2010). In terms of seminaria’s mindfulness they provided sufficient anecdotal evidence that compared well with Kabat-Zinn’s (2003, p. 145) landmark mindfulness definition, ‘paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally.’ However, Gause and Coholic (2010, p. 5) argue that this stream of mindfulness has been operationalized as a cognitive behavioural intervention. They question (p. 9) whether mindfulness practice can be sustained long-term without recourse to a holistic philosophy. Exemplifying differences between the clinical/cognitive and contemplative forms of mindfulness, they argue:

Mindfulness within a cognitive-behavioural framework is operationally defined, and the processes involved are broken down and measured for specific outcomes, [whereas] . . . a holistic mindfulness might be more creative, attuned to people’s specific needs/goals, and open to discourse that is spiritual/holistic and existential [and] . . . helping people to make meaning of their life situations (p. 17).

With regard to Gause and Coholic’s question, I discovered over time that seminaria seems to provide a holistic framework for the three key axioms of mindfulness: attention, attitude, and intention (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). The concept of containing is based on Jung’s (1946/1969) idea used in therapeutic settings, that the process can be likened to an alchemical container in which the ‘chemicals’ are the thoughts and feelings which have to be held safely. Thus contained, I began to explore the possibility and gradually to appreciate the fit of these three key axioms expressed as three domains of human functioning (indicated albeit in different words, in Figure 1). These three domains are: focused cognition, emotional or affective intelligence, and volitional will (more commonly known perhaps, as thinking, feeling and doing; idiomatically—head,

heart and hand). Clearly, teachers and leaders are challenged to operate effectively in all three domains. Yet since The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adoption of The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000, standardisation and comparability have seen countries compete for position in the league tables, increasing pressure on teachers and students. A plea for Pestalozzi's (1746–1827) threefold ideal to be taken up anew (Heinz-Dieter Meyer, cited in Jürgens, 2016), argues that achieving harmony between head, heart and hands would instead enhance students' concentration capacity, overcome their sense of isolation, and reduce conflict. Examinations, he contended, could then be about applying what has been learnt in a reliable way in each of the three domains. While Meyer here is addressing student need, I argue that the harmony he seeks to achieve is equally vital for their teachers and leaders (Albrecht, Albrecht, & Cohen, 2012; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013; Wylie, 2014).

The way in which seminaria mindfulness incorporates all three domains is that it requires the focusing of an idea to be expressed in words; then, the emotional response to its content connects cognitive and affective processing; and thirdly, the active will is in the written documenting, especially the decision and action of the fourth line (see 1.1.1 for Linde's explanation). The reflecting by rereading a seminaria in reversed line sequence, from the bottom line up (in syllable order: 2, 2, 3, 3, 5, 5, 7), further brings the will into play when acting upon any realisations inspired by the seminaria themselves.

Thus, I found seminaria to be a new, minimalist mindfulness practice whose origin is the 27-year old legacy of Jens-Peter Linde's (1989) poetic 'Seminar Form.' Strengthened this far in my quest to understand how seminaria and mindfulness merge in a contemplative and living way that justifies the title: *The mindfulness of seminaria*, and having laid out the path I took to arrive at this point, I now provide 'guideposts' to the next part of this inquiry. Rounding the next corner reveals the relevance of what I have learned so far about seminaria mindfulness as a potential practice for teachers and leaders.

1.1.4 Why this study is located in teaching and its leadership

At a personal level, this is my field. My love for teaching and learning, and interest in the qualities of effective leadership—informed by some understanding of the issues the profession is currently experiencing—mean I care. I am motivated to contribute.

Foundational for this thesis, then, are the three questions posed in the introduction to this chapter. In addressing the second, Why is this study located in teaching and its leadership?, it is important to point out that evidence, though small, is growing for the potential efficacy of mindfulness-based practices for teacher wellbeing (Albrecht, 2016; Kwon, 2015; Oxford Mindfulness Centre, 2018; Weare, 2014). The corollary is stark.

Worldwide, it is accepted that teaching is a stressful profession (Bullough, 2011; Cefai & Cavioni, 2014; Marshall, 2013). Burnout is the result of unmitigated chronic workplace stress (Borg & Riding, 1991; Fischer, 2011; Kyriacou, 2001; Laughlin, 1984). Job dissatisfaction and teacher absenteeism are two commonly cited negative social outcomes of stress (Bowers 2001; Hall, Altman, Nkomo, Peltzer, & Zuma, 2005; Whitehead, 2001; Wylie, 2008). Without a sense of thriving in their chosen career, teachers experience greater difficulty coping with their employment responsibilities and their mental and physical health. For example, more than 39 per cent of New Zealand teachers report teaching to be stressful or extremely stressful (Beckley, 2011); the New Zealand attrition rate is 37 per cent by their fourth year of teaching (Secondary Teacher Supply Working Group, 2016; see also Bernay, 2012) and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) findings on a range of measures such as managing workload stress and slipping morale, suggest primary and intermediate teachers and principals are stretched too thin on the job (Wylie, 2014). In Australia, the attrition rate for teachers is 25–40 per cent within their fifth year of starting, while statistics of teacher suicide in the United Kingdom (Knowsley, 2012; Save Our Schools NZ, 2014) are reported to be approximately 40 per cent higher than for all other professions.

Therefore, changes towards embodying wholeness, I contend, are overdue. Changes that seek to renormalize the inclusion of a holistic model in the workplace are vital. These include challenging the ideology of managerialist performativity (Ball, 2003, p. 216) that governs teacher workload stress (Ballard, 2007; Codd, 2005; Neyland, 2010; Snook, 2003; Sullivan, 1994, 1998; Wylie, 2014). However, notably, despite and perhaps even because of the neoliberal business model retained by successive governments, teachers increasingly are taking individual steps themselves to de-stress body, soul and mind (Jennings, Roeser, & Lantieri, 2012; Roeser et al., 2013).²⁰

²⁰ Neoliberalism is a widely used term to refer to a theory, a set of ideas, a political strategy, or a historical period: see, for instance, Risager (2016). For neoliberalism in the context of the New Zealand education sector, see Harris (2017, p.61): 'A new approach to the economy [affecting education policy] requires not only an account of values (such as care,

One such approach is mindfulness and mindfulness as meditation, essentially self-development (the ancient maxim, ‘Know yourself!’) through contemplative inquiry, which may be variously considered by those who practise it—or indeed other forms of mindfulness meditation—as secular or religious or spiritual or philosophical—or of irrelevance to define (Beach, 2014). Though mindfulness has its origins in contemplative practices that go back thousands of years, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Stoicism, some of these are religious traditions, and some are not (Beach, 2014). No one tradition has a monopoly on the human condition.

Whether mindfulness is approached primarily outwardly through activity—which may include various artistic activity—or inwardly (through the centring stillness of sitting meditation), long-term practice is known to provide a synthesis of experience and thresholds to cross as each incremental step in progress is made (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Zajonc, 2010a; Lowndes, 2000), noting that the process is not a linear progression for everyone (L. Burrows, April 19, 2017, personal communication).

As research in the field of mindfulness meditation has burgeoned during the last two to three decades (Baer, 2013; Black, 2014; Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Dryden & Still, 2006), particularly in the mind sciences (Wallace, 2012), both mindfulness practice and research into its effects is increasingly being taken up in education (Arthurson, 2015; Burrows, 2011; Jennings et al., 2012). In fact, a focus on mindfulness in education has grown internationally in the last decade (Albrecht et al., 2012; Black, 2014; Black, Milam, & Sussman, 2009). To date, most of the research in this area, however, has focused on assessing the efficacy of school-based mindfulness programmes on student populations (Burke, 2010). This fact leads to the third question asked above (see 1.1 above), namely: *How* will the mindfulness of seminaria scholarship inform the literature? Addressing this question also underscores this study’s originality and significance.

community and creativity), but also a strong narrative about who or what can deliver these values.’ See also Kelsey (2017) and Neyland (2004).

1.2 Heuristic inquiry as the optimum design choice for the research question

In this chapter of introductions, I now introduce the research design's suitability for the research question (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kleining & Witt, 2000), thus providing a biographical and preliminary pointer toward Chapter three wherein my methodology is addressed in detail.

'Heuristic inquiry,' the scientific method (Hiles, 2001a) I chose for this study, aims through self-inquiry and dialogue with others to find the underlying meanings of important human experiences (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). In heuristic research the investigator must have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. A question of personal challenge and puzzlement can become quest-like and as with virtually every question that matters personally, there is also a social and, perhaps, universal significance.

What is the nature and being of seminaria? The challenge of this question (since March, 2013) had become my quest. In its gradual unfolding, the question evolved. Through the contemplative relationship I had with it and as a result of the participant workshops near the end of that same year, my question evolved to become: What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice?

Recognising that every relationship to its practice would reflect the individuality of the person learning to engage with it, I also knew that the initial recruitment interview with applicants would require discernment, to identify those with depth of integrity regarding their established contemplative practice into which they would add the newly learned art of seminaria that I would teach them.

Briefly, then, as a preparatory glance at my road map, once there were voluntary participants attracted to join the study as independent co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994; Hiles, 2001a), my aim at our first meeting was to:

- Survey each participant's relationship to their own mindfulness practice/s as a basis for recruitment (Appendix D); and once affirmed,
- Teach them the mindfulness of seminaria (Appendix E).

Following their induction and three-week practice of seminaria, I planned to:

- Examine each participant's relationship to the practice of seminaria mindfulness
- Understand their essential lived experience of seminaria
- Identify any practice or theory of seminaria that indicated potential value for others.

In broad terms, heuristic inquiry is an integrative alternative to the positivist tradition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3).²¹ Recognised as one of a number of transpersonal research methods for the social sciences, heuristic inquiry honours human experience (Braud & Anderson, 1998) as a way of being informed, a way of knowing (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10).

In previous studies I had drawn, as had Moustakas (1990), on the work of Michael Polanyi (1966) with regard to his patterned structures of tacit knowing. Now in my review of literature on heuristic inquiry as a possible methodological 'fit' for my research question, it was Douglass and Moustakas (1985) who provided further philosophical, ideological links to the tacit dimension of heuristic inquiry by outlining the visionary, artistic and aesthetic elements of consciousness that, in combination with the clues of cognition, enable a more holistic comprehension of human experience. Their rationale, coherent with that of Coholic (2014, 2016), aligned with my own search to make sense of the 'presencing power' that I experienced through the mindful practice of this particular poetic form, seminaria.²² I discovered that when it was used in a contemplative, exploratory and/or reflective manner, seminaria held potential for a different sense of connectedness—whether with self, other, the natural environment or something sensed as greater than the everyday human dimension (Fisher, Francis, & Johnson, 2002; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2011; Vaccarino, Kavan, & Gendall, 2011). I questioned, therefore, whether others might sense something similar.

An extensive literature review of heuristic inquiry revealed its integral character (Anderson, 1998; Casterline, 2009; Clements, 2004; Hiles, 2001a, 2008; Moustakas, 1990, 1994), and affirmed for me its 21st-century locus within social science research. I recognised that heuristic inquiry was designed

²¹ Positivism, as derived from the the work of Auguste Comte, argues for social theory to be built in a rigid, linear quantitatively factual way (Hewitt, 2008).

²² By 'presencing power' I mean the arrival of energy sensed and felt in the body and affirmed by the mind's knowing, such as may be known in response to the question used by Vaccarino, Kavan, and Gendall (2011, pp. 88–89), 'Do you feel you have ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?'

to provide researchers challenged by the sort of phenomenological conundrum I was facing with the ‘thinking and linking’ to the tenets of other transpersonal methods of inquiry. For example, heuristic inquiry validates as research evidence the symbolic growth experience (SGE) (Frick, 1983), frisson (Goldstein, 1980; Colver & El-Alayli, 2016) and peak experience (Maslow, 1964) consistent with being ‘in the flow’ or ‘the zone’ (Csíkszentmihályi, 1996)—all of which, I gratefully contend, continue to be autobiographically compass directing.

The body is closer to an all-encompassing level of consciousness than the intellect. The intellect limits, it segments reality into partial aspects, with which it concerns itself, one by one. The body, on the other hand, can open itself to wholeness . . . as a vehicle into the trans-mental space of consciousness . . . we have forgotten this spiritual power of the body. The body is always the base. It is in a way the vessel, in which the encounter with the godly truth is held (Jäger, 2008, p. 128).

In fact, it was just such a physiological sign (Vaccarino, Kavan, & Gendall, 2011) that prompted me to walk across Northern Spain in 2012 without knowing why. Comfortable in the ‘not knowing’ (Cox, 2008), the purpose surfaced on the 29th (and final) day as I was descending, dusty, into Santiago. The message, clearly and simply, was ‘*This pilgrimage is a metaphor for your next thesis.*’ At that point, the words ‘heuristic’ and ‘seminaria’ I knew not, let alone their respective, powerful purpose. Although, as a researcher, I was aware of Clark Moustakas’s name as an integral researcher, his methodological approach I was yet to appreciate as an ‘insider.’

Concerned with meanings, essence, quality and experience, the word heuristic itself derives from the Greek *heuriskein*, ‘to find,’ ‘to discover’ or ‘serving to find out,’ evocative of an ‘Aha’ moment or frisson event experienced when the mind is consciously recognising physiological and often subtle changes in the body’s sensorial mechanism/system. The latter occurred when I was introduced to seminar form early on the first morning of a meditation course, by one of the other participants, a music teacher who, tiptoeing from her room lest she disturb other guests, found me doing the same. Stifling our shared mirth at the synchronicity of our timing, I turned on the light and she proceeded to show me her work with seminar form. I knew at that point that I was being challenged to understand it phenomenologically. Thus, quite independent of the course content with which we were engaged during the day, the significance of seminaria had made itself known to me in that ‘still, small, inner voice’ way. From this moment was forged a relationship of exploration. My early morning mindfulness practice included the daily writing of a research journal and a cautious review of mindfulness literature before I would heed the inner calling to investigate the topic formally and in depth, through a doctoral research pathway.

The result of my eighteen-month informal investigation indicated the potential for seminaria to be of service to others. How, and under what conditions, I became increasingly interested to investigate. I also knew that realistically it would not necessarily have universal appeal. While language is our greatest cultural heritage and birthright, not everyone is interested in the 'word smithing' required for poetry. But my question now had currency. It had moved, from being just my lived experience, to that of other people. Increasingly, I asked myself: What would other teachers and educational leaders find, should they take up the mindfulness of seminaria as a daily exercise practised over an extended period? Fired with the flame to investigate more deeply, a formal study proposal was prepared, presented and accepted by the (then) Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law at Flinders University, South Australia.

At this point my formal heuristic inquiry began, while recognising I had been informally exploring the question heuristically since its inception. Just as each seminaria had been a tiny diamond container in its own right during my exploration to determine its veracity for this present study,²³ now heuristic inquiry as a process became a larger 'container' for my investigation to ascertain whether there would be any evidence of generalisability/transferability of seminaria's mindfulness potential for other teachers' reflective practice. In other words, whilst each seminaria had been a microlevel container for my own researching of this poetic process with words, meaning and tacit knowing, I now felt that heuristic inquiry (recognised as a well-researched approach) would enable me to lift the inquiry to a more expansive, macrolevel with others. As the optimum methodological choice for my research question, heuristic inquiry would provide an albergue-of-a-container in which (as primary researcher) I could reside holistically and creatively, critically and discerningly as I set out to explore the research terrain.²⁴ My notion of containment is one of holding and boundarying based on Jung's (1946/1969) idea. It defines the sense I had of 'at-one-ment' with the heuristic phases (Hiles, 2001a) and of my internal search to know (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985).

²³ 'Diamond' refers to the written shape of the poem caused by the prescribed number of syllables per line and the meaning therein that may be considered in the Jungian context (1.1.3).

²⁴ 'Albergue': a pilgrims' shelter or hostel, from which no genuine pilgrim-in-need (it is said), is ever turned away.

Research as pilgrimage

Once the research question is clearly defined, the authentic heuristic inquirer must ‘live the question’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28; Rilke, as cited in Popova, 2012).²⁵ Everything becomes crystallised around it with sustained focus and concentration. Drawing on the inner life as well as outer circumstances in pursuit of a solution to the central question, all that constitutes life experience, its interiority and exteriority is factored into the quest. Dreams, organic growth experience (OGE), frisson, synchronicities, intuition—are all a part of the holistic, heuristic process of enquiry towards deeper layers of discovery (Frick, 1990; Hiles, 2001a, 2008; Moustakas, 1990, 1994). Equally, physical phenomena are examined for their integral value. The research path becomes akin to a pilgrimage, in that, according to Richard Niebuhr (1984, p. 7), ‘Pilgrims are persons in motion . . . seeking something we might call completion, or perhaps the word clarity will do as well, a goal to which only the spirit’s compass points the way.’ His last phrase mirrors my experience to a degree. Trustful of my inner compass, calibrated by the Camino, I felt encouraged setting out into the terrain of this new research territory.

1.3 The organisation of this thesis as pilgrimage through six heuristic inquiry stages

This thesis, then, is structured as a pilgrimage (Blackwell, 2007; Bolen, 1994; Coleman & Eade, 2004; Denford-Wood, 2012; Hyndman-Rizk, 2012; Hannaford, 2001; Niebuhr, 1984; Ross, 2011; Rufin, 2016; Schnell & Pali (2013); Turner & Turner, 1978), synchronous with the methodological design of heuristic inquiry as outlined in this chapter.

The pilgrimage metaphor, according to extensive scholarly literature (Ross, 2011; Schnell, 2009; 2011; Schnell & Pali, 2013), differs from that of the archetypal journey in that the former is commonly defined as being motivated by inner meaning. Making a pilgrimage to a sacred place as an act of devotion, for instance, is a meaningful human activity that spans centuries. That the area

²⁵ In *Letters to a Young Poet*, Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) makes a case for the importance of living the questions, embracing uncertainty, and allowing for intuition. In 1903, to his protégé, Kappus, Rilke writes: ‘I want to beg you, as much as I can . . . to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually . . . live along some distant day into the answer’ (Rilke, as cited in Popova, 2012).

between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea is universally still known as The Holy Lands is, in part, due to its focal point for pilgrimages of the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Traditional pilgrimage narratives though, include all the great religions of the world and in this relatively secularised 21st century, the implicit religiosity of pilgrimage (Schnell, 2003) has become more broadly defined as ‘a search of significance.’²⁶

A search of significance (for those wearing a ‘heuristic hat’), goes beyond the vague intrigue of the tourist, the digital lens of a casual photographer, or the gourmand’s ‘gastronomical urge.’ What defines a search to be ‘of significance,’ I argue, is its meaning-making potential—that which Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2011), for example, originators of *The map of meaning*, would define in any or all of the quadrants of their holistic development model (p. 221): developing the inner self; expressing full potential; unity with others and service to others. I argue here, too, for the importance of trust in the unknown. That is, being motivated by inner/tacit meaning that has not yet surfaced into concrete experiential meaning (Denford-Wood, 2012).

Schnell and Pali (2013, p. 888), from their study of 85 Camino pilgrims (my path three years ago), found the majority were individuals who had suffered a crisis of meaning and thereby were pilgrimage-motivated by their ‘need for clarification.’ From an anecdotal perspective, that too, was my experience of the many I engaged with en route. Whether these pilgrims were travelling either ‘explicitly for religious reasons (conviction) or in search of clarification (quest),’ they either draw motivation, Schnell contends, from vertical transcendence (religiosity or spirituality) or from apparently purely secular reasons, such as athletic challenge (p. 888).

Affirming my own experience and that of others I met along *the way*, the data from the entire sample of Schnell and Pali’s (2013) study support the meaning-making potential of pilgrimage. That

²⁶ ‘Secular,’ origin Middle English, from Old French ‘seculer,’ from Latin ‘saecularis/saeculum,’ meaning generation or age. Used in Christian Latin to mean the world (as opposed to the church) (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>). ‘Secularism’ is a principle that involves two basic propositions: 1) the strict separation of the state from religious institutions; 2) that people of different religions and beliefs are equal before the law and parliament. No religious or political affiliation gives advantages or disadvantages and religious believers are citizens with the same rights and obligations as anyone else. Secularism champions human rights above discriminatory religious demands. It upholds equality laws that protect women, LGBT people and minorities. These equality laws ensure that non-believers have the same rights as those who identify with a religious or philosophical belief (<http://www.secularism.org.uk>). ‘Implicit religiosity’ covers the beliefs, acts and experiences associated with personalised avenues to the sacred, characterised by a commitment to ultimately meaningful concerns with sacred character, attributed by an individual (Schnell, 2009, 2011).

is, following their pilgrimage, participants reported strengthened commitment to vertical self-transcendence,²⁷ horizontal self-transcendence and self-actualisation. Notably, these changes occurred independently of each participant's original motivation for their pilgrimage. After the journey, as well as four months later, pilgrims were found to be experiencing life as significantly more meaningful, and their crises of meaning were overcome.

Pilgrimage in Jungian terms, is an expression of and an effort to circumambulate the Self, to 'quicken the Divinity' by bringing the Self within us to life. Whether we call that part of us that seeks pilgrimage the soul or that part that seeks individuation the psyche, the meaning is the same and the goal is healing, wholeness, and transformation (Bolen, 1994, p. 248).

None of these commonly reported motivations tallies with the reason for my pilgrimage that underpins this study. Whilst retrospectively the above are recognisable elements of its *effect*, they were not the motivations for my setting out in the first place. On the other hand, Marlee Ross (2011) in *The way of the pilgrim* exemplifies my experience perfectly:

The first deep listening practice is to hear the calling to embark, whether this call is a persistent, urgent calling, or a barely perceptible whisper. The art of the practice of listening is in understanding that the calling is a profound invitation to a journey of meaning that needs to be made, and that cannot be turned away from. This listening to a question embedded in the calling, in the longing, begins the cultivation of inquiry so necessary in pilgrimage (p. 36).

Reviewing the breadth of growing pilgrimage literature, from the fields of traditional religious studies to the anthropological arguments about mobility, locality and belonging, highlights a need for the continuing reframing of pilgrimage theory. Popularity of pilgrimage is growing, in an age of globalisation, commensurate with the mobility of populations and cultural opportunity. In this sense, Coleman and Eade's (2004, p. i) definition of pilgrimage as 'a form of voluntary displacement which constitutes cultural meaning in a world constantly en route,' I contend, is apt.²⁸

Thus, my choice of a pilgrimage narrative for this heuristic inquiry into the mindfulness of seminaria hopefully will have become increasingly clear to the reader during the recounting of the first

²⁷ 'Self-transcendence' (*Vertical*: explicit religiosity; spirituality; *Horizontal*: social commitment, unison with nature, self-knowledge, health, generativity); 'Self-actualisation' (challenge, individualism, power, development, achievement, freedom, knowledge, creativity) (Schnell, 2009).

²⁸ Here I pause again in gratitude for my privileged pilgrimage. Whilst scholars of pilgrimage, on the one hand, debate elements of self-actualisation (Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Maslow, 1964; Schnell, 2009), there is a vast gulf at the heart of our humanity, on the other, with hundreds of thousands, if not millions of refugees fleeing from their war-torn homelands in search of a meaningful new life. Their pilgrimages, to find safety and, for their children, a more hopeful and secure future, locates these pilgrimages at the *base* of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and thereby, at the growing heart of humankind's concern for social justice.

heuristic phase, initial engagement, then subsequently through each phase of the heuristic inquiry as I tell the story of seminaria's evolving scholarship. For this reason, I now table Moustakas' (1990) landmark work influenced by the philosophies of Gendlin and Polanyi (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 7–8), and expanded here, after Conlan (2004, p. 130).

1.4 Introducing Moustakas' six heuristic stages; identifying their tasks

Table 1. Six stages of heuristic inquiry

Stage or phase	Heuristic Inquiry Descriptor
Initial engagement	Task: To discover an intense interest that calls out to the researcher that holds important social meaning and personally compelling implications. An emerging research question lingers with the researcher, awaiting disciplined commitment that will reveal its underlying meanings.
Immersion	Task: To take on and live the research question in waking, sleeping—even dream states. This requires alertness, concentration and inner search. Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion.
Incubation	Task: To retreat from the intense question focus, let it go, give it up and allow the inner tacit dimension to expand the knowledge that is coalescing. Polanyi (1969, pp. 131–132), Scharmer (2009), and van Houten (1995, 2000), too, cite this important step in the creative process requiring patience and trust.
Illumination	Task: To allow for a breakthrough, an awakening process that occurs naturally when the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p. 266). This stage may involve: modifying an old understanding; correcting distorted understandings; disclosure of hidden meanings; synthesis of fragmented knowledge; or an altogether new discovery of something that has been present for some time yet beyond immediate awareness. Illumination, as its name suggests, opens the door to a new awareness, a process Moustakas (1990, p. 30) argues has been continually recognised in scientific research discovery.
Explication	Task: To examine fully what has awakened in consciousness in order to understand its various layers of meaning. It requires a researcher to attend to one's own awareness, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgements preparatory to understanding what is derived from conversations and dialogues with others. Focusing and indwelling are two inner conditions for discovering nuances, textures, and constituents of the phenomenon to be elucidated into a whole experience. Organisation, the comprehensive depiction of core themes, is vital.
Creative synthesis	Task: To be thoroughly familiar with the depictions and knowledge that illuminate and explicate the question; and following a preparatory phase of contemplation, to put the components and core themes into the form of a creative synthesis—a narrative, verbatim examples, or condensed further into a poem, story, drawing, painting or other creative form such as Yin Mei's (2014) <i>DIS/oriented: I dance to keep things whole</i> .

These stages as tabled have become chapter themes for this thesis—accounting for how, with a recommended number of independent participants, the mindfulness of seminaria (TMoS) is investigated. Hence, the next chapter reflects a period of immersion in the relevant literature.

Chapter two Literature review

Locating the Untrodden Path, finding my 'Songline'

2.1 Introduction

The central purpose of this chapter is to review the literature germane to the mindfulness of seminaria. In preparation, I introduce three features of this chapter: the heuristic perspective, the change of author voice, and the pertinent fields of literature.

The first heuristic inquiry phase, 'initial engagement,' characterised by the introductory nature of the previous chapter, transitions now into 'immersion,' not only with the research question but in the process of investigating the fields of literature that serve to refine the question (as outlined in 1.1 and in step with the notion of pilgrimage (1.2). Immersion consequently continues into the next chapter, until it is contained by the third phase, 'incubation.' Thus, as mentioned, the six heuristic phases run thematically through this thesis.

Second, in this chapter the first-person pilgrimage voice comes and goes, engaging with the reader from time to time as pilgrims might meet en route to consult a map. As the chapter's subtitle suggests, by locating and minding the gaps I am seeking my 'songline.'²⁹ Otherwise, the relatively distanced third-person voice is used while I intentionally step back from my experience and identity for the purpose of analysis. which I regard as the appropriate stance from which to examine the relevant and interdisciplinary fields of literature.

Third, worldwide, the practice of mindfulness is shown to be increasing exponentially (Albrecht et al., 2012; AMRA, 2018; Black, 2015). This literature review outlines some of its core concepts and applications, including evidence of its benefits in education. Following deep consideration of the literature over time, an analysis of the theoretical bases of contemporary mindfulness practices reveals that it appears to fall into two broad streams; the cognitive (Langer, 2005; 2009), and the

²⁹ In Australian Aboriginal lore, a songline is a route through the landscape travelled during the Dreamtime (Alcheringa) which features a series of landmarks thought to relate to events that happened during this time (Mingren, 2016). I use 'songline' metaphorically to connote my identification with the energy or essence of *The Way*, and my future work emerging to meet me at the end, in the way that Chatwin (1998, p. 287) concludes that a 'songline' is synonymous with having one's identity intact.

contemplative self-development stream (Ditrich, 2017; Hanh, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2009a; Zajonc, 2009; 2016). I will draw from an ever-expanding research field of mindfulness, and from the literature specific to teachers as reflective practitioners, in order to refine the focus for this inquiry. The scholarship of seminaria as poetic form is explained (with reference to its primary, and only available source of literature), and finally argued in a sociopoetic context.

Introduction to the literature through heuristic stages of inquiry

The first stage of my inquiry led to engaging with the literature. Initial engagement then, the first phase (1.3), is the discovery of an intense interest that calls out to the researcher and which holds important social meaning and personal compelling implications (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). My lived experience of this first phase was elaborated in the Prelude. Having disclosed the circumstances of my initial engagement with seminaria, it was the spark of its essential substance that caught my interest. From the emerging question, ‘What is the nature and being of seminaria?’, my concentrated focus with it became the ‘centre of my world’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 45), evolving into a daily mindfulness practice, extending the question to, ‘What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice?’ And from thence to one of transferability: ‘Would other teachers and leaders discover anything of value from engaging with it?’

I posit here that the heuristic researcher’s process is itself one of mindfulness: of paying attention to the different parts of the journey, the different phases, forms of knowing and writing, relating and situating the study within the fields of relevant literature. The literature is discussed in relation to the timing of my investigation and the key themes involved.

Everything in . . . life becomes crystallized around the question. The immersion process enables the researcher to come to be on intimate terms with the question—to live it and grow in knowledge and understanding of it (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28).

As my central question evolved ontologically, a discerning first step in determining whether my early glimpses of ‘underlying meanings’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15) might contribute to knowledge was to continue scrutinising the fields of literature relevant to this study.

When stones
Speak stellar
Language that you hear
As signposts on your life’s path
Mindfulness has made

Its presence
Conscious.

Therefore, three principle threads of literature are germane to this study: mindfulness, teachers' reflective practice, and self-written poetry as research. Each is now reviewed in turn, and any additional strands within each of these three threads provide further specificity. This chapter is structured by tying together these three relevant fields to show the current trends and gaps. From what is contested and what we yet don't know, this present study, 'the mindfulness of seminaria,' seeks to add to new knowledge.

2.2 Mindfulness research—The literature

In the field of mindfulness research—burgeoning, as Figure 6 below, shows—the initial applications in medicine and psychology have been advancing into other discourses including education. David Black (2014), a mindfulness researcher and founder of a school-based mindfulness program in the USA, publishes a monthly report of peer-reviewed journal articles on mindfulness. In his words, he is dedicated to providing, as an educational resource, information that is evidence based and relevant, to streamline the field of mindfulness literature 'as a research dissemination effort.'

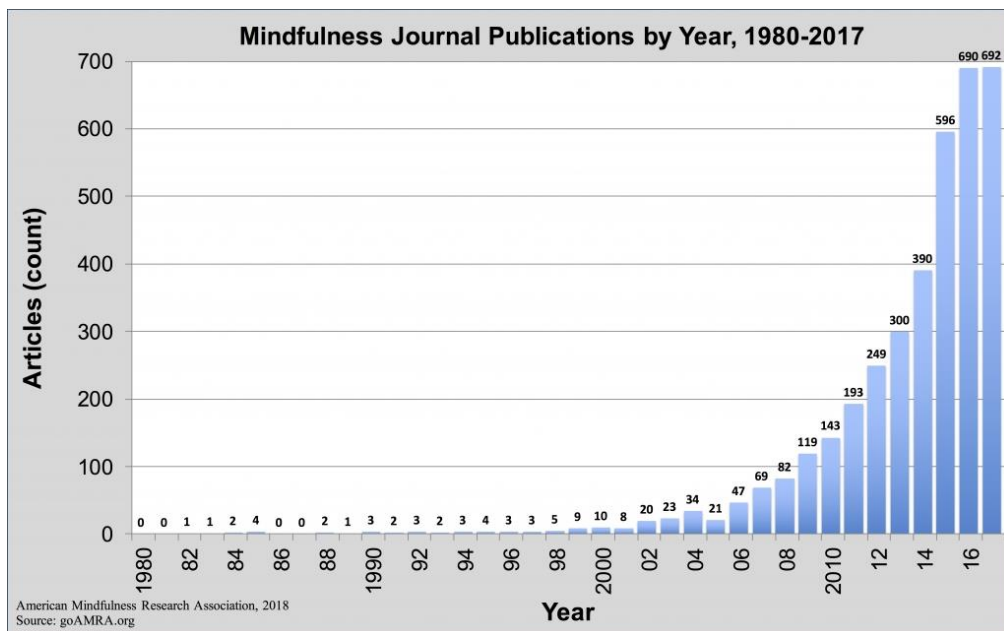


Figure 6. Annual mindfulness research publications, from zero in 1980–81 to 692 in 2017

Articles that focus on the effects of classroom teachers' and school leaders' experiences of mindfulness meditation practices, however, are set in the context of school mindfulness programs.

Whilst Black's resourcefulness continues, via the American Mindfulness Research Association (AMRA), to provide an excellent overview of the field of mindfulness research, the focus of this present study is not school based. Rather, it is the personal–professional mindfulness practices that teachers and their leaders adopt outside of and separate from their teaching interactions.

Research in the area of teacher participation in mindfulness training is, as yet, in its infancy, according to a 2012 literature review published by Albrecht et al. (2012, p. 2). Moreover, their scrutiny highlights that most studies to date have been directed toward understanding the impact of mindfulness on student populations. Further, because most of these studies have used a quantitative approach and a range of mindfulness scales (Ragay & Bystrisky 2009), it is argued (Burrows, 2013; Grossman & van Dam, 2011; Sauer et al., 2013), that new qualitative approaches to studies are required in order to reveal more subtle, refined and nuanced participant voices.

This investigation into teachers' and their leaders' use of 'seminaria' meets that criterion. Although a web search of the words 'seminar form poetry' produced 8.5 million results, investigation soon revealed the generic use of these three words denotes actual seminars on poetry writing and the like, totally unrelated to the scarcely known specific seminar form/seminaria that is the focus of this study. A search for studies approximating the design parameters of this one, gave a zero result, suggesting that there may well be a need for this type of research in teacher education and mindfulness inquiry, to address such gaps. It is important, before going into the heart of the matter, to address three foundational questions:

First, What is mindfulness? Second, Where did it originate? Third, How does one differentiate the various types and their applications/uses?

2.2.1 Mindfulness: A natural human capacity

A broad definition of everyday contemporary mindfulness sees it as a natural human capacity to:

- engage with life intentionally, affectively, and simultaneously with focused attention;
- maintain equilibrium, calm acceptance, compassion, and kindness (Sauer, Lynch, Walach, & Kohls, 2011);
- know what you are doing when you are doing it (Williams, 2012); it may be cultivated, applied and practised through movement or in stillness.

Mindfulness can be applied to everyday activities such as walking, studying, storytelling, cooking and eating (Albrecht et al., 2012; Burrows, 2013; Chai, 2013). By contrast, there is the apparent physical stillness of a contemplative (sitting) approach to mindfulness meditation as a path primarily of self-development (the ancient maxim *Know yourself!*) through, for example, an eight-fold path (Gunaratana, 2015; Lowndes, 2000; Dietz, 1999; Steiner, 1976).³⁰ Zajonc (2009) describes such a path as an inner schooling. In this spirit of learning, Oxford Mindfulness Centre director Willem Kuyken (2015) encourages us to ‘keep learning through our own mindfulness practice, training and the science. No one owns or has copyrighted the best way to understand, train and transform the mind. This work is invitational, empirical, participatory and democratic.’

Whether mindfulness is approached outwardly through activity or inwardly (in deep stillness), long-term practice, as already mentioned, is known to provide benefits (Williams and Kabat-Zinn 2011; Zajonc, 2010a; Lowndes, 2000). Therefore, in considering the mindfulness basis of this heuristic inquiry, it is important to examine the roots of mindfulness itself.

2.2.2 Mindfulness: Core concepts, history and context

Contemporary usage of the term ‘mindfulness’ has its roots in ancient Buddhist contemplative practices that outline a systematic form of training of the mind involving meditation. At the heart of its etymology is the Pali word ‘sati,’ meaning ‘memory,’ as used by Brahmins vis-à-vis their memorised Vedic scriptures. The effective recall of large bodies of text requires the attainment of clarity and presence, free of distractions, one of the states of being in developing what today is called ‘meditation’ (Gethin, 2011; Gunaratana, 1991, 2013; Sujato, 2011). It is believed that the Buddha adopted this Brahmanic usage, and used the word *sati* to refer to both ‘memory’ (of texts) and ‘presence of mind’ in meditation (Gunaratana, 2013).

Whilst some definitions of *sati* allude to ‘consciousness,’ rather than its direct translation ‘memory,’ I propose—in keeping with Gethin’s (2011) emphasis on *sati* as an active state of mind—that the word ‘re-membering’ is a more appropriate refinement (Latin: ‘re-’ meaning ‘again,’ + *memorare*, meaning ‘bringing to mind,’ used in its present participle verb form as distinct from the fixed

³⁰ The eight are: Right View; Right Intention; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Livelihood; Right Effort; Right Mindfulness; Right Concentration. Practical exercises are provided for schooling each faculty; practised one at a time, cyclically. Consciously develop control of one’s own thoughts and actions, equanimity of feelings, positivity and openness of mind and heart (The Center for Social Sustainability, 2010).

gerund). With its synonymous 're-collecting,' the term is evocative of 'connectedness' with the aforementioned state of 'consciousness,' that is, of unity and seeing, re-cognising and remembering representative parts that comprise a holistic paradigm (Denford-Wood, 2013a).

In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, two types of meditation are practised, both of which purportedly build mindfulness capacity (Gunaratana, 2013): samatha includes concentration to develop a quiet, peaceful frame of mind; and vipassana focuses on building skills of insight, clarity and awareness.

In contemporary literature there is agreement that three core axioms of mindfulness—intention, attention and attitude—engaged simultaneously (Bell, 2009; Brown and Ryan, 2003; Shapiro et al., 2006), match Kabat-Zinn's (1994, p.4) often-quoted definition, 'paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally'; yet, as Shapiro et al. (2006) argue, this tacit state of 'bare awareness' includes the possibility of polarity, meaning that an individual could observe with cool distance, even antipathy or from a position of 'innate stability where compassion, open-heartedness and peace for others and self, reside' (Albrecht et al., 2012; Zajonc, 2006a). In fact, Zajonc (2006b) embraces the latter as 'an epistemology of love' that he later articulates (2013b, p. 92) 'as the most profound form of knowing by identification.' Recognising parallels in Moustakas's (1990) heuristic phases of initial engagement and immersion—that is, in the coming to know something profoundly so that love becomes the way of knowing it (Zajonc, 2009) —was a determining factor in the choice of methodology for this study that was validated through freshly reviewing the primary literature (Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Douglass & Moustakas, 1985), substantial early secondary literature (Hiles, 2001a, 2008), and some subsequent secondary literature (Conlan, 2004), relevant to this present study. With Palmer and Zajonc's (2010) collaborations freshly reviewed and Zajonc's (2009) contemplative inquiry grounded into practice-based research (Denford-Wood, 2014b), I was able to briefly review this literature at the Mind and Life Institute's International Symposium for Contemplative Studies. Zajonc recognised in my research narrative that essence 'of knowing by identification' which he articulated as 'opening a door' (A. Zajonc, personal communication, October 31, 2014).³¹

³¹ The narrative of synchronicity by which, as revealed in the Prelude, seminarina appeared to find me, rather than I, it.

2.2.3 Mindfulness: Different approaches

Different approaches to mindfulness have grown out of generic mindfulness practices and have been developed to best fit the unique features of an increasingly larger number of clinical needs. These include, for example, the introduction at the end of the 1970s of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) for clinical settings (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990, 1994); an increasing number of interventions aimed at supporting practitioners to cultivate mindfulness in their daily life including, among others, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) (Ma & Teasdale, 2004), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), and mindfulness-based relapse prevention (Witkiewitz, Marlatt, & Walker, 2005); and dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) (Linehan, 1993), which combines mindfulness techniques from Zen meditation with principles of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), the first treatment with proven efficacy for borderline personality disorder (Linehan, Heard & Armstrong, 1993). Mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) (Chiesa, Calati and Serretti, 2010; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010) have shown efficacy for several mood and anxiety disorders.

Thus, in the last decade, increasing interest has been directed towards the empirical investigation of the concept and applications of mindfulness in both scientific and lay communities as a means of dealing with a large variety of physical and psychological disorders (Chiesa et al., 2010; Keng, Smoski, & Robbins, 2011). I discovered that inherent in some of these different mindfulness applications were elements or subskills that define their practice and evaluation. For example, the mindfulness attention awareness scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003); the mindfulness/mindlessness scale (Bodner & Langer, 2001); Baer, Smith and Allen's (2004) KIMS questionnaire, which was developed to measure a set of the subskills (observing, describing, acting with awareness and accepting without judgement); and a computer-based instrument, developed by Fan, McCandliss, Sommer, Raz, and Posner (2002), which measures three functions of attention: alerting, orienting and executive control. In reviewing the literature broadly so as to clearly orientate this study, I recognised that while others seek to measure and quantify mindfulness, that approach would not meet the needs of this specific study with its exploratory focus.

With ever more diverse applications of mindfulness being adopted, an inevitable result is that a common definition of mindfulness has become more elusive, and therefore necessarily generalised. My working definition of seminary mindfulness (Denford-Wood, 2016) incorporates the three core

mindfulness functions of intention (volitional will), attention (focused cognition), and attitude (openness, equanimity and positivity), simultaneously engaged. This state requires awareness characterised by a surrender to and acceptance of the happenings of the moment, a calm, sustained focus of attention inward (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Walsh & Shapiro, 2006; Zajonc, 2016), and, commensurate with heuristic inquiry, a heightened sensitivity with the ability to observe and name the contents of consciousness.

2.3 Mindfulness in teacher education—Overview and context

Two main types of mindfulness in education

Mindfulness in its present development in teacher education may be categorised broadly into two types,³² both of which employ concentration and awareness in the moment: contemplative (Hanh, 1987, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2009b; Oldmeadow, 2001; Zajonc, 2009); and cognitive (Langer, 1989, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2009), the latter comprising flexibility, engagement, novelty seeking and production. ‘Mindful learning,’ as Langer prefers to call the cognitive type of mindfulness, focuses strictly on the cognitive processes involved and the commensurate creativity that may, as a result, arise. Sensorial awareness in the present moment without involving contemplation or meditation is the way Bernay (2012) references Langer’s (2000) definition. A social psychologist, Langer (2000) contends that consciously noticing something new is enlivening and may be as much of a health benefit as the contemplative practice of meditation. Arguably, this novelty effect may not compare with the hard-won results of an eight-fold path through which wisdom, loving compassion, and peace supersede fear, hate, and doubt, which are common outcomes of chronic stress. For example, as Ditrich (2017) argues, diminishment of five human hindrances—(sensory cravings; ill will including hatred, annoyance, resentment, hostility, irritation and anger; slothfulness; restlessness and worry explained as agitation, unrest, distraction, remorse and anxiety; and doubt expressed in perplexity, hesitation, uncertainty and lack of trust) —is an indication that mindfulness and concentration have become fairly well established, and these, in turn, as the effects of one’s personal practice, are a precondition for wisdom and insight to occur. Hence, practising loving kindness and compassion, enhances the development of mindfulness and vice versa. From Buddhist, Rosicrucian and

³² The term ‘teacher education’ in this thesis is used generically to variously include pre-service and in-service teacher education; initial teacher education; and professional learning and development.

contemporary secular perspectives, increased kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity may be good indicators of progress in self-development, the positive effects of mindfulness meditation.

I concur with Bernay's argument (2012) for the applicability of both cognitive and contemplative forms of mindfulness in teacher education, based on the commonality of their goals, and his view that their difference is grounded in the word 'meditation.' His qualifier, though—'and related to one's personal beliefs' (p. 34) —it may be argued, is questionable. Meditation and 'belief' in this context are mutually exclusive, or at best incongruous, since epistemologically, one of the first requirements for mindfulness practice is open 'nonjudgemental awareness' (Albrecht et al., 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Zajonc, 2006a). *Ipsa facto*, tacit and implicit, is suspension of any position of 'belief.' In an epistemology of knowing, accessible through a mindfulness practice (which may include the discipline of an eight-fold path), notions of belief hold little store (Ditrich, 2017; Williams, 2012).

Though Buddhist mindfulness is taught as a nonsectarian practice in the West, some people choose to explore the religious underpinnings to deepen their understanding, although beliefs are neither required nor necessary to gain benefits (T. Ditrich, personal communication, September 6, 2014; Gunaratana, 2013). 'In the East they don't distinguish between the secular and the sacred, that's a Western invention really,' contends Williams (2012), who reports how Eastern and Western paradigms are bridged through the mutual appreciative inquiry that comes from working together with mindfulness and evidence-based science—education towards a shared knowing.

It is this sense of shared knowing to which Parker Palmer (1997, p. 1) refers in his 'reclaiming the sacred in knowing, teaching and learning.' Together with coauthor Arthur Zajonc (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010), they represent but two of a number of prominent educators who advocate expanding the inner landscape of the teacher through contemplative practice. Zajonc's (2009) own approach to contemplative inquiry and group practice includes the inner path of slow lemniscating between focused attention and open attention in what he calls 'cognitive breathing' (2009, p. 39), referring not to air but to the inner light of the mind (Lusseyran, 1998) that Moustakas explicates as the experience of touch (1990, pp. 60–61). Properly understood, Zajonc contends (2009, p. 40), contemplation is undertaken as a selfless act of service in which one enters through a portal of

humility and exits through one of gratitude. This supports the finding in an earlier study (Denford-Wood, 2014a) in which teachers considered their practice of mindfulness to be an act of service.

2.3.1 Mindfulness and meditation, the terminology

Debates on the definitions of mindfulness, meditation, and their relationship exist within the field. Practising contemplative mindfulness is considered by some participant researchers to be a form of meditation (Tang, Hölzel, & Posner, 2015, 2016; Kabat-Zinn, 2014). Others regard meditation as a practice that facilitates mindfulness (Israel, 2013; Siegal, 2015). Therefore, contemplative forms of mindfulness and sitting meditation are frequently found in the literature as ‘mindfulness meditation’—conflated for reasons Kabat-Zinn explains. However, Arthurson (2017, p. 63), in pointing out that there are multiple definitions and understandings of mindfulness and imprecision with the secular use of these terms, cites Grossman (2008), who suggests that mindfulness requires extensive meditation and introspective insight by the practitioner (rather than intellectual searching or academic reading on the subject). Therefore, I contend that further untangling of the terminology is not warranted in the context of this present study, which focuses on the investigation of a poetic form employed as an innovative mindfulness practice that embodies both physical movement and contemplative stillness.

We must be still and still moving into another intensity. (T. S. Eliot, 1943)

2.3.2 Mindfulness meditation and teacher well-being

Mindfulness, as a means to improve student and teacher well-being,³³ is increasing in use internationally and with growing mainstream acceptance. As Ager, Albrecht, and Cohen (2015, p. 896) attest, a growing body of scientific evidence suggests mindfulness is an essential life skill with the potential to enhance both teacher and student well-being (see also Albrecht et al., 2012; Albrecht, 2016; Black, Milam, & Sussman, 2009; Mazza-Davies, 2015). With mindfulness practices

³³ Well-being, for the purpose of this study, is defined as eudaimonic (as distinct from hedonic). Greek: eu = good, + daimōn = spirit). A central concept in Aristotelian ethics and political philosophy, eudaimonia was a term used for the highest human good. Ryan and Deci (2011) bring the term right up to date in its context of a sense of self-realization and meaning in life, holistically, as that which Lips-Wiersma & Morris (2011) describe as natural, constructive and energising. The latter authors’ framework fosters individual and collective growth, meaning-making, learning and becoming whole. They describe four main elements for assessing a balanced and inspired life: developing the inner self; expressing full potential; unity with others; and service to others. Their ‘map of meaning’ model includes individual search for deep purpose with the need to align goals, aspirations and values personally and professionally.

focusing on the development of the whole person, through their awareness of the physical body, mind, and emotions, there is potential for increased integrity in personal–professional life.

Mindfulness knows the impermanent nature of each breath. It knows any and all thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and impulses as they arise in and around and outside each and any breath. For mindfulness is the knowing quality of awareness, the core property of mind itself (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 77).

Therefore, an increasing base of evidence on the value of mindfulness meditation practices for teachers' personal and professional well-being (Burrows, 2014, 2015; Albrecht, 2014; Denford-Wood, 2014a; Bernay, 2012; Foreman, 2012; Smith, 2010) provides a case for inclusion of the practices in mainstream teacher education and development. However, these studies collectively pinpoint a significant gap in the literature: the lack of studies of the contemplative practices of teachers and educational leaders who are already long-term contemplative practitioners (Denford-Wood, 2014a; Ditrich, 2017).

The distinction between short-and long-term practitioners is important (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Zajonc, 2010a; Shapiro, 1992a) as explained below. There is ample evidence, such as that examined by Davis and Hayes (2011) and Singer (2014), that quantitative research holds significant potential for learning more about the neurophysiological processes of mindfulness meditation and the benefits of its long-term practice on the brain.

Importantly, there are a number of attributes to teacher well-being—for example, self-care, resilience, stress reduction, calmness, clarity, concentration and focus—for which neuroscience has been able to establish a positive link with sustained mindfulness practices. (See Figure 1) Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011), Kabat-Zinn (2014) and Singer (2014) are among many reporting that research on neuroplasticity is beginning to explain relationships among length and quality of practice and developmental stages of meditators. Singer's (2014) on-going study of compassion with subtle attitudinal differentiation is demonstrating that specificity of mindfulness practices matters when considering its potential for the well-being of the caring professions. Clearly, that definition includes teaching and educational leadership.

Noteworthy, for example, are Singer's (2014) findings that demonstrate the critical importance of the concern, raised by Shapiro et al. (2006), for the tacit state of 'bare awareness' (to which I refer in 2.2.2), to encompass a position of compassion, openheartedness and peace for others and for self. It further highlights the importance of having long-term mindfulness meditators, qualified to

teach and guide others (Arthurson, 2017; Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Rix, 2017), as well as being the subjects of research.

Whilst some have argued that these quantitative and qualitative studies of mindfulness represent a schism between notions of science and religion—‘secular versus sacred’—unifying trends are articulated by Kabat-Zinn (2014), for example, and Polanski (2015, pp. 21–22), who evidences a ‘meeting of the minds’ between the neuroscience of psychology and a cultural context that is ‘trending away’ from organised religion to ‘modern spirituality.’ Citing a number of authors, Polanski (2015) contends that ‘scientific research has tended to treat this cultural context as a confounding variable that cannot be controlled for,’ and so is instead deemed irrelevant. She argues that such research rarely mentions the religious or spiritual context of mindfulness meditation. One exception is the study of 22 Australasian teachers and educational leaders, all long-term meditators, who openly shared their spiritual orientations and affiliations and were employed across school sectors from Early Childhood to Higher Education (Denford-Wood, 2014a). That study underscored Polanski’s contention that ‘much has been written about how no phenomenon can ever be examined context free’ (2015, p. 22). The topic of teachers as reflective practitioners in their personal–professional life is the context of our next focus.

2.4 Teachers as reflective practitioners

First, I provide a general definition of teachers’ reflective practice. Then, in the next sections, following seminar form’s origins and scholarship, I indicate how teachers may use seminaria mindfulness as a component of their professional reflective practice for creative insight and meaning.

For the purpose of this study, I follow Bacchus, Hancox and Denford-Wood (2004) in defining ‘teacher as reflective practitioner’ thus: in teaching, one who researches their own thoughts before, during and following practice in order to analyse, interpret, construct meaning and evaluate effectiveness of that practice. This process involves the ability to perceive what is subtle, complex and important. The spontaneous, intuitive performance (Schön, 1983, p. 49) of ‘knowing-in-action’ and ‘reflection-in-practice’ (p. 68) has been embedded in teachers’ professional development since the 1980s, having evolved from Kurt Lewin’s landmark 1948 work (Day, 1999; Gibbs, 2006). Carried to its logical conclusion (Denford-Wood, 2004a, p. 137), teachers’ reflective practice is a form of

participatory action research (McNiff, 1988, 2013; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014).

Classroom action research typically involves the use of qualitative, interpretive modes of inquiry and data collection (quantitative and evidential) to help teachers make better judgements about how to improve their own practices to further facilitate student learning. Arguably, the quality of relational connectedness a teacher has with a class, and each individual comprising it, is the basis for discovering what we, as teachers, must look for as the innermost kernel in each individual (Denford-Wood, 2004a, p. 138 citing Trostli (1998, p. 51). Therefore, reflective practice is participatory as it describes the cycles (or spirals) of planning, acting and observing, reflecting, revising the plan, acting again and observing, reflecting, ad infinitum, in relationship with students, other teachers, parents and so on. Additionally, there is the private, more contemplative individual reflecting as a review of the day; evaluating how the enacted curriculum met the teaching–learning needs of individual students and the class as a whole.

In view of the hegemonic management model under which teachers currently work (Ballard, 2007; Codd, 2005; Neyland, 2010; Snook, 2003; Sullivan, 1998),³⁴ and the rates of teacher attrition, illness, depression, suicide and other effects of teacher stress and burnout (Beckley, 2011; Bernay, 2012; Denford-Wood, 2014a, Wylie, 2012), appropriate mindfulness practices implemented by experienced practitioners may help counter the erosion of teachers' self-identity. Mindfulness may have an important role in supporting teachers to reconnect with the spirit of education advocated by Neyland (2010), via the 'bridging' to which Linde (2013) refers.

This present study heuristically investigates seminaria mindfulness for creative insights pertinent to teachers' reflective practice.

Whence comes
What's within?
Original Source . . .
Human being: Know yourself!
Education's aim:
To lead out
Knowing.

³⁴ Hegemonic: the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group.

Now, in the context set by the previous sections, it is important to understand precisely what is meant by this particular practice—the mindfulness of seminaria (known generically as ‘seminar form’ and synonymously, ‘seminar verse’).

2.5 Seminar form, origins and scholarship

Seminaria (adjectival noun + verb, singular and plural), (see 1.1.1, above), is the name I have given to a 27-syllable, seven-line word construct (syllabically 2,3,5,7,5,3,2), explored personally and professionally since March, 2013. Central to my inquiry heuristically, the nature and being of seminaria has posed a multilayered series of questions—ontologically, epistemologically and practically—to which I first took the stance of detached observer. Fascinated, I then focused my investigation phenomenologically in ways that Miles and Huberman (1994) describe as ‘multiple compelling interpretations.’ Phenomenological research relies on retrospective reflection, i.e., thinking about the experience and what it means, after the fact (Anderson, 1998), fitting the New Zealand mainstream criterion, ‘teacher as reflective practitioner’ (Ministry of Education, 2014). During this time, my daily relationship with seminaria poetic form was forged. Contemplating its connectedness and presence—that which Bone (2007) might distinguish as ‘the spirit elsewhere’ becoming more of ‘a spirit with-ness’—enabled me to recognise the validity of applying a deeper heuristic quality (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, pp. 38–39) to my investigation. And this was what my study aimed to do: open it up to the exploration of other teachers as co-researchers.

Seminaria has a poetic form originally designed for scholarly and contemplative purposes by Jens-Peter Linde in late 1988 and given first public expression in 1989 as *Seminar Form*. Linde, at the time, was a senior theology student, upon whose shoulders it often fell to convey the spirit of collective faculty thanks to visiting lecturers and the like. His sociopoetic way with words seeded his search for a form that was simpler and more compact than the sonnet, yet longer and arguably more comprehensive than the 17-syllable haiku (Linde, 2013).

I was looking for a form which would adequately reflect our time and which was amenable to my own poetic consciousness, developed in the spirit of this time. On the way . . . I ‘found’ the Seminar Verse Form (Linde, 2013, p.2).

What germinated is the form (described in 1.1) that remains largely unknown. Characterised by the quality of a concentrated seed form for something bigger to emerge (as presentation, lecture, speech), seminaria captures the essence or spirit of a topic from which a theme can be free

rendered; developed more dynamically than is mostly the case when reading from prewritten text. Heuristically, it recognises the vital importance of the spaces between, that which I defined earlier as 'liminal.'

Seminar form: Three scholarly origins

Linde (1989) structured his seminar form on the following three scholarly origins/models:

- the seven steps of philosophy argued by Thomas Aquinas (1225 –1274);
- the seven life processes, an integral model of learning and teaching proposed by Steiner (1861–1925);
- theory-U, another seven-step process that Scharmer (2009) terms 'presencing.'

The seven steps of philosophy, as described by Thomas Aquinas, are analysed with respect to this poetic forming in the following section, 'seminaria mindfulness as contemplative inquiry.'

The seven life processes, an integral model of learning and teaching proposed by Steiner, are used by teachers in an era of digital download to safeguard students' knowledge acquisition from the superficiality of 'undigested' information overload (Gidley, 2007; Nielsen, 2003; Riccio, 2000; Van Houten, 1995, 2000).³⁵ This seven-step process advances an integrative model of thinking, cognitive and affective processing, and meaningful activity/volitional will. Note, with reference to Figure 1, these three processes are commensurate with those of mindfulness: intention, attention, and attitude (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).

Theory-U, that Scharmer (2009) terms 'presencing' or bringing the future into the present, is another seven-step process: intention that is one hundred percent committed to a particular project; immersion with a challenge or opportunity; followed by an inner journey or retreat; synthesis of key insights, followed by deep personal reflection and presencing work; identifying key prototyping initiatives, recognising the work begins to operate from a different place, a different

³⁵ PhD climate scientist: 'I can remember what I learned in [Year 12 and 13] better than what I learned in second year varsity because of the teaching style . . . there was a difference between knowledge and information . . . between fear-based learning and being genuinely interested in a whole variety of things. Tertiary's all about performance—getting a degree. If you get an A or A+ the lecturers take notice of you' (anonymous source, cited in Denford-Wood, 2005).

level of energy and inspiration; then rapid prototyping, presenting a version to stakeholders for feedback; then reiterating till a prototype evolves.

The first part of this process is to observe . . . which means stop the downloading and open up into a full immersion into the context. Then you retreat and reflect, allowing the inner knowing to emerge. You access your own source. So you go from the chaos of observation to the still, inner place where knowing comes to the surface. You must ask yourself who is my self and what is my work? Your self doesn't mean your ego, but your highest future possibility. By 'work' we mean 'what is your purpose?' The more profound changes usually include a change of identity, an evolution in who you are and what you are here for. It requires a letting go of your old self in order to find your emerging authentic self. When the spark comes to the surface, you move into action quickly. You act in an instant, . . . [as] many companies do in prototyping (Brown, 2005, p. x).

These seven-step processes appear to show synergy with both Frick's (1983) symbolic growth experience and with Moustakas' (1990, 1994) six-step heuristic inquiry—initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis, a process that that Braud and Anderson (1998, p. 266) equate with creative expression. All these precisely defined steps, it is argued in the context of this inquiry, serve to show that by its very construct, seminaria is contemplative and arts-based heuristic inquiry, and ideally suited to assist teachers philosophically and practically in the purpose of their work. Philosopher and author Georg Kühlewind (2008) asserts that when working mindfully or meditatively with words and texts:

Every sentence, and every sequence of sentences, originates from a core—a 'that'—which is beyond language, beyond signs (p. 48).

It is this core of meaning that mindfulness attempts to access, first, by working with the informational meaning of the text which itself is hidden in the words making up the sentence. Reducing a sentence to its core, to its origin that preceded the words, is achieved by reducing the sentence to one of its words—perhaps one that stands out as the most significant; then, bringing the meaning of the other words one after the other into the chosen word, which then represents the whole sentence. Focusing full attention on this one word that carries the feeling content of the whole sentence, and, if attention is strong enough, letting the word disappear, 'so that only pure, signless, wordless meaning remains' (p. 49), it is possible that out of this space a new meaning may shine forth or an image or words appear as a deeper or higher meaning.

2.5.1 Seminaria mindfulness as contemplative inquiry

I posit that the various seven-fold processes inherent in the seminaria formation—there for the analysis in the deceptive simplicity of its meagre 27 syllables—demonstrate potential to fulfil the tenets of contemplative inquiry.

Arguably, then, the nature of and *raison d'être* for seminaria, in itself, is a contemplative, mindful, poetic process. Having pointed out that seminaria's origin and purpose grew out of a scholarly, philosophical and social impulse in the academic life of one scholar in 1960s Europe, its function belongs, clearly, in the contemplative inquiry genre (Hart, 2004; Zajonc, 2009, 2010a, 2013b).

Explicitly, the Thomas Aquinas model has the following structural components:

A set procedure to develop an *Argumentum* (Latin, an argument, proof, appeal to reason, inference).³⁶ The plural is *argumenta*. Commonly used in the name of logical arguments and fallacies, the *argumentum* begins with

- *Videtur* (Latin: It is seen.), to lay out, as Linde (2013, p. 3) explains, 'a certain opinion of thought.'
- *Praeterea* (L. furthermore; additionally), indicates further leading aspects in order to enliven the proposition.
- *Sed Contra* (L. on the contrary), provides an element with which to wrestle or engage inquiringly; to contemplate.

From these first three steps as a whole contemplated inquiringly, an initial result is found:

- *Conclusio* (conclusion; consequence; deduction).

From this *conclusio*, Aquinas advanced his own verdict with:

- *Respondeo* (L. re (again) + *spondeo* (promise) which, accordingly may vary from any of the following, depending on the context:
 - I reply, answer, respond;
 - figuratively—I measure up;
 - I am present, I appear, attend; meet or answer;

³⁶ Webster's New International English online Dictionary (2012); See also Aquinas (trans. 2018).

- of a sound—I re-echo, resound;
- I meet, agree, accord or correspond with, conform to;
- I make a return, yield.

This verdict is decided upon by reflecting or revising the three previous points in turn, as Linde (2013, p. 3) advises, to see how they look differently under the illumination of the preliminary conclusion.

With Steiner’s model, the structural thought pattern is similar to the Aquinas model except that the second half runs in reverse, mirroring the first part of the argumentum to reveal a final concept which includes the original thought as well as the tentative first result, on a concluding higher level.

The word
In the world
A world in each word
Know Seminaria’s form
Crossing point conscious
Neural-path
Potent.

Again the literature explains the premise or statement as a first step, given depth, colour and life through an example or added image as the second step. Next, this is put into a question through contemplating other dimensions, consequences or implications. Tension in the third step is an important element, resolved in the fourth by a decision or deed reflecting some contemplatively catalysed act which provides a turning point. The preceding steps are then mirrored and deepened to reach a place of peace within the tension of the fifth which reflects the third. The sixth line reveals something new reflecting the second line and the seventh line is a culmination, a synthesis showing the first statement—having been worked through—in a new light. Notwithstanding the importance of these two similar seven-step constructs that underpin seminar verse, Linde (2013, pp. 4–5) points out that:

Although the [rhythmical syllabic] pattern should be properly adhered to, at least in European languages, the inner processes [in practice, will] often reach across the boundaries of the lines and, not to become dogmatic, they may be more or less obvious—or hidden. And indeed, the various qualities of each line may not always become apparent when the flow of thought finds its own gestures.

Additionally, he emphasises,

Seminar verses avoid the lyrical beauty of dreams, but neither do they want to become didactic. They are personal reflections of the world around us; a human relationship to creation . . . longed for within a chosen boundary (Linde, 2013, p. 5).

Seminaria hint at the hidden wholeness Palmer (2004, pp. 25–26) elaborates in regard to ‘the inner [teacher’s] voice’ and relationships with others such as circles of trust that comprise authentic community. A decade later, one of the neglected dimensions of our education system still concerns the transformative—Kegan’s (1994) ‘self-transforming mind’ or Mezirow and Associates’ (2000) vision of transformative education, for example. As Zajonc (2010a, p. 101) asserts, ‘Our view of the student is too often as a vessel to be filled or a person to be trained.’ When the aphorism (arguably attributed to Emerson), ‘What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared with what lies within us,’ is understood as an educative principle, then teacher education will value the mainstream inclusion of mindfulness—as Zajonc describes it—as a means to experiencing life from the inside.

Is it possible to be alive, active in the world, and yet have such calm . . . inner openness and presence that one can lead a life, at least in part, that is an expression of that quality of meditative quiescence that's on the one hand quite alert and on the other hand, completely at ease, completely at rest . . . a bit like bringing the [peace of] sleeping life into [the activity of one’s] day (Zajonc, 2010b).

Seminaria then, as Linde (2013) describes the form, ‘bridges’ between the world of senses and the world of the spirit. Linde points out that:

[A] seminar(y) is a place or a time in which a perception of interaction and meaning of phenomena and consequences can be practised (2013, p. 5).

To conclude the previous sections, which explain the what, how and why of seminaria mindfulness, the next section explains my choice of the name, ‘seminaria.’

2.5.2 Seminaria, a research name

Seminar form is also known interchangeably as seminar verse. The term ‘seminaria’ was my attempt to free the name from its ‘masculine’ ecclesiastical (Aquinas) connotations without losing its essential identity that I felt privileged to honour. Additionally, my first strong encounter with seminar form occurred, as mentioned earlier, at an Alamandria event (www.alamandria.co.nz). Implicit in the name ‘seminaria,’ therefore, is acknowledgement of that relationship. Further, a subsequent critical discovery about the nature of movement and the restorative value of walking links seminaria heuristically with the Camino Santiago de Compostela that I walked less than a year earlier. The ending of this pilgrimage revealed the purpose of this thesis as a new beginning, and the subsequent sounding (aria), a symbolic growth experience (Frick, 1983, 1987) at the

sarcophagus in the Great Pyramid at Cairo twelve days after the walk, has a huge connecting resonance beyond normal time and space.

Striving
To retain
True connectedness
Of that space between two worlds.
Elusive now, but
To know it,
Strengthens.

These factors influenced the name change from seminar form to seminaria. I retain the seminar's etymological basis of 'seed-to-be-germinated' in what I offer as a more emancipating and suitable sounding name for the mindfulness association for which, in this heuristic study, it holds a central and creative focus.

2.6 Writing poetry as practice-based research: Sociopoetic scholarship

Seminaria emerged as seminar form (Linde, 1989) as a creative response to a perceived 'socio-poetic need' (J.-P. Linde, personal correspondence, September 26, 2013; June 12, 2015), before the term sociopoetic itself was coined by French philosopher and educator, Jacques Gauthier in the 1990s, as a new way of looking at qualitative research. Validation of sociopoetics occurred through the defence of dos Santos's 1997 doctoral dissertation that followed Gauthier's 1996 book, '*an epistemological review?*'—one of many attempts at that time to answer researchers' questions about the sociopolitical meaning of knowledge production.

It is important for the reader to note at this point that mention of sociopoetics as research is incidental to, and separate from my methodological approach and methods, which are addressed in the next chapter. Reviewing the literature on sociopoetics and poetry writing as practice-based research (in this context, for teachers) is important in order to accurately situate seminaria. This present section then, serves to investigate the literature for similarities and differences between seminaria and sociopoetics, and in so doing show where this study, in its originality, is addressing the gaps. Therefore, with reference to the literature, this inquiry weaves together its different global strands. Specifically, it weaves the poetic form of a scholar whose work emerged as seminar form in Germany and who continues to inspire others through his social science relationship to it, mostly

in Scottish society, with the stream of sociopoetics that emerged in Brazil in the 1990s, initially from a 1994–95 study in Rio de Janeiro. Dos Santos and Gauthier (2013) establish their research relationship to sociopoetics as ‘an [a]esthetic perspective of nursing research/care/education’—arguably, a critical link with the well-being perspective of my investigation.

Internationally acknowledged education researcher Reinaldo Fleuri (Gauthier, 1996) argues a case for sociopoetics being innovative in strengthening the knowledge of research subjects by making them co-researchers (a tenet of this present enquiry). Research that is coherent with my own use of *seminaria* mindfulness as a contemplative approach to teachers’ reflective practice is this: according to the philosophical principles of sociopoetics (dos Santos & Gauthier, 2013), the human body is a source of knowledge as it explores the cognitive strength of one’s senses, emotions, and gestures, besides imagination, intuition and reasoning. Hence, sociopoetics promotes artistic creativity in learning, knowing, researching, and providing human care.

Thus, as a result of reviewing the literature, a further fit for the sociopoetic component of my heuristic inquiry into *Seminaria* mindfulness is dos Santos and Gauthier’s (2013) claim that:

socio-poetics values cultures . . . and the concepts they produce, alerting that all types of knowledge share the same rights, and emphasizes the spiritual, human, and political dimension of knowledge construction (para. 3).

This inclusivity speaks of a social justice ideal, in terms of what Friesen (2007, p. 158) identifies as a typology of its basic principles: equality, tolerance, compassion, fairness and participation. Given Oman’s (2015) concern that, in the face of an increasing literature of the clinically cool, aloof streams of mindfulness, and a technical spirituality with its scientific need to be secular, the soteriological context that includes cultural and spiritual diversity in fact becomes marginalised, as Coholic (2011) has contended. It is noteworthy, therefore, that sociopoetics is socioculturally inclusive and pluralistically affirming. Further, dos Santos and Gauthier (2013) argue:

using the philosophical principles of socio-poetics as guidelines in research/education/care is a task that yields ethical and epistemological outcomes (para. 5).

The sociopoetic, they argue, is ‘self-institut[ing] during the research process,’ thereby ‘becoming its own master, because it is continuously regenerated by its will and its work’ (para. 5). In other words, the very nature of the sociopoetic in a research context is considered to be organically self-generating.

That, precisely, was a quality I glimpsed in seminaria while establishing it as a daily mindfulness practice. Whilst reviewing the literature, immersed in such subtleties, I began to ponder how the principles of sociopoetics might be found, in this regard, for other teachers. It is important to be aware, too, of other heuristic inquiries using poetry within an arts-based framework. Sociologist Laurel Richardson (1997, 2000, 2007) writes extensively on the relationship between academic research and artistic inquiry. She states that poetry, ‘built as it is on speech as an embodied activity[,] touches both the cognitive and the sensory in the speaker and the listener (1997, p. 143).

The literature search supporting this research of seminaria is influenced by my interest in, and prior experience of, phenomenological approaches in natural science as well as in the social sciences, and the relationships between art and language in conveying meaning. Thus mindfulness, throughout this research, concerns the idea of poietic activity (artistic, composing, shaping, exacting and transforming), as Büchler (2012, p. vii) describes. These qualities manifest through the various ways the participants, as teachers personally and professionally, engage with the mindfulness of seminaria. Poiesis as practice, with its alive, mobile, transforming capacity, itself developing through the contemplative, mindful processes each participant co-researcher uniquely expresses.

Whitehead (2003, p. 1) proposes that poiesis revitalises thinking about the ‘making’ of art, given that poiesis itself is that which ‘pro-duces or leads (a thing) into being.’ His conjecture that poiesis may enable practitioners of art and aestheticians who reflect upon them to come to a deeper sense of how artworks work—that they ‘realize themselves inter-dependently of the formative conditions of their inception’ (p. 1)—is both congruent with my evolving experience of the mindfulness of seminaria and the experience of physical education teacher, Blades (2005). Through her poetic search for meaning-making as an educator in the outdoors, she argues:

In sharing my poetry, it is not in the sense of being analysed as good or bad poetry but is my attempt to represent the enfolding of self, place and educator. Change was inherent within that and place was not a static entity, but rather, it presented dynamic fluid elements (p. 10).

The research poem, then (Blades, 2005; Furman, 2004, 2006; Janesick, 2016; Stein, 2003; Willis, 2002), reveals the use of poetry for the purposes of generating or presenting data rather than literary means. The difference between the two is in the position of the author to the data (Furman, Lietz, & Langer, 2006, p. 27). While the literature on poetry as qualitative research is interested in metaphoric (rather than statistical) generalisability (Furman et al., 2006), a prime purpose of the data, they posit, is its intervention value used in social work, i.e. using the content of clients’ poems

for therapeutic assessment. 'Social workers need research that helps them understand the emotional and contextual realities of people whose life experiences are often very different from theirs' (p. 24). It is a function that the literature reveals to be distinctly different, however, from my exploration of the mindfulness of seminaria in the context of teachers' contemplative and/or reflective practice. As Janesick (2016) asserts, 'Using poetic devices of any kind in the act of writing takes us to another level of thinking,' and 'They get to the emotional level of . . . inquiry' (p. 123).

Further, in investigating the relationship between poiesis and the sensory embodiments of art making, Whitehead's (2003) notion of 'the poietic act' as having potential to reinvigorate artistic creative energy is apt. Again, this is congruent with my initial two-year search with seminaria as a new form to be explored within a mindfulness education context. It is this creative energy, I argue from lived experience (van Manen, 1990), that keeps teachers motivated, connected and collegial (Neyland, 2010). McNiff (1998, p. 38; see also 2006) argues a case for such research as 'more creative . . . more conducive to advancing the sophistication of practice.' The result, individually distinctive, it appears, has potential as a source of creative refreshment.

2.6.1 Summary of the significance of this study

This section identifies eight reasons why the mindfulness of seminaria has significance for the literature. Posited from different perspectives, without priority, these reasons reflect the breadth of the terrain 'orienteered' in the course of reviewing the literature.

Currently, most studies of mindfulness use quantitative research methods (Albrecht, 2016; Ager et al., 2015; McCown, 2013). Kabat-Zinn (2003, p. 149) maintains that the 'radical, transformative essence' in mindfulness is at risk of being lost when there is too much focus on clinical change measurement. Therefore, this qualitative study's contribution to the literature in teacher education, professional development and learning, and mindfulness generally, will be through the strength of heuristic inquiry justified by its depth, openness and ability to access more nuanced narrative (Hiles, 2001a; Moustakas, 1990). In these ways, it will contribute to what we know and understand about teachers' own personal and professional ways of knowing and being that is not possible to ascertain through quantitative inquiry (Hayes & Shenk, 2006; Verhoef & Vanderheyden, 2007).

While it may be argued that there already exists a multitude of mindfulness awareness practices that have been used with teachers, such as the well-known mindfulness of the breath, these are

predominantly sitting practices that take time, effort, practice and preparation. Described by Dunne (2004) as ‘systematic,’ ‘technical’ and ‘manualised’ with their set practices, timelines and developmental trajectories, they can lack appeal for teachers as yet another thing to be squeezed into a seemingly impossible ‘tick-list’ day.³⁷ By contrast, seminaria’s apparent simplicity suggests it worthy of co-researcher investigation. While several studies have found evidence for the protective effects of mindfulness in reducing occupational teacher stress and burnout (Abenavoli, Jennings, Greenberg, Harri, & Katz, 2013; Cefai & Cavioni, 2014; Roeser et al., 2013; Weare, 2014), less attention has been paid to investigating the scope of practices for teachers. Increasing evidence of the value of mindfulness meditation practices for teachers’ personal and professional well-being (Albrecht, 2014; Burrows, 2014, 2015; Denford-Wood, 2017; Bernay, 2012; Foreman, 2012; Mazza-Davies, 2015; Smith, 2010) provides a case for its inclusion in mainstream teacher education and development. Additionally, there is a significant gap in the literature—studies of the contemplative practices of teachers and educational leaders who are long-term practitioners (Ditrich, Wiles, & Lovegrove, 2017). The distinction between short- and long-term practice is important, as others have previously stated (Lazar et al., 2005; Shapiro, 1992a; Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

Mindfulness research in teacher education (Albrecht, 2014; Bernay, 2012, Burrows, 2011, 2013; Cefai & Cavioni, 2014; Foreman, 2012) has begun addressing gaps in the knowledge. As others state, mindfulness and well-being of teachers is an issue too rarely addressed by schools in terms of their staff well-being (Bullough, 2011; Cefai & Cavioni, 2014).

Further, stress, a factor of teacher attrition (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, Burke, & Louviere, 2013; Cameron, Lovett, and Berger, 2007; Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2016), and its reduction through mindfulness meditation (Flook et al, 2013; Kabat-Zinn et al, 1992; Siegel, 2007, 2013), which is shown to be associated with an improved frame of mind, positive mental outlook and ability to think of new solutions (Brown & Langer, 1990; Davidson, 1992), all point to seminaria’s research potential.

³⁷ As an experienced teacher anecdotally reports, ‘For some they are not comfortable practices. They may be too stressed/uncomfortable to sit. [A] friend has a serious heart condition; too much focus on the breath can make him feel faint—and retaining the breath as happens in some practices such as ratio breathing is completely out of the question for him’ (K. Arthurson, personal communication, August 21, 2016).

However, most importantly, whereas studies of teachers' mindfulness (meditation) have thus far focused on initial (beginning) teachers, or on more experienced teachers being taught specific mindfulness techniques in order to utilise them with students in a school setting, this present study centres on teachers and educational leaders themselves.

It responds to the gap in existing studies, seeking to uncover, through the depth of a heuristic inquiry, the experiences of teachers already well practised in mindfulness.

2.7 Significance of this inquiry for teacher education

Teacher well-being is cited as an important predictor and determinant of professional long service (Vazi, Ruiters, Van den Borne, Martin, Dumont, & Reddy, 2013). Its corollary is more widely documented. Teaching is internationally recognised as a stressful occupation. If not mitigated or treated, chronic work stress may result in burnout (Borg & Riding, 1991; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Kyriacou, 2001; Laughlin, 1984). One hundred percent of teachers at the high end of the burnout continuum reported clinical levels of depressive symptoms (Bianchi, Schonfeld, Mayor, & Laurent, 2016, p. 9).

Teacher absenteeism and job dissatisfaction are commonly reported as negative social outcomes of stress (Bowers, 2001; Hall, Altman, Nkomo, Peltzer & Zuma, 2005). Without a sense of subjective well-being from thriving in their chosen career, teachers and their leaders can experience greater difficulty coping with their employment responsibilities, their teaching and learning relationships with students, their own professional inquiry and learning, social participation and their mental and physical health. Statistically, I have built a case in Chapter one (1.1.4) for heeding the level of stress experienced by teachers and leaders. Signs of systemic change are less evident from current literature than indeed signs of individual educators taking their own well-being in hand. While several studies have found evidence (as earlier cited) for the protective effects of mindfulness in reducing occupational teacher stress and burnout, the practice of *seminaria* as an innovative, fresh, poetic approach to mindfulness seems worthy of further investigation.

In taking account of the literature review findings, that the distinction between mindfulness meditation as short-term exercise and as long-term practice is important (Davidson et al., 2003; Lykins and Baer, 2009; Shapiro, 1992a; Silsbee, 2010; Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Zajonc, 2010a), a significant feature of this research is the sample of educators who have a long-term inner-life

orientation in mindfulness, meditation or some kind of contemplation. Therefore, participants were chosen for their contemplative experience. As stated in the introductory overview (1.1) and briefly in the context of informing teacher education and development (2.2), likewise, the literature lacks investigations of the depth, scope and wider applicability of teachers' own mindfulness and inner life experience with its attendant meaning-making—another gap in knowledge that this study seeks to address.

Because currently most mindfulness studies, as has been pointed out, are quantitative, this present study's contribution to the literature in teacher education seeks to build on what has gone before by addressing the identified gaps with the strength that heuristic inquiry offers qualitatively in depth, openness and ability to access more nuanced narrative (Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1990, 1994). In these ways it will contribute to what we know and understand about teachers' own personal and professional ways of knowing and being that is not possible to ascertain through quantitative inquiry.

2.8 Summary

This study seeks to address a gap in knowledge in the underresearched area of teachers' and educational leaders' first-person experiences of mindfulness practices that can usefully inform the way they approach their professional responsibilities as reflective practitioners, or as mindfulness practitioners (Ditrich, 2017). Through this present study, I explore the potential for teachers' inner knowing and its transformative effects on their personal and professional life that may be grounded into transferable, useful strategies for others in the field. As a Flinders professor summed up my research quest on my first visit to the campus, 'It's about how we, as teachers, sustain ourselves [through] relationships of renewal' (D. Giles, personal communication, June 24, 2014; see also Giles, 2011). I wanted to know whether the relationship of renewal I was having with seminaria, as a mindfully aware practice, might be of benefit to other teachers.

In reviewing the literature

on mindfulness

I immersed myself in an extensive search of the mindfulness literature over an extended period to ascertain and validate the differences in mindfulness practices—the distinctions that are overviewed in my introduction and condensed and differentiated in this chapter.

on seminaria/seminar form

The only literature traceable on seminar form from extensive searches is self-published, by the primary source himself, Linde (1989), who, over time, has become a discerning, scholarly correspondent and mentor when required, in relation to my exploratory research with his poetic word form. The lack of literature on seminar form is the reason I have taken the literary precaution of examining seminaria's relationship to other deceptively similar forms such as haiku.

Given the novel context and content of my heuristic inquiry and the lack of literature on its central focus, seminar form, I have integrated into the first sections of this chapter the relevant literature on mindfulness, seminar form, teachers' reflective practice and sociopoetic scholarship, commensurate with the requirements of heuristic research.

In summary, mindfulness comes in many forms, many disciplines and many orientations. A significant gap in the literature is a critical analysis and synthesis of what teachers do in regard to their own mindfulness practice, how they go about it, and its epistemological value to them as professional reflective practitioners.

Reviewing the literature constantly, in order to accurately and effectively position this inquiry, I have outlined the field of mindfulness research in the context of this study, mindfulness in teacher education. Last, I defined and explained the rudiments of seminaria mindfulness, locating its focus for this study that explores its meaning and potential purpose within a sociopoetic context.

I conclude Chapter two by summarising my route through the literature reviewed in this chapter that looks to two critical markers: the purpose of this study and its research question that leads to the heart of the matter.

- Mindfulness in education has increased internationally in the last decade (Albrecht et al., 2012; Black et al., 2009; Black, 2014). To date, the research focus has been on assessing the

efficacy of school-based mindfulness programmes on student populations (Burke, 2010).

- Despite several studies which found evidence for the protective effects of mindfulness in reducing occupational teacher stress and burnout (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014; Weare, 2014; Abenavoli et al, 2013; Roeser et al., 2013), less attention has been paid to investigating the depth, scope and wider applicability of teachers' own mindfully meditative experience (Denford-Wood, 2014a, 2017; Ditrich, 2017; Gemell, Snaith Gardiner, & Haralambous, 2014), and its attendant meaning making (Fisher et al., 2002; Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2011; Morris, 2014).
- Increasing evidence of the value of mindfulness meditation practices for teachers' personal and professional well-being (Burrows, 2014, 2015, 2018; Albrecht, 2016; Denford-Wood, 2014a; Bernay, 2012; Foreman, 2012; Mazza-Davies, 2015; Smith, 2010) provides a case for its inclusion in mainstream, teacher education and professional learning and development.
- However, there is a significant gap in the literature—studies of the mindfulness practices of teachers and educational leaders who already have a long-term established, contemplative orientation to their personal–professional lives. The distinction between short- and long-term practices is important (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Zajonc, 2010a; Shapiro, 1992a).
- This present poetic study, the 'mindfulness of seminaria' is uniquely participatory (Gibbs, 2006; Kuyken, 2015).
- The present study requires clear and nuanced accounts of what these teachers do, how they go about it and evidence of its value to them personally and professionally, as reflective practitioners. It represents a dearth of literature that this study begins to address.

With respect to the interrelating fields of literature reviewed, the overarching aim and objective of this heuristic inquiry is to explore, examine, trial, understand and develop the mindfulness of seminaria with teachers and school leaders for the purpose of investigating its influence and any perceived effects on their personal–professional life. It asks: 'What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice?' and 'Would other teachers and leaders discover anything of value from engaging with it?' As such, this study seeks to build on and contribute to existing research.

My research methodology (as tabled in Chapter one), is now explained in Chapter three where the stages of HI continue to contain the unfolding narrative. The next stage, 'Incubation' (as outlined in 1.3), is revealed as one that requires the inner tacit dimension to expand the knowledge that is coalescing. Thus we continue on this path of exploration.

[The] road less travelled . . . may make all the difference. We need to search out the way-marks to our own inner knowing. The light, while obscured, lies hidden in our memory (John Brierley, 2012, p. 280).

Chapter three Research design

Building an authentic research road

3.1 Introduction

Just as the research question has informed my choice of methodology, the latter will determine my orientation throughout the inquiry. The two go ‘hand in hand.’ Curiously, as a pilgrimage metaphor, the Greek word *hodos*, van Manen (1990, p. 28) reminds us, means ‘way,’ and ‘methodology’ is the *logos* (Gk: reason, study) of the *method* (or way).³⁸ Methodology then, means ‘pursuit of knowledge’ and is where this pilgrimage is next headed. I had sensed at the outset Moustakas’s heuristic method would support my pursuit, noting that Sela-Smith (2002) celebrates it as a significant contribution to research for inquiring into individual *internal* experience,³⁹ and what Polanyi (1983) referred to as tacit knowledge, the deeply embedded knowledge not normally available to our conscious awareness.

Having placed the principles of heuristic inquiry as ‘guideposts’ for the reader throughout the landscape of this thesis (see Chapter one, and especially Table 1), we now reach a defining point: consideration of the research design and its philosophical foundations. On the one hand, a qualitative research mode refers to certain distinctions about the nature of knowledge, how one understands the world, and the ultimate purpose of the research (as stated above). On the other, at another level of discourse, it refers to the research methods, including the way data is gathered and explicated and the type of generalisations and representations that are derived from these data.

Therefore, Part A addresses the theoretical perspectives and qualities of heuristic inquiry adopted for this study, before Part B outlines the methods used to explore the mindfulness of seminaria with teachers and educational leaders (who become research journey companions). Ethical considerations are discussed, including the recruitment of participants, their induction to the mindfulness of seminaria and the nature of the three-phase interview process. I now explain the

³⁸ Mindful that the Camino wherein this study germinated is commonly called *The Way*.

³⁹ Noting Moustakas’s (1990; 1994) primacy of the researcher self.

‘what,’ the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of HI in more detail as it pertains to this study, beginning with the next phase, incubation.

Part A Methodology

Mapping the meaning

3.2 Heuristic inquiry phase three: Incubation

After being extensively immersed in the literature, incubation is the process in which the heuristic researcher retreats from the intensity of the question’s focus (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). For example, as the primary researcher prepares to gather data, it involves alternating between periods of *immersion* in the previous round of gathered data and periods of *incubation* that ‘invite the creative process to do its work while the researcher rests, relaxes and otherwise removes [the] focus from the research inquiry’ (Anderson, 1998, p. 91). From the Latin *incubare* to *incubatio* (brooding), the C17th English verb, *incubate*, is derived and its noun, *incubation*. As I waited, I felt the aptness of its meaning, to care for something, to keep it warm or nourished until ready to emerge in its own right, as, for example, a chick will hatch through the boundary of its egg shell. Implicit is an organic sense of the timing of the incubation. Moustakas himself uses the example of a seed:

Incubation is a process in which a seed has been planted; the seed undergoes silent nourishment, support, and care that produces a creative awareness of some dimension of a phenomenon or a creative integration of its parts or qualities (1990, p.29).

The express value of the incubation phase, for me, is that space is given for awareness with the understanding that on another level there is a knowledge expansion occurring, as Anderson (1998), Ettling (1994), and Moustakas (1990) have each pointed out. That is, having emerged from full immersion in the literature and its review, this stage is now about creating the right conditions for the research to unfold. This includes the careful choice of methodology, planning of steps, and the ethical and other considerations necessary for growing a healthy study. Thus too, with the data to be generated by the co-researchers, ‘the period of incubation [enables] the inner tacit dimension to reach its full possibilities’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28).

3.3 Theoretical perspectives and qualities of heuristic inquiry

The term *heuristics* (See above, 1.2), originating from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning to find out, or to discover, can be used in any social science research endeavour where the inquiry is on the cutting edge of new territory being explored (Sela-Smith, 2002). This is apt because, from the outset of my inquiry, there was no established paradigm for this field, and I had no idea of the territory let alone where the path through it would lead.

Heuristic inquiry is concerned with exploratory discovery, rather than a more conventional goal of testing hypotheses. The inquiry is open-ended with only the initial question as the guide. ‘What works’ becomes the focus of the inquiry, and anything that makes sense to the researcher can be tested. Thus, this trial-and-error process, this discovery of what works, according to Sela-Smith (2002), is the heuristic, guiding the way forward in the same intuitive way that can guide a pilgrim in unfamiliar territory. (On the Camino, for example, in the absence of scallop shell signage,⁴⁰ the intuitive, ‘inner navigator’ has to work a little harder.) As Douglass and Moustakas (1985) point out, the HI methodology attempts to discover the nature and meaning of a phenomenon through internal self-search, exploration and discovery, encouraging the researcher to explore and pursue the creative journey that begins inside one’s being, and ultimately to uncover its direction and meaning.

Because heuristic inquiry can be complex (Moustakas, 1990), I seek to give the reader—like the rope thrown to assist in an unfamiliar river crossing—an explanatory ‘thread of continuity’ as I forge my way. This thread is woven from the form of my understanding of heuristic research requirements as I live and experience them in the process of this study (Moustakas, 1990; van Manen, 1990). The choice of this research design, then, is its fitness for my purpose (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), congruent with my personal and professional practices, both empirical and contemplative, poetic and investigative. In the end, what most has influenced and transformed my worldview, validating the ‘marriage’ between inner and outer signs, is knowing how to trust this intuitive research path. Heuristic research, after all, is transpersonal (from the Latin *trans* meaning beyond or through, and

⁴⁰ The scallop shell is an iconic symbol of the Camino de Santiago, used with yellow arrows to guide pilgrims along their way. Printed on signs, painted on trees or buildings, or as bronze-cast tiles set into pavements, this shell shape resembles the setting sun, coincident with the journey west, finishing at the ‘end of the world,’ the name given to the destination, Fisterra, a contraction of ‘Finis terrae.’

persona meaning mask or façade), and I bring it freshly to attention here to reference a field of research and scholarship that lies beyond or through the personally identified aspects of self that Braud and Anderson (1998, p. xxi) define as seeking to honour ‘human experience in its fullest and most transformative expressions.’

I set out below the theoretical perspectives of heuristic inquiry and its qualities, heeding Moustakas’s (1990) emphasis on obtaining qualitative depictions. These, ‘at the heart and depth of a person’s experience’ (p. 38), mean that, as the investigator, I am able to draw on ‘excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records and case histories’ (p. 38), including depictions of situations, relationships, thoughts, feelings, values, events, conversations, dreams, and so on; hence my sharing of ‘A threshold of discovery’ (Prelude), and the importance of unexplicated verbatim narrative as data (next, in Chapter four).

3.3.1 Heuristic and traditional phenomenological research distinctions

Douglass and Moustakas (1985) emphasise that the heuristic scientist seeks to discover the nature and meaning of a phenomenon and to illuminate it from the direct first-person accounts of those who have experienced it. Phenomenological research (Wertz, 2005), with its various streams and differentiations, requires distinct understandings of method. For this reason, I highlight the four main points of difference between heuristic research and traditional phenomenological research, summarised by Moustakas (1990, pp. 38–39):

- Whereas phenomenology encourages detachment from the phenomenon under investigation, heuristic investigation requires connectedness and relationship.
- Whilst phenomenology permits the researcher to conclude with definitive descriptions of the structures of experience, heuristic inquiry leads to depictions of essential meanings and portrayals of intrigue and personal significance from the search to know.
- While phenomenological research generally concludes with a presentation of the distilled structures of experience, heuristic research may involve reintegration of derived knowledge that is an act of creative discovery, such as a synthesis that includes intuition and tacit understanding.
- Whereas phenomenology loses the person in the process of analysis, heuristically, research participants not only remain visible in the data, they continue to be portrayed as whole persons. Phenomenology ends with the essence of the experience; heuristic inquiry is designed to retain the essence of the person at the centre of experience.

The last theoretical perspective (retaining the person at the centre of their experience of a phenomenon), is congruous with my worldview, which I define as holistic/integrative rather than positivist/reductionist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, pp. 3, 440; also see above, 1.2). Corbin and Strauss (2015) stress clearly that researchers state their orientation at the outset because of its consequent influence on the way knowledge is constructed.

3.4 Ontological and epistemological orientation of the researcher

Consistent with the HI methodology, then, I turn briefly to my own ontological and epistemological orientation (the ways of being and knowing) that I bring to this research. This includes life experience such as earlier described and my subsequent interest, practice and appreciation of Goethean phenomenology. Inspired by the depth of Steiner's work, which has informed and enriched my understanding of educational philosophy and practice (my Master's thesis was in that tradition), are such 'secondary' authors as Gidley (2017), Perlas (2011), and Scharmer (2009). These, alongside others such as van Manen (1990), and Polanyi (1962, 1969, 1983), whose work undergirded my initial doctoral work in the area of teachers' knowing and its transformative effect on their personal–professional life, have added to my eclectic and ongoing 'pilgrimage of meaningfulness.' Polanyi's (1962) expression epitomises my own:

Having made a discovery, I shall never see the world again as before. My eyes have become different; I have made myself into a person seeing and thinking differently. I have crossed a gap, the heuristic gap which lies between problem and discovery (p. 143).

Crossing such thresholds that separate reductionist from holistic perspectives (as two further influences explicate: see Bohm, 1995, and Bortoft, 2012), my training in holographic (resonance) repatterning (Wordsworth, 1996), with teacher Lori Forsyth and, later, induction by her and Rosemareyn van der Sluis (2014) into their own work, 'Quantum Energy for Self-Transformation (Quest13),' I experienced as powerfully and socially transformative. These, together with contemplative practice (Kühlewind, 2008) that I began in the 1970s, have assisted me to synthesise and integrate the insights and learning I have made from multiple disciplines. The interconnectedness of this inner and outer work, over time, I came to experience as 'service' (Zajonc, 2009).

'To make the search within, we need mindfulness and a calm, unhurried attitude. Effort, struggle, goals and a focus on achievements make mindful attention difficult. Self-discovery requires a meditative attitude. You cannot storm the self. Force will not work. . . . Gentleness, time and support are needed.

Nonviolence, love, the presence of supportive people—these blessings are needed. Only they yield up the self so that it may be known and changed. And nothing else does it.’ (Ron Kurtz, cited in personal communication, L. Burrows, March 12, 2015).

Kurtz’s words bring to mind Steiner’s (2004, p. 187) verse, ‘Quiet I bear within me,’ where inner quietness is the great source of strength, the gentle strength, that holds us firm and steadfast in our search for self-knowledge. As Bamford’s introduction to Kühlewind (2008) asserts,

What makes *The Philosophy of Freedom* and the meditative path arising from it . . . radical (and so different from many other paths) is its implicit starting point.⁴¹ It starts where we are, with ordinary thinking consciousness and our given faculties of sensing, feeling, and willing. On this basis, it proceeds by a meditative, step-by-step process of increasing phenomenological self-awareness to an intensification of our cognitive capacities; that is, a metamorphosis of consciousness. Then after a while, and if we persevere, the process may unfold further until it reaches a moment when we experience a new sense of self—the true Self or ‘I am.’ Therewith a new world opens before us, the real world: the world of love. And then, of course, the real work begins: to make those ‘I am’ moments continuous and transformative of the world. (p. 10)

Among the different traditions of meditation and mindfulness formative for self-knowledge have been the following: Ashaya or Nowspace (<http://www.choicethefilm.com>); The School of Spiritual Science, the Mind and Life Institute and its international symposia for contemplative studies (<https://www.mindandlife.org>); meditation as contemplative inquiry with Zajonc (2010a); and the Amphora Group that subsequently evolved in Wellington, New Zealand, associated with Alamandria (www.alamandria.co.nz). To a lesser extent, other traditions have also played a role, such as Mindfulness Works (www.mindfulnessinnewzealand.co.nz), and the mindfulness of Hakomi, in which observation of the human body as a ‘doorway to the unconscious’ (Mommesen-Bohm, 2015)⁴² is a training in phenomenological astuteness, in this case, described as developing the ability to ‘read the storyteller rather than the story,’ an invaluable skill for any teacher. It is important to note in light of these contemporary websites that the tradition of self-knowledge at their foundation harkens back, at least, to the Delphic inscription over the temple of Apollo. Thus, the Ancient Greek order, ‘Know yourself!’ (Γνῶθι σαυτόν), constitutes a pillar of philosophical reflection of all time, ethics and mysticism, permeating cultural heritage since antiquity (Martinez, 2013).

⁴¹ The purpose of *The Philosophy of Freedom* is to lay the foundations of ethical individualism and of a social and political life (Steiner, 1995)

⁴² Founded by Ron Kurtz (1934–2011) on the field of complex living systems, hakomi is the Hopi word for ‘how do you stand in relation to these many realms?’ http://www.goodtherapy.org/famous_psychologists/ron-kurtz.html. See also Kurtz (2005).

Therefore, I sought to bring to educational learning and teaching and to the ‘learning wellbeing’ practices that I ran in Wellington and the Wairarapa a synthesis of such philosophy, theory, psychology, health and contemplative elements, as well as the research questions they raise, during a growing depth of experience, established through practice. In this way, as for every practitioner, the process of one’s ‘doing, being, and knowing’ is stamped with individuality that brings uniqueness to relationships—with self, other/s, nature and source (Burkhardt & Nagai-Jacobson, 2002; Fisher et al., 2002; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2011).

Not to be misconstrued as sentimental, what I strive for is that which Zajonc (2006b) names an ‘epistemology of love.’ That is, ‘the most profound form of knowing by identification’ (Zajonc, 2013a, p. 92), by coming to know something profoundly so that ‘love becomes a way of knowing’ it (Zajonc, 2009). A legacy from my own best teachers, this is the essence I seek to bring to teaching, learning and research.

Given the plethora of paths today, and in deference to Corbin and Strauss (2015), it is methodologically relevant to state the principles that inform my meditation and mindfulness practices. First, the soul is both embodied and transcendent, and the interrelationship of cosmological and evolutionary factors of humankind include the origin, nature, and destination of human ‘being.’ Second, self-transformation and professional development is inclusive of meditative and mindfulness practices that cultivate faculties of perception and cognition, permitting the soul⁴³ life to be more thoroughly recognised in one’s self and in others. Third, the dimensions of life experience in all its many varieties of human encounter, engage one in a relational path of colearning. Importantly, conceptual learning and processing (in accord with the sixth HI phase, creative synthesis), includes artistic experience, so as to absorb the learning deeply, in order that it becomes individually embodied learning (as indicated in the work with students in Chapter one).

While it is important to note—given the phenomenology/heuristic inquiry distinctions outlined above—that HI is regarded in essence as phenomenological, I heed Finlay’s (2009, p. 9) point, that ‘any research which does not have at its core the description of “the things in their appearing,”

⁴³ Soul life: ‘in working out a correct and penetrating definition of soul. According to the norms of his own logic, the nature of a thing as expressed in its definition is the starting point of every demonstration in scientific procedure’ (Owens, 1971).

focusing on experience as lived, cannot be considered phenomenological.’ In a decisively clarifying point from Moustakas himself (1990), he emphasises:

Unlike phenomenological studies in which the researcher need not have had the experience . . . the heuristic researcher has undergone the experience in a vital, intense, and full way (p. 14).

It mirrors my experience of *seminaria* mindfulness in the grounded, sensory way articulated by Finlay (2009, p. 6):

Phenomenological researchers generally agree that our central concern is to return to embodied, experiential meanings. We aim for fresh, complex, rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived.

That concern and those aims precisely are mine in seeking to investigate the mindfulness of *seminaria*.

In considering how my chosen methodology might adequately communicate the aesthetic dimensions of human experience, I value how van Manen (1990, p. 13) points out that:

Phenomenology, not unlike poetry, is a poetizing project; it tries an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice in an original singing of the world.

His words are resonant with the name, ‘*seminaria*’—the research name (see Prelude, and 2.5.2) evoked from the king’s chamber in the Great Pyramid when, like the universe sounding through me in a state of nonduality, I was simultaneously and consciously fully embodied and in control of its continuation and point of stopping.

My experience was redolent of van Manen’s understanding that ‘not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze toward the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sedimentations—and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect’ (1990, p. 12). He too advocates the writing up of phenomenological research as including, ideally, an artistic dimension to ‘stir our pedagogical, psychological or professional sensibilities’ (van Manen, 2007, p. 25). And, as for the language arts:

The words are not the thing. And yet it is to our words, language, that we must apply all our phenomenological skill and talents, because it is in and through words that the shining through (the invisible) becomes visible (van Manen, 1990, p. 130).

Hence, heuristic inquiry becomes increasingly meaningful as the framework for this study of a poetic form (*seminaria*)—mindfully applied.

3.5 Exploring and answering the question

Now feeling 'geared to go,' I first heeded Moustakas's (1990) preparatory advice on how to *generate* the appropriate question. It is vital, he points out, that 'the researcher be alert to signs or expressions of the phenomenon, willing to enter a moment of the experience timelessly and live the moment fully' (p. 44). In Moustakas's later (2015) methodological guidance, he encourages:

In the process of heuristic search, I may challenge, confront, or doubt my understanding of a human concern or issue, but when I persist, I ultimately deepen my knowledge of the phenomenon (p. 309).

3.5.1 Characteristics of the heuristic research question

Without the question itself having the qualities of simplicity, concreteness, specificity, and clarity, cautions Moustakas (1990, p. 41), referring to Kierkegaard's earlier (1941) work, it could lose itself in vague indeterminateness. This last phrase links with a participant selection criterion: an established inner (mindfulness) practice. In setting up my research parameters, I aimed to ensure both design precision and ways to guarantee a purposeful engagement, on the part of the participants, with seminaria, and I spent some time in my research journals pondering the best way to do this. Moustakas states clearly (1990, p. 42) that the ideal research question should have the following characteristics:

- It seeks to reveal more fully the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience;
- It seeks to discover the qualitative aspects, rather than quantitative dimensions, of the phenomenon;
- It engages one's total self and evokes a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the process;
- It does not seek to predict or to determine causal relationships;
- It is illuminated through careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings or scores.

Therefore, in order to be sure that my exploration was guided by the ideal question, I began to practise the mindfulness of seminaria in relation to the following five steps.

3.5.2 Formulating an effective question

Moustakas (1990) advocates a type of 'brainstorming,' a five-step process to assist in formulating the question, namely:

- Listing all aspects of particular interest or topics which represent curiosities or intrigues—jotting them down even if incomplete;
- Clustering the related interest or topics into subthemes;
- Setting aside subthemes that imply causal relationships or contain inherent assumptions;
- Looking at all the remaining subthemes, considering them thoughtfully, until one emerges as central—one that awakens your interest, concern, and commitment;
- Formulating it in a way that specifies clearly and precisely what it is you want to know.

Having formulated the question, *What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice?*, and worked with it extensively as a daily practice, I felt it had met ‘the acid test’ for me as primary researcher. But would it stand up to the lived experience and inquiry of other teachers and leaders, unfamiliar with its form and process and practised for the relatively brief period of three weeks?

The heuristic approach is one that encourages expanding the horizons of scientific enquiry, and, as Polanyi (1983) and Logan and Logan (2001) explicate, knowledge may originate preconceptually, with tacit murmurings that are initially unspecifiable. Because it was just such a pattern of ‘tacit murmurings’ that had guided this study to date, it was important to me that the question above be addressed. Polanyi (1998) posits a person-centred position for understanding scientific inquiry and knowledge:

[T]he act of knowing . . . which shapes all factual knowledge, bridges in doing so the disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity. [Implicit is] that man can transcend his own subjectivity by striving passionately to fulfil his personal obligations to universal standards. (p. 17)

Thus, my personal obligation in exploring and answering a research question is contingent upon its aim and objective. Mine (1.1), with a sample of teachers and educational leaders, is to explore, examine and understand the mindfulness of seminaria as a phenomenon.

I reckoned, as Moustakas (1990) articulates, that having a number of independent co-researchers anticipates the possibility of achieving ‘richer, deeper, more profound, and more varied meanings’ (p. 47). It is a process of using others’ input without losing the heuristic focus of the inner searching self (Sela-Smith, 2002).

In adopting the mindfulness of seminaria as a three-week daily practice, I wanted to find out if they would find new ways, as reflective practitioners, to accomplish practical tasks. Would the contemplative element of seminaria influence how they felt about their personal–professional life

as defined and described in the preceding sections, and as I have framed the question in relation to the growing literature? Would they report any significant inner and/or outer experience?

3.6 The role of the self in heuristic inquiry

Because heuristic inquiry explicitly includes the lived experience of the primary researcher as a focus of the study (Hiles, 2001a), I was initially concerned it might be read as solipsistic. This led me to review many HI studies which revealed, besides self-disclosure, a clear social value as Moustakas (via Hiles, 2001a), explains:

[A] process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. (p. 9)

[While] understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. (p. 9)

Essentially, . . . I am creating a story that portrays the qualities, meanings, and essences of universally unique experiences (p. 13). [There] must have been actual, autobiographical connections (p. 14), and as stated at the outset, with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance. (p. 15)

Further, as Conlan (2004) points out, with reference to Douglas & Moustakas (1985, p. 40), ‘enhancements of the disclosures are further deepened by reference to a broader field of depictions such as may be found in art or literature. It is in this way that the purely subjective exploration becomes a ‘systematic and definitive exposition’ of human experience’ (Conlan, 2004, p. 101). Putting any residual concern to rest, I grew enlivened by the prospect of its cognitive requirements. The term cognitive is broadly defined to include the tacit dimension, and different ways of knowing.

3.6.1 Core cognitive processes of the heuristic inquirer

To give the reader an overview of these processes, I have adapted the following table from Hiles (2001a, p. 3), and with reference to Conlan (2004, p. 99).

Table 2. Summary of the core cognitive processes of the HI researcher

Identify with the focus of the investigation
The heuristic process involves getting inside the research question, living it, becoming at-one with it.
Self-dialogue
Self-dialogue is the critical beginning, allowing the phenomenon to speak directly to one's experience. Recognising that knowledge grows out of direct human experience and that discovery involves self-inquiry and openness to one's own experience.
Tacit knowing
Adding to knowledge that we can make explicit, there is knowledge implicit in our actions and experiences. This tacit dimension is ineffable and underlies and precedes intuition. It can guide the researcher in untapped directions, into untapped resources and sources of meaning.
Intuition
Intuition provides a bridge between explicit and tacit knowledge. Intuition makes possible the seeing of the parts as a whole. Every act of achieving integration, unity or wholeness requires intuition.
Indwelling
Refers to the conscious, deliberate process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of a quality or theme of human experience. Indwelling involves a willingness to gaze with unwavering attention and concentration into some aspect of human experience.
Focusing
Inner attention, a staying with, in a sustained process of systematically contacting the central meaning/s of an experience. Enabling one to see something as it is and to make whatever shifts are necessary to make contact with necessary awareness and insight.
Internal frame of reference
The outcome of the heuristic process in terms of knowledge and experience must be placed in the context of the experiencer's own internal frame of reference (not some external frame).

As Part A has addressed the main tenets of HI as they relate to the framework of this study, we turn now to how, with other educators, the study was conducted.

Part B Methods

The roadworks—constructing clarity

3.7 Teacher–participants as co-researchers

I wanted to know how other teachers as co-researchers would respond to the research question, given, as Patton (1990, p. 71) points out, that participants in a heuristic inquiry become co-researchers who share with the researcher an ‘intensity of experience’ of the phenomenon under investigation. It requires sensitivity to the meaning of the researcher–co-researcher relationship that Finlay and Evans (2009, p. 30) describe as an ‘embodied dialogical encounter.’

The rationale for my choice of teachers and educational leaders as participants—bearing in mind that teaching and learning has been my focus across discourses and sectors, and that research in this field is of particular interest—included the following broader factors:

- The study builds on and contributes to mindfulness research in teacher education (Bernay, 2012; Burrows, 2011, 2013, 2018; Cefai & Cavioni, 2014);
- The mindfulness and well-being of teachers is an issue too rarely addressed by schools in terms of their staff wellbeing (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014);
- Stress is a factor of teacher attrition (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2016; Buchanan et al., 2013; Cameron et al. 2007). Stress reduction through mindfulness meditation (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992; Siegel, 2007, 2010) is shown to be associated with an improved frame of mind, a positive mental outlook and the ability to think of new solutions (Brown & Langer, 1990; Davidson, 1992). Collectively these are critical factors of research worthiness.

However, most importantly, whereas studies on teachers’ mindfulness (meditation) have focused on initial teachers or on more experienced teachers being taught specific mindfulness techniques in order to carry them out with students in a school setting, my heuristic study centres on the teachers (and educational leaders) themselves. It seeks to uncover their experiences of the mindfulness of *seminaria* by investigating the question: *What is the nature and being of seminaria adopted as a mindfully aware practice?*

3.8 Methods for gathering data

My primary data is in the form of interviews from in-depth conversations, in the mode of relational research (Finlay and Evans, 2009) that takes into account Moustakas's 'empathetic phenomenology' (1994), and is sensitive to the meaning of the researcher-co-researcher relationship. The emphasis is on the ethical orientation of researchers in 'setting aside prejudgements and opening the research interview [here I would add, 'and conducting it'] with an unbiased, receptivity' (pp. 180–182). (The recruitment of participants from whom data is gathered, is addressed in 3.10, Ethical considerations.)

First, two primary population sets were identified: (a) teachers and educational leaders in the sectors, early childhood to higher education, of whom more than 100,000 are New Zealand registered (Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015); and (b) mindfulness/meditators who, from aggregating the totals provided by spokespeople from the most prominent mindfulness groups, gave a New Zealand total that exceeded 30,000. The intersection of these two sets (c), although currently incalculable, is the group from which I expected to derive the study sample. Accordingly, advertisements (Appendix A) were placed in prominent education noticeboard sites and nonsectarian mindfulness websites. The selection criteria included: as a teacher, practising for at least five years; as well as having a regular mindfulness or contemplative practice for the previous five years and a predilection for arts-based writing such as poetry, journalism, creative writing or journaling. The second criterion, initially based on self-report, would be able to be verified in phase one at the first interview.

In phase one, the first interview was aimed at screening volunteers for selection. Unlike the phase two and three interviews described below, the first was semistructured, open-ended and conversational (Moustakas, 1994). At separate meetings with individual prospective participants, they were invited to tell the story of their motivation for their own mindfulness and any related contemplative, arts-based practices that may be part of their daily (professional and reflective) teaching and learning. Participants were informed they were free, as per the ethics agreement, to discuss/not discuss any information about their experiences. An interview schedule (Appendix D), designed to be a reliable indicator of authenticity and suitability for recruitment, provided a consistency of screening criteria even if, prior to our first meeting, the content of any communication gave assurance of suitability to participate. The semistructured interview was

designed to elicit standard demographic data, after which, twenty-one further questions were asked about the nature of the candidate's contemplative practices (Appendix D). The interview process was designed not only for screening selection but to establish a relationship of trust and set the tone for the study. Notably, all of the potential participants were found at this stage to be suitable.

The second half of our first meeting was used for induction into the mindfulness of seminaria. At this point the participant was given a carefully prepared journal (blue A4, unlined, hardcovered, elastic band secured), containing support material (Appendix E), for each to continue the process independently on a daily basis (approximately 15–20 minutes), for a period of three weeks. Backup support was offered for their practice of seminaria by email, telephone, Skype, or, within reason, in person. Participants were invited to seek clarification whenever needed on any aspects of the process, in order to maintain it as a daily practice.

Further, built into the research design (and the ethics agreement), was the addition of 'arts-based seminaria mindfulness workshops' to consolidate the practice if necessary or of value to participants.

Phases two and three included the second and third rounds of co-researcher interviews respectively, timed approximately three weeks apart, ten to fourteen days after commencement of the study and again, after completion of their three-week commitment. Voice recorded interviews were timed not by the clock but by 'inner experiential time' in keeping with Moustakas's (1990, p. 46) point of allowing interviewees opportunity to tell their story to a point of natural closing. Interviews were transcribed by myself without using recognition software, in accordance with the potential for gathering finely nuanced data that qualitative study affords (Braud & Anderson, 1998). Transcripts generated from the voice recorded interviews were given to the co-researcher as soon as possible following each interview. They were asked to read each transcript carefully for accuracy of their intended meaning and to make any comments or amendments they considered necessary to verify it as a true and accurate record of their experience of the phenomenon and what they intended to express, before signing and dating it.

3.9 Methods for organising and synthesising the data

The process of data analysis demands a gradual, thorough, steady layering of understanding of seminaria mindfulness until a synthesis of all its aspects is revealed (Hiles, 2001a; Moustakas, 1990).

The method of the layering component as indicated is achieved through attending to four developing elements of the research: the *individual* depictions that will comprise an inherent *composite* depiction (in Chapter four), *exemplary portraits* (addressed in Chapter five) and a *creative synthesis* (exemplified in Chapter six).

The final sequential step in heuristic data organising is the creative synthesis of the experience. Inviting recognition of the unfolding tacit–intuitive awareness developed by the primary researcher, this step brings to expression knowledge that has been incubating over months through the heuristic processes of immersion, illumination and explication of the phenomenon investigated. Because this step fulfils the sixth phase of heuristic inquiry, the creative synthesis is fully explicated and illustrated in Chapter six. In terms of meeting the requirements for this section (the methods for organising and synthesising the data), methodological evidence of heuristic integrity, addressed only briefly here, will accordingly continue to unfold throughout this thesis.

3.10 Ethical considerations

My first step was to ensure internal consistency of this project by ascertaining that all aspects of the research design were congruent with heuristic inquiry, my values and knowledge of the literature, and the gaps that this study sought to address. I was well attuned to the multiplicity of ethical considerations by the time approval for the project was granted on June 17th, 2015 by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC project 6871), and eager to advertise for participants (Appendix A).

3.10.1 Sociocultural sensitivity

Cognisant of need to respect commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi (Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document), and mindful of the principles of partnership, participation and protection, I referred to the document of my former (and again, current) university of employment (AUT), in case any of the participants in this research should subsequently identify as Māori, though in the event, none did. Sociocultural sensitivity includes the need for awareness of how, as a researcher, to minimise influence in the generation of data and their subsequent analysis and interpretation. It can mean 'walking a tightrope between addressing needs and avoiding deficiency, and balancing universal and particular research agendas' (De Souza, 2007, p. 9).

3.10.2 Sensitivity to vulnerability

I knew too, that with any 'inner work' such as mindfulness, there is a risk, no matter how remote, that the activity may trigger emotional issues (Britton, 2014; Burrows, 2018; Lindahl et al., 2017; Shapiro, 1992b). There is empirical evidence that meditation may give rise to negative effects. Although my previous study (N=22; Denford-Wood, 2014a, 2017) found negative effects only as a result of lapses in practice, Shapiro (1992b) found that just over 69 per cent of his meditant interviewees had experienced unpleasant effects during or after meditation and more than 7 per cent experienced profoundly negative effects.

Given the participant sample size of this present study, however, where each was an established practitioner of a contemplative practice, engaging voluntarily in a creative approach with words of their choice, the risk was considered minimal. To mitigate any such risk, though, participants were reminded that their involvement was voluntary and that they may remove themselves from the study at any time without question. In the event that during an interview a participant found the study triggered unconscious material resulting in discomfort, I had undertaken to stop the interview, support an appropriate decision to take a break, move onto a different theme, or to offer other 'due care.'

3.10.3 Mitigating risk of identity

Efforts to mitigate risks associated with participants being identified in this project included undertaking to ask them to nominate an adequately private interview space and a pseudonym. Their true names and any other identifying information were removed for the purpose of analysis/synthesis and not used in publications or other outputs. After recruiting participants, only their consent forms and signed transcripts remained identifiable. I undertook to keep these securely locked electronically and physically in accordance with the university's ethics requirements. Each participant had the opportunity to check the interview transcripts to ensure sufficient de-identification of their comments in the research reports which supervisors check before publication. My commitment to this project was not only the essential ethical stance, 'Do no harm,' but in relational mindfulness terms (Burrows, 2011), a duty of care.

3.10.4 Contact and recruitment

Recruiting participants took longer than scheduled for several reasons including the delay of a publication to mindfulness teachers throughout New Zealand. Additionally, the advertisements resulted in a slow response. However, I had prepared myself for the possibility that if, after several weeks no responses were forthcoming, I would need to be able to ‘walk the talk’ of authentic mindfulness with a stance of calm acceptance and equanimity. Once I resonated with an attitude of ‘letting go,’ it seemed that no sooner had I surrendered to the will of the research itself, with no attachment to any kind of outcome, potential co-researchers began to surface. Hiles (2001a), I later discovered, seemed to know this state of being:

Heuristic inquiry is an extremely demanding process, involving disciplined self-commitment, rigorous self-searching and self-reflection, and ultimately a surrender to the process (p. 2).

Eight people—four women and four men—responded, from whom I selected a sample of the five best fitting the criteria, and who gave assurance that they could commit to the study. The others, with their agreement, were kept in reserve in case of dropout, which occurred with one volunteer, a school principal, who was hospitalised soon after recruitment. The length of her recovery then rendered her also ‘in reserve.’

Snowballing was offered by one participant, which then resulted in my being able to recruit the last planned number of participants (N=5). Information packs were given to potential participants who distributed them to other respondents who showed interest. This method protected the privacy of potential participants and allowed those interested to contact me directly. A further ‘snowball’ (as described in 3.11), resulted in N=6, making the total number of volunteers nine, six of whom are key to this study.

3.11 Participant profile

Three women and two men, of the initial eight people who volunteered to participate in this study, met the selection criteria and agreed to become co-researchers. Using agreed pseudonyms, they are:

- ‘Hope,’ late 30s, a UK secondary school art teacher, now a part-time early childhood teacher and writer in the North Island of New Zealand;
- ‘Gordon,’ early 40s, a primary school teacher of Year 3, experienced haikuist and Zen

mindfulness practitioner, who teaches an evening adult meditation class in the lower North Island, New Zealand;

- ‘Maree,’ late-50s, previously a secondary school physical education teacher who has taught in the International School system in PNG, volunteered in Africa and continues to fund-raise for school building development there; now a New Zealand primary teacher of Years 5 & 6;
- ‘Mikaela,’ in her 60s, a published author and leader in higher education who teaches diverse groups in university and corporate settings in NZ and internationally after earlier careers in journalism and as an artist;
- ‘Murray,’ mid-50s, a UK secondary school principal who has taught extensively in NZ and the UK; an accomplished artisan with qualifications in art and design.

Supplementary evidence came from:

- ‘Olivia’, 50’s, a primary teacher of Year 5, with an earlier successful stage career. She contacted me, at the end of the school year, keen to share her discoveries from a solidly developed seminaria practice, having been introduced to it three months earlier by her colleague, Gordon.

With these participant–co-researchers exploring a totally new process—the mindfulness of seminaria—my aim was to:

- Examine the relationship of each co-researcher to the practice of seminaria mindfulness;
- Understand their essential lived experience of seminaria;
- Identify any praxis of seminaria mindfulness of potential use to others.⁴⁴

The practice of writing seminaria was individually introduced to each participant as outlined (in 2.5 and Appendix E). When given their blue research journal (3.8) with the scholarly background to seminaria’s poetic construction explained, they were encouraged to engage with its syllabic form in a way that was enjoyable, exploratory, and suited their needs by adopting it as a mindfulness practice into their existing contemplative practice/s. I wanted them to avoid any sense of complexity that in the orientation phase might mar their spontaneity or limit them to logical brain ‘getting it right’ (Cropley, 2015; Arrowsmith-Young, 2012). As Einstein (in McGilchrist, 2009) pointed out, the intuitive mind is a sacred gift; the rational mind, its faithful servant. Thus, I encouraged a sense of

⁴⁴ Praxis (Ancient Greek: *πρᾶξις*), the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill—in this case, the mindfulness of seminaria—is enacted, embodied, or realized. Praxis was popularised in education by Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire (1921–1997) as transforming an environment through social action and critical reflection, building social capital towards human flourishing (Freire Institute, 2018).

playfulness whilst exploring this poetic form in a mindfully aware way. From the standpoint of ‘teacher as reflective practitioner,’ I suggested possible applications, including: recording events, solving dilemmas, child study, processing feelings, contemplative inquiry, ‘bookending’ the day, and planning ahead.

3.12 Summary

The point of this chapter, explaining my methodology and methods, is to provide the framework I use to ‘map the meaning’ of my inquiry and carry it out with teachers and leaders who set out individually to explore the mindfulness of seminaria. Their experiences of this phenomenon form the basis of Chapter four. Like the fourth line of a seminaria poem, this chapter is the largest, and focuses on the co-researchers’ verbatim narratives as raw data. Just as the axial line contains the greatest number of syllables and may be experienced as a crossing or turning point, in relation to meaning-making, this next chapter is the middle, major evidence-holding chapter of the seven.

Although the participants themselves would not be required to ‘inquire heuristically,’ I began to wonder to what extent the nature of seminaria’s construct, once engaged with mindfully and developed as a practice (Appendix E), might reveal its meanings? The question I was incubating at this point was, To what extent TMoS might connect co-researchers with their own implicit knowledge?, in the way that Polanyi posits:

Knowledge is an activity . . . better described as a *process* of knowing. (Polanyi, 1969, p. 132).

[The] heuristic process is a way of being informed, a way of knowing. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10).

Finally, two research guidelines initiated me into this study. The first, explained in the opening sentence of this chapter and which applies to all research, was that my methods were chosen to accommodate the topic (in essence, my question: *What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice?*), rather than to follow tradition or the convenience of well-practised methods from previous studies. The second guideline, unique to transpersonal approaches—in this case, heuristic inquiry—was chosen on Anderson’s (1998, p. 90) advice: to set the stage for the phenomenon ‘*to show up*’ [my emphasis]. How the phenomenon of this study shows up is now addressed.

For when the heart goes before like a lamp and illuminates the pathway, many things are made clear that else lie hidden in darkness (Longfellow, 1867, p. 85).

Chapter four Co-researcher narratives as data

Illuminating the mindfulness of seminaria

4.1 Introduction

In terms of this research pilgrimage, I could not assume that the co-researchers, whom I had sent down a similar path to the one I had taken, would find anything of significance. I had taught them the technique and offered suggestions for its application, from which they were free to pursue their own preferences. While I hoped they would help me illuminate the phenomenon, it was by no means guaranteed. So, in true pilgrim spirit, carrying a mood of mindful surrender, I entered this next phase prepared for anything. Provided I was true to the heuristic process, I trusted that some degree of illumination would occur, even if it meant shining a torch back to the starting point. The participants' input therefore, would be crucial to finding out.

4.2 Heuristic inquiry phase four: Illumination

Illumination, a process that occurs naturally (Moustakas 1990, p. 29), happens when a researcher is open and receptive intuitively to tacit knowing (Hiles, 2001a; Moustakas, 1990; Polanyi, 1983). It involves a breakthrough or an experience of awakening, like a door opening to new awareness; modification of an old understanding; a synthesis of fragmented knowledge; or new discovery (Hiles, 2001a; Logan and Logan, 2001). How illumination is reflected in this next research phase is in the light of how each co-researcher helps me to understand this TMoS phenomenon.

4.3 Participants as co-researchers: gathering depictions of experience

What does it mean for participants in a heuristic inquiry to become co-researchers who share the researcher's intense experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Patton 1990)? In sharing the same direct experience as the primary researcher (daily practice of seminaria, mindfully adopted for 15–20 minutes), the co-researchers would need to be people who could reflect richly and report comprehensively on any experience they claim to have had. Would the participant selection criteria (as described in 3.8) support the potential for qualities of insightfulness, self-reflective behaviour, and willingness to say freely what they thought of this subject under investigation?

As indicated, the co-researchers' finely nuanced reports of their seminaria experiences were sought to help illuminate the phenomenon (to be explicated in Chapters five and six). In this sense, the co-researchers' 'voices' and my 'interviewer voice' are present in the exploratory, conversational way characterised by HI: mine, quietly present, drawing out the informants' experience and inner knowing with encouragement, ideally without getting in the way, and sensitive to what it means to engage in 'embodied dialogical encounter' (Finlay and Evans, 2009, p. 30). Meanwhile my 'pilgrim voice' recedes as though into a pedestrian tunnel through a mountain pass, allowing for further immersion and incubation to initiate illumination, as the substance of what all the co-researchers have to report as raw data, is unfolded.

I have created *individual portraits* of the co-researchers from the (signed) transcripts of our conversations. These portraits, as distinct from the *exemplary portraits* (in the following chapter), are defined as individual depictions of co-researcher experiences with the phenomenon 'that [may] include biographical background of the co-researcher' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 19). Appropriate to this study, they are designed to show the uniqueness, richness and strength of each participant in his or her own right.

Furthermore, I have sought to provide, through the curating of this living collection, a form that becomes an implicit *composite depiction* of the phenomenon. My responsibility is to ensure that the individual portraits are presented such that both the phenomenon under investigation and the individual persons emerge in a vital and unified manner (see 3.3.1), leaving the reader free to assimilate the data that are generated. In such representation, it would appear, the true nuanced hue of co-researchers is allowed to shine through.

Thus, this chapter characterises the opening up of the research question to co-researcher investigation. What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully adopted practice? Their depictions of 'the mindfulness of seminaria' follow next, taken verbatim from transcribed interviews and research journals. The source of additional information is the personal and demographic data recorded during phase one.

For the reader, I place the following 'signposts' for clarity:

- The context of the narrative (rather than calendar dates) provides clarity concerning which stage of their exploration they are referring to.

- The text represents the verbatim voice of the respective co-researcher, except where italicised and single-spaced (the primary researcher’s voice in co-carrying conversation).
- Introductory and closing comments in closely spaced text are authorial. Seminaria used in co-researcher introductions are the author’s, unless otherwise cited.
- To respect confidentiality, all names are agreed pseudonyms.
- The practice of indicating participants’ word emphasis by means of italics when pronounced with a heavier stress than usual has been followed to provide nuance.⁴⁵

The six individual portraits begin with that of Hope.

4.4 Co-researcher Hope

Meet Hope
 First sign-up
 Perceptive, U.K.
 Secondary Art teacher
 Experienced, now
 Early years
 N.Z.

I drive to the address Hope has sent me. Arriving in the dark, I feel my way carefully along the lane, tripping the automatic light in time to descend confidently down flights of concrete steps to the house set into the hillside. The door is opened by Hope, a fair-haired woman in her late thirties or early forties. My first impression is of her Raphaelic face, reminding me that she is an art teacher temporarily working in early childhood.

As though setting the tone for her own investigation of seminaria, Hope begins by asking, Shall I read a poem? I nod warmly, noticing the glowing fire in its hearth and my rising excitement that her question touches a central theme of this thesis—the synthesis of teachers’ inner and outer work (as described in the Prelude). She begins:

Looking is a marvellous thing, One space spreads through all creatures equally, inner world space. Birds quietly flying go, flying through us. Oh, I that want to grow, the tree I look outside at, is growing in me.

As Rilke [she adds] wrote in a letter to his wife, Clara, after looking at Cezanne’s pictures in the Salon d’Automne, Paris, October 1907.

For me, seminaria have been making such images! Expressing what’s inside of me but also reflecting to my inner being what I have expressed—like a lemniscate [shows a figure-of-eight movement with her right hand], the relationship between inner and outer. The *point* of the lemniscate is the

⁴⁵ See Henry (2013).

seminaria. It anchors the meeting point between the inner and the outer. In the symmetry of its lines and syllables it's like a reflection, and this certain point like a mirror perhaps. Sometimes it's the first line, because I've been writing seminaria so they're almost like verses in a poem. It just depends on what you're writing and the flow. It can change depending on what's happening at the time.

Can you highlight some examples of the crossing point in different places? Is that possible? Or . . . if you happen to find them at some point—not necessarily now.

I'd be interested to . . . [reflective pause] because in some of them there's a flow. Some of them though, are very much like *Doomp!* That's it! [a] single one.

How did you first discover this relationship with seminaria and Rilke's poem about the tree?

I keep a poetry file of quotes that mean something to me. I did an amazing workshop, 'exploring inner landscapes,' about learning to use a sketchbook for personal, creative work. This was one, I think, from Central St. Martins in London, a profound three-day workshop, the first step to realising I could do creative work expressing something from *within* me rather than just more about style and design. My first painting from a dream of Africa to do with my granny who'd spent time in Kenya; my first connecting something from my inside to my outside. I looked at the picture and went, 'That's it! That's come from within . . . something different than I've ever created.' In [my] only exhibition . . . *Soulsapes* or something, I painted my dreams and I started a kind of *practice* learning to express what's inside and get it out. Since then I've kept sketch books of ideas and pictures.

Seminaria's much more succinct, captures it in such a quick way, whereas often painting a picture, I find I get bogged down feeling, 'Oh, that's not what I really wanted.' With form, figure and colour—complicated, whereas, seminaria's such a simple form. So I can imagine myself going on to produce an actual image, but if time is of the essence, then actually, I find seminaria really helpful. It captures something, expresses it without getting all my art materials out. I mean, I got stuck in traffic and I wrote one the other day. It's quite accessible, quick and easy to use.

So the material you need is within you . . . language . . . words at your fingertips. . . ?

With the words though, I do sometimes think, Oh dear, I don't have much vocabulary. So my mind can cut in and halt the process but, the same when I'm creating an image, and actually [pauses

reflectively] my mind has everything it needs for drawing, painting, *or* writing. It's probably just my ego trying to put in the seed of doubt 'cause actually, it doesn't matter how simple the words are, it can still create something quite profound. You don't need a huge vocabulary.

When I use *seminaria* in a meditative, rather than in an intellectual, way it doesn't actually matter what the words are because I tap into that inner meaning—inner resource—whatever that is, the connection between the outer and inner. It's a spiritual thing, like you're the vehicle for something. I mean it's not even you; there's no *egotism* in it. You're tapping into a source and so when I'm struggling with my intellect [while] writing, I go into a meditative place with *seminaria*, I let go of my ego. [My] mind becomes empty but then the vision comes, whether it be words or picture . . . and I don't just mean it comes to mind intellectually, I mean it comes to mind as a feeling or *knowing* what needs to be written or painted, through the pencil or brush.

That's what I mean by *not knowing* whether it's from outer or another source, or whether it's inner . . . but it's that interconnectedness. It's about a *connectedness*. That's what I mean about the point of the lemniscate . . . a point where there's no direction. Just a point. I can't quite explain but I have the feeling of it. It's quite hard to put into words.

Go on . . .

It's when you lose yourself. I lose myself in creating pictures or it could be just the sensations of spreading paint around—you can become quite rhythmic and lose all sense of form and figure. In a way, that's what happens with *seminaria*, like I stop thinking about what I'm writing and I just write it. It's that empty blank canvas mind-space or whatever you want to call it. (Lots of people would probably call it lots of different things.) [reflective pause] But that's what I've experienced with *seminaria*.

Is there an 'Aha' moment of discovery then, when you see what you've actually written?

If I have time to read it back. *Either* I get left with a feeling I don't *need* to read it back because it's changed something in me for having written it. It's irrelevant *what*, if it's not for anyone else to read. It's that transformation, it's healed something within me or I feel a sense of rightness or, perhaps if I'd felt stuck, I can feel my energy flows again so I can move on. *Or*, I read it back and it reflects back to me that inner and outer thing—what I know is inside me. Then there's a sense of attunement;

like a therapist and a client, or with a friend. Like mother and child, that real sense of affirmation and attunement, a *meeting*.

A relational connectedness . . . ?

Yes, and it can have a sense of transformation.

I've used seminaria quite a few times when writing. I'd found it really, really difficult to get into the flow of my [other] writing. When I started using seminaria to write about how stuck I felt and how there weren't any words coming, it was like a tool. I would write about how stuck I felt and then I could feel my energy flowing. Then I would either write another seminaria or start writing one of my stories, and that just created a different energy flow.

I've used seminaria too because I have all these ideas for a story or I've got all these different ideas for all these different stories. I don't know, is this *one* story or is it four? I've started to use seminaria to work out what my story is, in a very simple form.

So it's also simplifying what feels too complicated, too big to unpick, too overwhelming; all of those things . . . reduces it to a simple form. It might get bigger and more complex again but I need to anchor it in simple form at that point, in order to be able to move forward.

I might use three weeks doing seminaria for you for this project, but I know that I'll keep using it. It has *such* value . . . it's so helpful and such a good tool for so many different things but actually I *enjoy* it as well. I get a kick out of writing them, the 'feel good' factor but essentially, it's more than that. I will continue to use it now as part of my creative practices.

I can imagine myself—not necessarily with the children that I work with at the moment because they're so little—but I can imagine if I go back teaching older children, getting the kids to write them. Also, if I'm sitting there in my lunch break and I'm struggling with a class or needing something, I can imagine it being a really good tool. Depending on the age of the class and what's happening—you could sit and write one there and then because it is so quick. But yeah, the value is . . . it has huge potential.

The nature of teaching for so many educators I know—you work and the stresses and the obligations and the expectations of you are over and above a lot of other jobs. I mean there's emotional involvement, you're dealing with behaviour, academic levels, policies, admin., aspects of the job I

think a lot of people don't realise unless they've actually done teaching and often it is to the detriment of the person who's teaching.

The busyness I've been talking about with my teaching at the moment, seminaria's a good tool for when you *don't* feel mindful, you know. I literally have a fifteen-minute break for my lunch. Sometimes half an hour—which is okay. I understand how it works. I get there later and leave earlier, and we're all just taking very short breaks, but actually, it doesn't leave much time for reflection. So the next time I pick up my phone and think, Oh, I'll just get an email done, actually, I could write how rushed I feel. Doing a seminaria around that, would lead me to feeling more grounded, more centred and less rushed because of the process and what it does to you, as well as expressing the issue outwardly—so watch this space [chuckles]. I'll try and do that!

I take my leave with gratitude for Hope's trust, her earnest enquiry and openness to share. Groping my way in darkness to the foot of the path, I'm glad when the sensor beams light back onto the steps. I feel lighter inside with the revelation of what she has shared. Her commitment is clear and her application diverse. Three weeks later, more footsure, I return for our final recorded interview. Hope welcomes me robustly with the fullness of her lived experience. Seated once more at the table by the fire, we resume our 'teacher talk' in relation to the mindfulness of seminaria.

How many people I know put the children first, don't take time off sick because they know that the children will get behind. It's a bad profession for that, so even more important that the teachers care for themselves, because you're caring for *others*. A lot of caring professions would be like this—about *their* needs before *yours*. Whether they be early years or high school—a lot of it is set up for others' needs; not one's self. So with the speed, the pressures of time—all of those things are so great that seminaria actually is really such a quick tool, a quick grounding exercise that you can do within that busy schedule, because you can't necessarily go for a nice walk, if you're on duty. There's a lot of constraints to the work [we do] in education.

Is this one way then of meeting a personal need alongside your professional responsibilities? Because personal–professional integrity, authenticity, the totality of who you are as a person matters, doesn't it?

And your *presence*. You know, I think that's where education's gone a bit skew-whiff. There's so much about *what* you're teaching and for young people who don't have a certain presence in their life, you're spending a lot of time with your teachers and educators so probably it's more beneficial for teachers to be authentically themselves, to be grounded, attuning to the children. It's not all about academic content with early years. The learning is about being *alongside* them. If you're

disconnected from yourself, you can't be properly present or bring presence. Even if the children don't consciously notice it, they're going to pick up on it on some level.

And that's the part of me that becomes more self-conscious when I'm there, because I'm aware of it, and then my being aware of it doesn't necessarily help me, because it takes me into my head and I start thinking about it rather than becoming more connected. [Sometimes] being aware of something makes you disconnect first and then you have to work at, and practise becoming more connected.

Whereas in therapy you have a therapist who witnesses your pain or your struggles—just having someone witness and be empathic, ask you the right question, is healing and can be transformative. So if you're working on your own and you use seminaria, it's *just you* witnessing. Or even *not you* witnessing but seminaria is witnessing *you*. So you've expressed something and you feel like, That's hit the nail on the head! That's exactly how I've expressed what I needed to express. There's no one there watching but that's where seminaria—I might sound a bit bonkers now—takes on the quality of being a witness to you.

So is it like the mindfulness of seminaria is attuned (to use that word you used earlier) with your 'essential' self and your 'everyday' self so that when you experience blocks, it can serve to reconnect these aspects of yourself? Is that what you're describing?

Yes.

Supporting you to truly express yourself, by removing hindrances along the way?

And expression—having your expression *got*! It's *you* that's *getting* it. You don't need someone else to say, Oh I really hear you; I see your struggle with that. That can be healing, but in a way, seminaria when it's written, is reflecting *that* quality back to you. Even when I don't read it back, just having expressed it, I feel better. It's like an attunement to that expression and that feeling.

It mirrors it back. So you don't even have to read it. It's just getting the words out and again, the flow of the energy. Especially the ones where the energy just flows, the words just come. That is healing in itself. You might be feeling struggle, or pain or whatever, and just the sheer ease of the words starting to flow, that in itself, is healing. I've had a few where I've written like that. The first one feels a bit sticky and the words don't quite come but when I write more than one, the theme flows.

Again, you might be having a bad day with certain struggles in an area of your life. If I then keep writing seminaria around that [struggle] there begins to be a rhythm and a flow to it that is physically, a 'guest,' a change in the body. Actually, there's a flow of ease with the writing where, maybe before that, your body had felt quite uncomfortable, on edge, or stuck, or whatever, if that makes sense?

It does. When you describe it like that, it reminds me of a therapy practice I used to have, articulated from a view of coherence and non-coherence . . . seems to me you've just exemplified that process, where something's made whole again (or coherent) by a process that first identifies the non-coherence. Like where some part of you is not resonating with the whole. Then a process—in this case, the mindfulness of seminaria—enables you to get back to a sense of flow and coherence?

Yes, and in a way, that's what seminaria is, it's a *physical* experience. It's a physical transformation that's happening, but then you add to that, the fact that it's words as a form, so you're using your intellect. And then there's the whole feeling aspect so just from that, actually, it's a whole-being experience . . . because you're using different parts of yourself. You're probably using the left and right side of your brain. Your body is having an involvement, and even—this is me being very 'old school'—for me, writing, the physical act of writing. I can't imagine writing seminaria on my computer. I have on my phone when I don't have paper with me, but there's something for me about physical flow, and when I write my stories, I don't write them on the computer. I use a pen and pencil. They have to flow out from my body, down the pen, onto the page. That's a physical need for flow and a certain quality, that 'digital' for me, doesn't have.

Did you hear that RNZ interview about Ben Okri writing by hand for the same reason?

He writes massive novels, doesn't he?

Yes, and there's educational philosophy that values handwriting 'cause it uses the rhythm you described, cursive writing flowing rhythmically from the body (lungs and heart aligned with arms and hands and brain) whereas, what I experience writing seminaria digitally, is more nerve and sense, intellect and fingertips—which can be quick and convenient, but I find there's a different quality when I write them by hand, for the reasons you highlight.

Yeah, you know I sent you that link about Elizabeth Gilbert who talked about the poems that would thunder across the fields to her—and Tom Petty who is in his car and melody comes to him and he's like, 'Not now! Can't you see I'm driving!' Well, actually, if there's a really *insisting* seminaria that wants to be written, then it doesn't make any difference whether it's pencil or iPhone. Like, typing it on my phone when it's urgent—there's a seminaria that *needs* to be written. Like, just get it down!

It's already there. So actually that doesn't make any difference what writing modality you use because the seminaria's already there on the tip of your tongue or [hand]. Whereas, I think the whole digital versus handwriting question, if you're blocked and unsure, and you've got to try and help something come [then] the difference between rhythmical and digital writing is that the longhand can facilitate it.

Reminds me too of poet Mary Ruefle, out here for Writers and Readers Week. At a lunchtime seminar with Bill Manhire [Institute of Modern Letters], a question from the floor was, 'How do you know if you have a new poem or it still requires a lot of reworking?' She replied, 'The poems that just won't leave me alone,' which echoes what you said before.

Liz Gilbert was talking about the genius and the fact that people are taking credit for their own creative work now, whereas it used to be, that you would have [reflects], I think it was called 'the genius,' some sort of spirit that would help you with your creative work. Like that poet who says that the poems would thunder across the field and she'd have to run inside to get her pencil. Sometimes she wouldn't have the pencil ready. She'd have to pull it back by its tail, sort of thing, and then it would come out, but written backwards with the last line first. [It] seems she has that quality and how much of it is yourself or another source, who knows?

So the being of seminaria itself, how it was constructed—if you look at its origin—seems to have an understanding within it of what you've just said, in that it harkens back to some of those early philosophers, and it also has a modern theory-U presencing element in it as well. So, where does this lead us. . .?

I was thinking about the form and the symmetry of the form. I was working at an intermediate school where we did illustrated haikus because they were studying poetry and because I was an art teacher I always got them to illustrate everything. I had to write examples with them. I didn't feel like things were quite finished; like they were left hanging because of the form of haiku. And that's something again, I feel about wellbeing—seminaria feel relatively finished because of the 2 syllables up to 7 and back to 2. It creates a completion and when I was doing art therapy, we looked at the gestalt of stuff where you have a *completion*. There's something for one's wellbeing about having things that are not left hanging. That's actually why going back to the 2 and having a symmetrical form, regardless of whether you start in the middle, start at the end and what lines come to you, when. The sheer completion, I think, is quite healing. Plus, I can't remember if I said in the last interview, but there's something about the containment of seminaria that's helpful for my wellbeing

because I'm a person who can go off on these tangents. The structure of having a form to write in—in a way it's like packing a suitcase.

You go on holiday and you think, 'Oh goodness, I could take that and I could take that and I could take that and that' and before you know it, you've packed a carload! But actually, literally, you just have a bag because the seminaria is like, 'That's *it*.' That's all you're allowed so instead of being restricting, I actually have found it to be incredibly—what's the word—liberating! It creates an opening rather than a restriction because of the containment, a bit like with a small child, creating a boundary for them actually gives them freedom. And there's something about that for me, especially as a writer, 'cause I'm trying to write and I never felt like I could express myself, I always did things *visually* so now having that boundary, that containment of form . . . creates infinite possibilities that I didn't think it would be (especially for the reams and reams of paper that I write, and notes and notes and notes). All these ideas become overwhelming and the simple form of this seminaria is like, 'Right! That contains it.' And that is another point about its focus.

I've been trying to look at, *How do I learn to focus?* 'Cause I realise that I've never really focused and in terms of discipline, a lot of themes in my life—as teacher, parent, artist, whatever it is, without that sense of focus—you can have as many ideas as possible but it doesn't come to fruition if you can't focus. That sense of things being unfinished or spiralling out of control, whereas seminaria's elements and qualities create such a focus, it prevents that from happening. Or, all those ideas, thoughts or feelings that you have—it helps bring them into focus, which again, is a healing thing I've found for my wellbeing. So this form, seminaria, it's for me becoming a bit of a metaphor in my life as a way to focus.

Seminaria practice is like a threshold that I'm going through and like my talisman that I'm taking with me as a tool to help me focus. Seminaria can go across from your personal life to your working life to your creative life. It's a tool you can apply to all of those. You just might use it in a different way.

As you said, you got stuck in traffic and wrote one. Do you have any other situational examples?

Well, my Mum's been ill. I wrote one in the hospital when I didn't have a friend to chat to or have anyone to chat with me but it helped anchor the feelings I was having, feeling overwhelmed. It helps me connect with myself and be a bit more grounded in a situation that's quite full-on and intense.

Oh, that was the other thing, I struggle with clutter. As a child, I didn't. Everything had its place and sense of order but this issue arose when my granny died and my mum inherited a vast amount of stuff. Probably due to her not being able to let go because of emotional processing, we ended up with [it] all. It's actually become, like, [a family] hoarding tendency and I don't want to be like that. Yet I've found myself struggling with stuff especially since having children. All this stuff!

Seminaria feels like . . . a bit of a journey to de-clutter. Seminaria's helping me do that as *well!* So even in my physical home space, seminaria is helping me focus so I've written some about clutter. And then it's like the clutter of all these stories and I don't know which one to start on. I start on one and then I can't work out, 'Is this one story, or is this three of my stories combined?' So, that real sense of clutter—whether it be in my actual physical home or my studio that has too much stuff in it, or in my head—too many ideas, so yeah, seminaria is a good declutterer! [appreciative chuckle]

Interesting, because this work arose for me partly from walking the Camino Santiago de Compostela, everything I need for a good life in seven kgs on my back! I thought, Why do I have a house full of stuff? knowing some of it's biographical reminders of experience that shapes who I am but . . .

Even that! I've got rid of a whole *load* of journals. I burnt a load of stuff realising, I *don't* need all that any more. A lot of my writing was working out issues and relationships in diaries [but] with seminaria and the lightness of it—'cause even when you deal with something heavy—when you write one, you feel lighter.

There is something about seminaria that really does create a 'here and now' and in terms of mindfulness and meditation, essentially . . . without judgement, just being where one's at, in the moment. Mindfulness and meditation . . . in a way, what happens is that, when you write one, even if it's about your childhood, there's something connecting with yourself in the here-and-now, through writing it, which makes you feel lighter. I just found this one. I've got all these stories I want to write, I get so confused.

Story
Come to me
You are welcome here
To get to know each other
I've made space for us.
Come and play
With me.

(I'd felt really bogged down and in my head; all these ideas and all these trillions of bits of paper). Then suddenly, I just sat down, I wrote that, and I started smiling, because there's a playful quality about it. And it's so simple. It's not even the vocabulary, nothing fancy but it captured—almost with a sense of humour—what the situation was, with a lightness.

So that harkens back to something you said last time, about enjoyment.

Yep, I really enjoy writing them. [points in journal] That one I wrote, was it yesterday; rushing up and down to the garage to get wood and taking some stuff to the charity shops. It was all about rushing and the busyness. I had a little definite time frame and as I was walking up, the camellias were looking so beautiful! I stopped, I laughed, and I wrote a seminaria there, looking at the camellia and it had this playful quality. A lot of my seminarias written when things have been really tough the last few months, have been about coping and processing difficult things. This was one of like, real joy:

Dewdrops
Glistening
Fills my heart with joy!
Soft camellias open –
Take my breath away!
Small pleasures
Mean much.

It was a joyous moment. Seminaria's also about capturing the enjoyment and the pleasure, and so when you're writing it, it's sort of playful whereas the last one like that I wrote:

Bare trees
In winter
The bleakness in me
Sing like a bird on a branch
To renew my soul
To find hope
And joy.

So there's a totally different quality and a lightness, having written that despite the bleakness that I was feeling that day and I have no idea why, but there's still a playful quality because of being able to use language like, a line about a bird! Using metaphors and similes in your seminaria—a kind of creativity comes in, which is playful. It could be about something even very disturbing but the nature

of using your creative words—the language—that is playful, despite the heaviness of the feelings that you may have—that you’re trying to express. Does that make sense?

It does. Do you want to read one or two more?

This is a good example of a day that I was really challenged by things that were happening:

Living
And feeling
With clouds overhead
How do I get them to go?
To give me a break,
To feel free,
Lighter.

That’s a really good example of something I’ve written where literally, the beginning—you feel the clouds overhead and not thinking what I was going to write—was totally spontaneous and by the end, seminaria has helped me find a way through. Even the last line is ‘lighter’, [a] sense of self, seeking out something. So—feeling very heavy, overwhelmed by what’s happening—then through writing it, words started to come, like I wanted to feel lighter and by the words coming, talking about feeling lighter, after writing that, I felt lighter.

When you mirror the resolution ‘lighter’ (reversing the paired syllables) which now say: Lighter living; (which is wonderful, associatively), To feel free, and feeling; To give me a break, with clouds overhead (like giving you a break from that); How do I get them to go?

Oh, I’ve never done that. Yeah!

Doing that, I find, can accentuate somehow, a resolution or the end of the process, whether it takes you to an unexpected place—if you mirror it back to where you began. See here [Hope’s example]: ‘My self, My soul; My voice; New calm.’

Found my voice! Oh, I must write that down.

In your blue journal at the back. [flicks over to the guideline notes]

Mirrored yeah, [reads] ‘Now the five steps are mirrored and deepened; the psyche finds peace and attention as the fifth step reflecting the third . . .’ Is that what you mean?

Yes. Hey, this is great thanks, all this depth of sharing, your lived experiencing of seminaria.

I’ll finish on this one then:

Glowing
Warm and light
Embers of hope's fire
How can I ignite the flames
They struggle to catch
But hope wins
And shines.

That was about 'hope'; then I realised my pseudonym! I've been really enjoying writing seminaria. I feel really blessed that you introduced it to me.

I feel blessed that you volunteered because you're going so deeply, broadly and creatively into fields and areas I had not considered. I'm deeply grateful. [Ah, mutual then, she rejoins.]

4.5 Co-researcher Gordon

Teacher
Of Year Three
Zen Buddhist background
Philosophical, grounded
Lover of haiku
Practical
Peaceful.

I was looking forward to meeting with Gordon, wondering whether what he would say about his new seminaria practice would reflect both his role as a middle school teacher and that of an adult meditation teacher. After a good drive north, I arrive early and still myself in the library room made available for our interviews. Through north-facing windows, sunlight slants across the path; all is quiet but for intermittent birdsong. When Gordon enters he appears to carry a deeply peaceful presence, one that is no stranger to the twinkle of humour that readily plays across his otherwise earnest face. A strong-looking man in his mid-forties, Gordon's head of dark hair already shows a distinguishing silver at the temples.

Thank you Gordon for coming to the library, today. Tell me how you're experiencing the mindfulness of seminaria . . .

Spontaneous, quite hard to keep up as a daily practice amidst other commitments but it's a practice I'd like to continue. In terms of how the practice has unfolded, firstly, I experienced quite a strong tension in the writing, because I've always written a lot of haiku. Given the structure and nature of the seminaria poem, it was quite hard for me to move away from the haiku, a very, very *different* form—though it has the syllables and that, the way it resolves itself is very different.

Initially, I tried to write seminaria like a haiku which didn't suit the overall balance of the poem. From a *technical* perspective, I experienced tension and once I began to resolve that, as one might expect, I experienced *other* tensions, technical questions, my *vocabulary* [little laugh of self-recognition and humility in the face of language's enormity]. Finding the words—that's the *outer* experience. Then, as I moved *in*, how I experience any spiritual practice I engage in, it took me to my *limit*, to my boundary if you like. As a *new* practice, I found I was often experiencing that boundary as a tension between heart and head, staying with the stillness of the inquiry, so opening up to something from beyond and the need to interpret that and put it into words.

I did have a conversation with my colleague 'Olivia' about the form of seminaria. She was writing them too and helped me get some clarity because as a former professional actor (going back some time for her), she said that's how she experiences acting. You have to know the lines. To learn them you use your *head* and then of course, to *let go into the experience beyond* those lines so the *character* emerges. You couldn't really *think* your way into a character, she said. You had to *open up* to something and so I found that's where the practice of seminaria has been and continues to be for me: seeing the necessity to work in *both*, you know—the *heart* and the *head*—opening up to the object or the theme, allowing something to become apparent that's from outside, and then interpreting it; putting it into words but then going back; opening up again.

Sometimes, if I was tired—if I felt more closed you might say—I ended up being more in my *head* and what I *tended* to do—when you look in here [opens research journal]—I couldn't write just *one*. I'm quite retentive [laughs]. I like them organised and neat, but when I'm working creatively, I like a big bit of paper and I scribble and I write. So what tended to happen, as *process*, sometimes, I didn't want to change them at *all*. I felt—No, that's where I want to leave them. But more often than not, I would say, whilst I might start out feeling quite open, I would tend towards more of a head experience *as* I moved into the poem. Later on when I became more *open*, I would gradually shape it into the form that I wanted it to be. Having said that, as a practice, I'm definitely experiencing more of my poems, of late, are revealing themselves in their unedited form at the beginning, which I think would indicate that, as an *inquiry*, I'm able to stay more *open*, and not becoming fixed in the head. For example:

Cold news
Yesterday's
Words, precise and crisp

Crumpled in the blackened grate
Burnt by intense heat
Today, light
And warm.

Definitely with the poems—when I’m writing them, I know when I’m *there*, and [conversely] when I’m not able to maintain connectedness and it becomes [just] a head experience. Similarly, I know when I’ve written one and maintained an openness that I’m happy with.

Has the process become more practised for you, leaving you freer to be open, and are you finding seminaria serves what you need, say for a child or a dilemma, or problem-solving?

Yes, *definitely*. Those two things have happened so it’s twofold definitely. The poems *lately* are to do with that very *thing* . . . trying to penetrate to the heart of what a child’s needs are. So, for example, last week lots of my recent poems are about a particular boy [of concern]. I’ve come again and again and again to the seminaria so there’s *definitely*, definitely that element there. Other more *pressing* themes have come in but I did find, gradually, many of the poems were to do with just real simple, *everyday* things.

The actual form of seminaria itself, do you sense that it has a ‘beingness’ of its own that is supporting you in your work in some way?

Yes. I think that would have been my *starting* point anyway. I think every poetic form has a ‘*beingness*’, if you like—a collection of subtleties and dimensions that are particular to that form. As I said, I think one of my initial difficulties was that the form I’m most familiar with is the haiku. So, I’d say I’m still working my way into seminaria in that sense.

The haiku at its zenith is an attempt to convey non-duality. That’s its purpose. So there are many stories within the Zen tradition of something akin to the notion that a great haiku poet writes *one* haiku in their lifetime and a master writes *two* . . . that idea that the goal, the objective of a non-dual experience is uttered onto the paper. In that process, at its zenith, I’d say that the head isn’t involved any more. It *transcends* the head. It’s just an *experience* and within that experience, the experience isn’t lost.

And as I said, with the seminaria, I’m finding it very different as a form. Whilst ultimately it might lend itself in that direction, I’m finding the way *I’m* using it anyway, is more as a form of *enquiry* . . .

which is very different. I don't think a haiku starts with a question. In fact, I think a haiku would fail if it started with a question.

So the quality of the seminaria, I sense at the minute, will increasingly depend on the quality of the question or the enquiry I begin with. I think I'm reasonably good at sitting with things and opening up. I don't know if I'm so good at forming a question that leads to insight into a particular object.

This reminds me of the question you raised earlier about 'effortless effort' in relation to the nature of what it means to be human. That is, how intention is transformed into action through an emotional (heart) response to the process of thinking, or alternatively, cognitive processes motivating action through feelings. Because if it's not heart warmed, the thought doesn't necessarily lead to action. Could the 'effortlessness of the effort' be to do with enthusiasm do you think?—Greek 'entheos,' 'the god within' or source of insight in the original etymology of the word . . . so I wondered whether you're discovering through your process of inquiry into 'effortless effort' . . . some interrelationship of how thinking, feeling and will (in mindfulness mode—attention, attitude and intention) interpenetrate?

Yeah! It's certainly a theme. I'll answer this in a roundabout fashion because I did *sit* with that question, *What's the nature of effort?* It took me back into a concept that I came to a long time ago. In Buddhism you have the idea of the arising of the will to enlightenment or the Bodhicitta so there's a loose understanding that it's often seen as gravitational. So you have two planets. You have Earth, and you might say this [other] represents enlightenment or transcendence. In this analogy, there's an *effort* required at the beginning just like there is for a rocket to leave the Earth's atmosphere. If the rocket stopped, it would plummet back to Earth, but once the rocket's broken through the Earth's atmosphere, it can't fall back. It's propelled by the pull of this other planet. In this particular formulation it's the arising of the Bodhicitta the recognition that we're *inseparable* from all beings; therefore, *their* wellbeing becomes as important to us as our own. So, we're not talking about an intellectual idea . . . and when that *spark* begins to *ignite*—it becomes an overpowering *force* (without falling into clichés) of *love* for *all* beings. So if you look at Buddhist practice, that's always the intention. You know, all the things you read on t-shirts: 'May all beings be well and be happy.' All practices aim at triggering that spark. And once that happens, there's a very different type of effort and so, just as you could see in the gravitational pull, the pull to transcendence is now greater than the pull of our conditioned existence, our selfish desires. So that's the image that comes to mind when I think of 'effortless effort.'

But I do think—although it's hard to unpack seminaria's influence from other things happening in my life—it's had an impact. One of the things I'm reflecting on a lot is the nature of *connectedness*

within this experience of seminaria. One of the wonderful things about coming from another spiritual tradition is it uses a different language, different pictures; requires me to look at everything *afresh*. We can only know an object by its influence. So you don't know a drop, you know the ripples. So by its influence, interpenetrable experience. You influence me; I influence you. I don't know Gaylene. I experience the influence that we're having *upon* one another. So that's a very strong theme of my experience and I think they're all related to each other because that gives rise again to *What questions am I asking?* I'm not trying to penetrate the object. I'm trying to *connect* with the ripples that that object's creating—the layers of connections that I *can* perceive.

It's a kind of experience, isn't it. I'm not adding anything to your description here, but can I relate it to something you said earlier about tension? You were describing the stillness and then the practice of writing which is movement and there's this transition between them into which something can arise or arrive, and the actual 'taking it up' which is, maybe, related to the effortlessness of effort?

Yes! I'm *with* you there, and that was something I started thinking about again in relation to that question, 'What's the *nature* of effort?' I've experienced quite a few of the Dos when I lived in Japan. The Dos, the Ways—it's the same Chinese character as the idea of the Tao, or Dao, the Way. One of the images that I've come across that helps me understand the relationship between the two, is the idea of *practice* versus *transcendence*. So in most of the ways—Kendo is the way of the sword, Judo's the way of throwing and moving, Chado's the way of tea—they're very elaborate forms to learn. So you have a very strong *structure*, but that's never the object. The object is to become so familiar with the structure that you can *leave* it behind. That's the idea in all of the ways; that ultimately, if you put that into a particular form, like Chado is the way of tea. So when you study the tea ceremony you're trying to imbue it with [reflects], There's a saying: 'Ichigo ichie' so every moment, an opportunity.

Just like *this* moment's an opportunity. We will never have this moment again. This is a moment that will never repeat itself. And in that way, it's remarkable. If it *was* to be recognised as what it *is*, our hearts would burst open. So the Chado, the tea ceremony aims at recognising that in presenting someone with a *cup of tea*, something *enormous* is happening. So the idea is, you learn this *form* and gradually you try to *imbue* the form full of *love*, until in the end, the form and the love and the person are inseparable. That's the general idea and I can see that in the *practice* of seminaria and like, maybe the question's a 'training wheel' [chuckles at the image] you know, training wheels

enabling me to narrow my focus, and to bring my energy behind something. But I can certainly see the possibility.

If I practise seminaria they feel more *fluid* for example and I can certainly see, maybe there could be a time in many years where I've mastered it enough that I can *enter* that *flow* [and] I don't have to leave it. (I find I'm leaving it. I dip into it and I leave it.)

Well I think the originator, giving a forty minute presentation on something, formulates it from this poetic form, then can free-render from the condensed ideas or essence of the form.

It's interesting you say that, because that's how I tend to write my student reports. When I write a report, I always start with a poem and on the basis of the poem, I can write the rest.

Because it contains the whole and then you can address all the parts?

Exactly! It captures something which is *beyond one* thing. It shines a broad light as a picture.

Another challenge I've found in these seminaria . . . I'm very pictorial. Asian poetry as a whole, tends to be less about words. Words are *not* so important. Of course it *is* words, but the words tend to be simple, just representing a picture and the essence is in the *simplicity* of that picture. I do often struggle with Western poetry because it becomes—for me anyway—so *flowery* and language orientated that I find it very narrow. It becomes about the construction of words rather than about the construction of a picture. I work much better in pictures. I think why I love the haiku is the picture they're conveying is so small when you look at the words themselves. Yet the thing it's conveying is so enormously vast. So that's a personal tension in me I find with not all, but a lot of European poetry. I find it doesn't talk to me, because it doesn't convey the rich images. I can get stuck in words.

You seem to be exemplifying, for me, an aspect of why the Camino Santiago de Compostela is my pilgrimage metaphor for this work, 'Less is more.'

Yeah! Simplicity. Always, always, always. That's definitely in my personal writing and in my storytelling. I definitely move towards *less*. I remember reading Ernest Hemingway. The *simplicity* of his story, he used the word 'and' a lot. In a way, his writing shouldn't work if you break it down [analytically] into what you're taught to do as a writer, and yet his simplicity of story, I've always found deeply moving. I think, as a rule, that's probably what I keep coming back to. Probably my favourite poem ever that I carry around in me all the time, is a poem by Ryokan who was a Japanese

monk. 'The thief, he left it behind, the moon in the window.' There's nothing complex about those words. There's nothing smart or clever about them. Yet, what it conveys is something so enormous and profound:

the thief
he left it behind
the moon in the window

Something . . . incubating for a while now, the notion of seminaria and its connection with 'The Way'—as a mindfulness practice, like a mindfulness App. . . a mindfulness application and map. I mean, I'm a long way from resolving what it really means, but it's quite . . .

I hope you never do! [He laughs. Both laugh heartily at the irony.] It seems like there's no limit to what can be experienced.

Well, that leads to another question that has arisen in the enormity of the pictures you've been painting for me, as you've been speaking, to do with movement again, and stillness and the crossing point of consciousness between them. It's to do with movement and rhythm and the rhythm of the heart, and I wonder how you see that in relation to seminaria?

Well, I'm familiar with the lemniscate model in [prominent environmentalist] Nicanor Perlas's work. I think that is definitely the model I work with when I teach meditation. I don't use the same image that he does, but that's how I try and approach everything. He uses the lemniscate as a fourfold process, but certainly, the image that comes to mind is that we have a boundary. We have a point. Everything within that boundary is contained. It's our self. But if I think about my practice, my meditation practice, my practice as a teacher, my practice as a father and a husband; it's the notion that I have a *boundary*, a perimeter. If I *rely* on what's contained inside that for my answers, my responses to life, I'm going to keep getting the *same* answers already known. If I want to *transcend*, if I want to change my life, the lives of the people around me, the life of the world, then I need to stretch into the *unknown* and the unknown, by definition, can't be approached through the known. It's not possible. We can't know the unknown in the sense of approaching it through that same lens.

Silence!
Another
Explicable word
Unobtainable while I
Forget the object
Of silence
Is not.

So my practice of seminaria, my practice of meditation, seems to be about coming into myself and my entirety as a human being, to the extent I feel my perimeter; I feel the tension. Then, developing the practice of sitting there and resisting the tension or desire to move back into my own preference (which is what I know already). I mean, because I can only prefer what I know. I can't prefer what I don't know. So always, the inclination is toward contraction, to be more limited; to move back into the safety of what I know. So the practice of seminaria and practice of meditation, I experience as taking me to my edge (acknowledging I have a preference to write down what I *know* which is not transcendent), and to stay there long enough for what I *don't* know to become apparent . . . so, stretching the inner lemniscate for that movement to take place.

That's definitely an image that I work with that informs my practice. It comes back again to the things seminaria's bringing . . . that relate to Nicanor Perlas's model of the lemniscate—formulating the question that arises from the point of contact. (He said, *We have contact. The contact brings up a challenge.*) I think I'm feeling a personal need to get much better at feeling that contact and formulating the question . . . that I can take into my inner world.

That contact—just to be specific—is that in life in general, or . . .

Everything, so again, that definitely has huge implications for my experience and practice as a teacher. As I said before, I'm inclined to work more intuitively. I don't know if I would have been so inclined—the questions would be there—I don't want to put forward the idea that I'm mindless [chuckles] but certainly, I have not previously been as mindful of the importance of refining the question that arises from that contact, my contact with a child, with myself, my contact with other aspects of the world, as I have through seminaria.

And I mean, of course, the questions are there and always have been but as I said, I haven't been as conscious of *crafting* them. I haven't acknowledged the role that crafting plays, in the nature of the transcendence or insight that takes place as a result of the art.

Because the consciousness to craft can only come about through pushing that boundary or through having allowed what is across the boundary to come to you. . . ?

So in Zen, for example, you don't start with the mind, in fact you're always trying to get *rid* of the mind. That idea of a koan as a riddle, you're not trying to speculate or cogitate. [It's] the opposite, to find a place where there is just *no* answer. That's the point of the practice. You're definitely not

trying to formulate *questions*. That would be completely contrary to Zen practice; would presuppose that there's a question that can be answered. So that's my background. But that's not entirely useful in a classroom! [chuckles]

Socrates for example, implied the need for questions. 'The unexamined life is not worth living.' The question leads you forward.

Say I'm experiencing East meets West. Things arise in a cultural and historical context. The time and place where something merges, and that's a tension in me too, because—and it's all related—we live in a scientific materiality and if human beings are going to be convinced of the nature of reality, one thing I'm certain of, is that it needs people who can translate and engage that aspect of people's minds. So the Zen tradition, for example, can have its impact in the world where people already acknowledge it but I think it's probably limited in its capacity to begin to convince people who don't already have a practice; who don't already see the world of depth, of the possibility that there's something *beyond* the relative, atomistic, nature of existence.

So do you see seminaria as having the capacity to forge any difference?

I certainly think it engages on that level. It starts with an object—and as I said, very different from a haiku [where] you're *not* starting with an object. So, I haven't thought about it but my sense is what you're saying is true. That seminaria starts with an object to gain insight into that 'thing.' Yes. I can see how it's all related now. Certainly the biggest question and the question that inspires me most is, *How do I convey the world of depth to others?* I'd say that that's the driving force of my life. That spark—talking [before] about the Boddhicitta—I imagine it manifests differently in some people than others. Some want to go to Africa and I think it's important, but definitely, the driving force in my life is the desire to connect with the depth of all people and to begin to develop the means of conveying that there's really nothing else. That everyone is infinitely deep and anyone's sense of limitations; any sense that the world has to be a particular way; any sense that they can't find more creative, and loving and peaceful ways to exist; is a fallacy. [Thumbing through his journal, he offers an example.]

Orbits
Boundaries
Our solar system
Artificial partitions
Eternal expanse

Unbounded
Universe.

I certainly think that seminaria is a form that engages or starts with an object . . . as a way of moving people into an experience of something deeper. I would hope that all poetry aims at doing that but I think that the difference is—because it starts with a question—it's an *inquiry*. It has a very different quality [from] a poem that's a result of a feeling. A haiku starts with a feeling and ultimately it stays with that. Seminaria is starting with a question and expanding out, and trying to put it onto a piece of paper.

Loosely speaking, I'd say that poetry aims . . . You start out in nature. I start. I'm here and how am I going to express that? So there's a narrowing that takes place whereas starting with an *inquiry* rather than an *experience*, then it opens it up to the possibility of an experience. You're not starting with an objective experience, you're starting with an objective enquiry and moving it out into openness. I'd say they're definitely different triangles, if they're compared with each other. [Long pause.] They're starting on different *sides* of that lemniscate. A haiku starts in the inner and moves to the outer. A seminaria starts on the other side, but ultimately they're both aiming for the circle, for the unity (non-duality). True haiku—the experience and the putting it to paper—are not separate. I can definitely see the seminaria, although it starts on a different side, is still aiming to break down the boundary or barrier between the subject and the object. I'd say the end point is the same but they start on different sides of the lemniscate.

Interesting, because if I think of Arthur Zajonc's work—have you heard of him?—it means taking what has formed in one side of the lemniscate as a result of focused attention, and then—through that crossing point—erasing or dissolving it and patiently being in a state of open attention (no-expectation) and maybe something will arise; arrive.

That would be where my main practice is, resting on the perimeter with no expectation. That's my practice.

Without expectation; simply gratitude for the possibility.

Yes, I wonder, just in talking with you now, it would be an ideal, but maybe if teaching could be expressed as a Way, as a Dao. You know, the Dao of Teaching . . . just as in the Way of Tea or in the Way of Writing . . . the way of anything. There's a form to master. Before you can sit there in emptiness, you have to master the form. You can't practise a way without first mastering its form. [This] depth of connectedness is something that can give you happiness.

Do you see seminaria having a part to play in that process?

[He nods then laughs when he realises his silent, enthusiastic nod cannot be voice recorded.] Yes!
Oh, yes! [laughing generously, he adds]: I nodded. In the affirmative!

Thank you so much!

Oh, my pleasure.

Gordon goes, I straighten the chairs, check the voice recording is intact and leave by the side door as instructed. Retracing my steps on the sunlit path, I feel full of gratitude for the depth of Gordon's experience. His seminaria and haiku comparisons appear to come from a deeply appreciative enquiry of both which I find invaluable. I have learned a lot today. I leave looking forward to continuing our conversation in three weeks.

Now back in the library surrounded by books, Gordon, serene, settling himself into the same chair, stares for a moment into the middle distance, collecting his thoughts:

Lately, seminaria have definitely been helping me create a sense, or *feel* a sense of things that are beyond me, in a way that's useful. It's hard to know how *much* of it is the practice of seminaria, or whether other things are there but I certainly think it feeds into a *really* strong desire to work with *questions*. I don't quite know how to put it. I realise that in terms of gaining insight into things, I really need to do work on how to formulate a question. There are things that I would like to *understand*, and that experience is reasonably new to me. If I look at my practice before . . .

Do you mean your teaching practice or your practice of writing seminaria?

All my practices. I *tend* to be more intuitive. I let the questions *themselves* emerge. But now I have a sense that there are things I would like to *know*, and by forming the question, I don't have to *wait* for the question to arise.

Does the form of seminaria allow you to formulate your question as you're writing or. . .?

For example, when I write a seminaria about this [particular] boy, I find the depth to which I can go is increasingly determined by the quality of the question. That's what I'm trying to say. And that's a reasonably new experience for me, to really understand—feeling the necessity of *forming* the question so you might say, *narrowing* the band of inquiry. So for example, I'd have been more inclined, with this boy, before, to sit with him, that is, with his name contemplatively but as of late, I've narrowed that down and I'm formulating very different questions.

I think it's very much a work in process [but] I'm definitely finding a *clarity* emerge. I have a sense I understand him better and I'd say, upon reflection, I think it's changing the way I teach, in as much as—yes—I understand the children better. As I'm able to go deeper, I'm able to respond in very different ways.

I can give you an example of that—I have a boy in my class and he can seem difficult. The other day, I was quite reactive. I was tired and irritable you might say, and he came into the classroom and *he* was tired and irritable and it was probably the first time I'd found him insolent in the way he communicated. I ended up asking him to come down to the principal's office and I think that was the *right* thing to do but as a reflective practice, when I considered this, I might have been more inclined to not quite see what was happening but as I understood it, he had a strong need for *space*. I think I was able to see that *my job* is to teach *him* to recognise this need in himself, by first encouraging him to *have* the space, but encouraging him to recognise that habit *before* it got to this point. I think I might have got there anyway but I certainly feel now, I'm far more *open* to perceiving the children and their own experience and opening up to helping *them* understand *themselves*. And again, I think it all relates to the *questions*.

Facilitating their self-management . . . as teachers, that's part of our job, isn't it?

Yes. Self-management.

So are you saying that the process of working with seminaria and your evolving sensitivity to questions of focus for the children you teach, is actually . . .

Yes. So to put it into my words: Seminaria is a form of inquiry that's leading me to recognise more fully, the *children*—well it extends beyond that [slight chuckle that indicates realised relativity]—the *people* in my *life*, and their particular needs and rhythms, if you like, and responding to them with *understanding*. I'm tying back into that original question. I'm asking *different questions!* and getting different, well, different *answers!*

Seminaria, the way I'm relating to it now, is as a form that lends itself to an inquiry; the formulation of a *good question* and the *resting* with that question in openness long enough for the answer to come from beyond. So I appreciate there's still an element or possibility of a non-dualistic experience I suppose. There's still the ideal of merging or becoming closer, but yeah, as I said, I do

experience it very differently for that very important distinction—that I tend to start with a *question* rather than an *experience*.

You've described the way in which you're using seminaria, and I'm wondering about yourself. Have you done any self-enquiry with seminaria?

Yep! Yes. I don't know if it's such a different process when I've been using it on myself. I'd say it's a very similar experience and again, the more we talk, the clearer it is for me, the idea that I'm working with questions. I mean I've had a good practice for a long time; for *years*, I've worked with meditation, of opening up, of softening my edges, of allowing the *possibility* for other things to emerge. Many times I've engaged with insight practices where there's a question I've been meditating on but the thing that is different at the minute and I think the *challenge* that seminaria's brought to my practice is—What are *my* questions? I've meditated on *Who am I?* and with seminaria mindfulness I'm finding it's affecting many things.

So when I have a conversation—I was having one yesterday—and we were *struggling* with language. We got into a discussion where we were rubbing up against one another, around the idea of 'effortless *effort*'. And how I would have approached it before, I might have gone and done some more reading or *reflection*, but, in this case, the first thing I did is start to ponder what the *question* I needed to ask was—which in the end was, 'What is the nature of effort?' And I haven't *answered* this question yet but it seems like such an obvious thing in a way [little chuckle] that *revelation* and the *question* are *related* but I've certainly never taken that on as a personal practice—the practice of *forming* questions.

So seminaria has brought this specifically?

Very much, very much so, and in a way—haiku and seminaria and the difference they bring would be good similes for my experience. Haiku's about *just opening*—a Buddhist meditation primarily is about *opening*. Sitting there. Lots of Buddhist meditations are about just sitting. Zen is the practice of just sitting. You're not trying to put an *inquiry* or anything in there.

Whereas, the *seminaria* I'm finding has given *rise* to the need for *another* practice, if you like, or another *dimension* to my practice. And I would suggest that—I mean it's in all the traditions—the idea of opening up and then putting the questions in there. But I don't think I've always brought my *own questions*. And I think it's not possible to go deeply into the children and their lives and all the

questions that are raised *without* formulating *good questions*. And I don't think I saw that until I started writing these seminaria. It's much clearer. As I've said, that's the *big* one for me. The practice has brought the necessity of *crafting*, the crafting of questions. I think in teaching, this idea of the question—in a way I'm beginning to appreciate the *question is the form I've got to master*. Because *every child is a question*, and if I can't master the question [reflective pause]

You consider seminaria to be a way of facilitating that?

Yes. Absolutely. It's a practice and I mean like any practice, we have to go into them again and again; it's hard to unpack the direct influence the seminaria's having but certainly, it's something I feel really passionate about at present. Certainly, I think in doing the practices themselves, they bear fruit without effort.

It sounds somewhat like a curriculum of 'Letting Go' . . .

Exactly, exactly! So in letting go, the possibility of transcendence arises. [right hand gesturing cyclic and continuous] and that relates to my experience of school. If people are connecting with their own depth and the depth of others, if *that's* happening, quality education, education for life, is going to happen.

I've been talking about that with people recently too. There've been some studies [pause] an interesting study in America on the nature of compassion and *time* where they took two groups of monks in a seminary. Both were given the task of writing a sermon on compassion. They weren't aware of the nature of the study so all they got told was to write this sermon and they were told on a particular day at a particular time to go and visit their Monseigneur or higher authority who was to give them their final instructions. For their final instruction, one group was told, 'You've got plenty of time. Take your time. Walk over to the place, give your sermon, and good luck.'

The other group were told, 'Hurry up, get over there, you're running late! What are you doing?!' Then on the way, they all met someone who was suffering and the predeterminant, the overriding factor was not that they'd written a beautiful sermon on compassion, the thing that determined whether they were compassionate or not was *time*. So the fact of whether they felt they *had* linear time or not, undoubtedly plays an enormous role in our ability to soften our edges.

And feel freely able to reach out to one another. So, as you say, creating a rhythm that has within it the space and non-linear (not clock-watched) time, in order to respond to the world, seems pretty crucial.

Seminaria has that *rhythm*, and maybe as a practice—not only does it have that rhythm—to do a ‘practice’ we have to *create* time. That’s inescapable.

So how do you create time?

That’s a good *question!* [the word ‘question’ comes out like a little humorous explosion from a quiet measured pace of speech] [Both laugh.]

I would say this is the challenge of the world at present, *making depth* our *priority*. So depth becomes the purpose of existence [gestures a small lemniscate with his left hand], of living, of being, of everything we do, contains *within* it, by definition, time and space, because it’s our *purpose* in life. Just as someone whose purpose in life is to make money, the person who has made depth their purpose in life, has *time* and *space*.

And when I see this school and the class, there’s depth, there’s space, there’s life, there’s rhythm, this is it. Hopefully, gradually, step by step teachers begin through example and experience to lead others to begin to appreciate how to directly experience this for themselves. This fact, and it does *seem* like a fact, you know, as we know all the clichés, ‘Money can’t buy you happiness’ blah, blah; but this depth of connectedness *is* something that can give you happiness.

As we leave the library, I resolve to remember the lesson on time and compassion.

4.6 Co-researcher Maree

Maree
Taught Phys Ed.
Now State school five/six
Cosmic, universal soul
Grandmotherly wise
Strong social
Conscience.

I look forward to meeting Maree again, wondering how she was faring as we’d not been in touch since our first meeting. A tall, strikingly energetic woman in her fifties, Maree and I had met first at a halfway point, country village café for the first phase screening interview. Tucking ourselves discreetly at one end, we were, in the end, the only people present, perched on high stools overlooking an eco-sanctuary where a stream flowed as freely as the exchange of words; willows

danced their leaves across its surface—the air thick with tūis⁴⁶ at the flax. Thereafter, a downstairs room in Maree’s home was made available for our recorded interviews. When I arrive, she apologises for being not quite ready; it’s seven o’clock and she’s only just home from a hectic day at school.

Thank you Maree for giving your busy teacher-time to tell me how the mindfulness of seminaria has been for you. What’s your experience to date?

I’ve *enjoyed* doing it. I started off in the holidays with a *hiss* and a *roar* because I’d lots of time. I was more relaxed, did a lot of meditation and my two and a half hour dance class. A *lot* happened during those two weeks. I found it very *easy* to sit down and think [and] not *think*. I just *allowed* the momentum of seminaria practice to flow. Then when *school* started [ironic laugh at the contrast], it just became more difficult because I was tired. I’d come home and a couple of days I forgot or it was just too late and I couldn’t quite get my head around it. And the topics changed. They weren’t as *deep*.

I found when I had more *time*, there was a deeper realm to it but when school started they became more three dimensional. Does that make *sense*? But when I say that, I wonder how the weekend’s ones compare because there was a bit more *time*. But yes, it’s been an *interesting* experience.

I had one page and I’ll show you later; a page where there were just like, squiggles [laughs heartily]. Just squiggles—and then there was a whole *page* of diamond *squiggles*. That happened! you know. I’m sure there was some *meaning* to it, but . . .

You mean the words you wrote were squiggly, or . . .

No, I’ll show you in a minute. It was like I was doing it like semi-lightning. It was quite interesting. There were a lot of dimensions, lots of *dynamics* to it, particularly when I was in more relaxed mode. But of course, as school started, like today, I got home late and I’ve got meetings *every* night this week. It’s just like, ‘*Oh, no!*’ But anyway, I’m doing my *best*.

It’s your practice, truly yours [reassuringly] you’re researching it for yourself as much as being part of this project and you’ve almost completed your three weeks anyway.

⁴⁶ tūi, parson bird, *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*—a songbird with glossy-black plumage and two white tufts at the throat. Tuis feed on the nectar of the harakeke (flax) flower.

Yeah, I've got a little *notebook* in my *bag* and if I find that quiet time, I'll sit there and write a *seminaria* and transfer it into the research journal later. I did that, particularly over the holidays, I wrote little *seminarias*. For example, I was sitting in the car waiting for my daughter to come across from Wairua. I was just sitting down the bottom of Hewert's Hill in a peaceful spot. I just used that time to sit there and focus. I took the notebook out and wrote about what was going on there.

Those were situational things you were observing?

No, more [that] I was able to relax and go inward because of the timing. Yes, actually, the one with Susie was observing, but definitely Hewert's Hill was more a chance to relax and go inward and allow *seminaria* to flow really, and I remember specifically, that's what happened. Luckily, I had my little notebook, because sometimes I'd think, 'Oh, that would make a great little *seminaria*,' but I didn't have anything to write it down with. So I'd think, 'Oh, I've got to remember that,' but of course, I never did! [laughs heartily] Know what I mean?

I do know that feeling!

I found too when I was doing it, they sometimes felt quite *hard* and sometimes just *flowed*. I'd start off and I'd think, 'Oh, gosh, I don't know,' and I'd be sitting there going [counts on fingers as counting syllables] two, three, four, Nah! Ah! It just didn't work! Nothing seemed to *work* and then other times, you just think of an idea and it would just flow! You know, it would be 'La, la, la, la' [imitates the ease of flow with her hand and body gesture to match] and within twenty seconds, you know, thirty seconds, you'd have a *seminaria* there.

So how did that feel, when it flowed?

I was feeling great, in a good place. Or, I felt quite excited or *pleased* about something that had happened and it was an inner *emotion* and I would just pick up the pen and away it would go. I think more when it was forced when I *had* to do it because I needed to get something *down*. Then it didn't—at least not very well, and I'd think, 'That's a bit of a crap *seminaria*!' [laughs] 'Well, I'll leave it there because at least it's filled the page!'

Oh, sounds more like you were feeling duty.

Sometimes I felt duty bound and needed to get it done, you know, and because I didn't want to let you down. I tried *not* to get into that mode. I was trying to make sure of that, but I did find it a bit more difficult over the last few days, I must admit.

Of course, with the transition back to school and everything. So if you just go back to the beginning for a moment, how was it when you were just starting to develop the practice?

Do you mind if I reflect on this? It will help me heaps like . . .

Absolutely . . . your process.

I mean, I'm happy for you to have a look at what I did. I remember the first time:

Gaylene
Camino
Angel from above
Messenger to help all men
Privileged to share
Thoughts about
Maree.

Initially there was like, a friend staying with me. I have a deep love for Jean since I was twelve, so *that* seminaria just flowed. [reads snippets]

It was
Sisterhood
Best friends forever
Laughter, tears, sleepover . . .

And a bit about the woolshed that was dear to my *heart*:

Earth, air
Fire, water
Will unite . . .

As you can probably hear, my voice is getting excited because it feels very close to my heart, so it was *easy* to write, and it felt [considers] I felt in a really nice place of *being*.

So that nice place of being, can you elaborate a little . . .?

I guess the word is 'serenity.' Just feeling like I put here: Masks off, At the door. [She reads out quickly several seminaria in a row.]

And I reflected on that. It just feels like the mask comes off and you can be yourself and find that authenticity and depth of communication with each other.

Closed eyes
Meditate

Dreams of days gone by,
What do you see, affirming
Images, visions
With wide eyes
Open.

[Thumbing through her journal, she pauses and her voice deepens to a more serious tone when she says]: One day, I accidentally turned over two pages, and I flicked it open and I started to write this and I just said—which is *not* a seminaria but it's *about* seminaria. I put:

Seminaria
Slows the pace of life
Reminds me to see
To remember what
Has always been in front of me.
Thank you Seminaria
For the gift you are giving.
I tip my hat with respect
And my wings expand.
Who knows
Where this may lead?
Giggly and gleeful
With the thoughts of what may be,
Arms wide open.

That just absolutely flowed! Like it was you know, just *straight* from the *pen*. I didn't even think about it. And I left a page here and I thought, you know I haven't filled it yet but [implies keeping it for another moment of inspired spontaneity] So, anyway, I thought that was quite interesting. And I wrote about housework, the staff at school, so this is all during the holidays and then [reflects], oh that was another time I pulled out my little book. I was waiting for Simon at the station. I wrote a little note here. My grandson calls me Nan Nan:

Nan Nan
Sparkling eyes
Roaming, arms open
Kisses abound! You, I've found
Can't wait to see you
My angel
Grandson.

Those ones were not so deep, waiting for Simon at the train station. That was when there'd been a shooting on the tv and I just put:

Shooting
Why would you?

I don't understand
What drives man to think this way
Indiscriminate
Bang you're dead
Goodbye.

You know . . . the sun was coming up. Here, it was late at night I remember that and there, a light in the distance . . . waiting for Simon. I just went:

Distant
Horizon
Peeping over hill
Sun lighting the way for you
Peek-a-boo to you
Hide and seek
Each day.

Oh that one was when Jean lost her husband.

Sadness
In the hearts of all
Sadly missed.

And walking with my friend. Afterwards, I just pulled out the little notebook.

Walking . . .
Left then right
Keep the pace even
Heartbeat and breath increases
The end is in sight
Keep going
Made it!!!

[jolly laughter]

I was just reading a book about self-deception and that was what I got out of it. [I] was waiting to go to yoga and I just again pulled out my little book. Actually, I realise I've pulled it out a lot more than I'd thought.

People
Honour them
See as a person
Humanity of others
Needs, hopes and worries

Believe me
Are real.

And this, about dancing. She talked about suspension and momentum:

Dancing
Suspension
Gentle momentum
Creating our own movement
Together we blend
In the flow
Sacred.

There's a lovely kind of rhythm in that . . . a lovely movement there.

And another one:

Welcome
Come closer
My inner child calls
Smile glowing, her hair flowing
Please come dance with me
Sun shining
Laughter.

That was just a real 'inner child' thing while I was dancing. We did a meditation afterwards.

This is on Susie's land. My daughter's bought six acres of land. It's beautiful. It's so serene. But it was really windy so I got out my little book again [laughs in delight at the memory]:

Gusty,
Wind blowing
Grandeur in its might
Clearing all the dust and dirt
Off God's creations
Hold on fast
Deep roots.

'cause she's got a row of trees there that are really old. They're at least a hundred years old, that they're not going to cut down. So then I wrote:

Perfect
Yes you are
Always remember
In the eyes of God above

You are who you are
Always be
Perfect.

So that was just about the area. She's got a little river and I had a headache so I told it to go away
[little explosive laugh at the thought].

Headache
Go away
Tightness increasing
Pain that tells me to slow down.
Expanding, pulling
That's enough!
Thank you.

Did it affect how you felt?

I'm not sure *how* it went but I don't recall it getting *worse* but it was good writing it *down*!

River
Gently flows
Clear and crisp and clean.
To water drew and lucky
Drinks are on the house!
Quenches thirst
Current.

[flicking pages] Oh, these are what I wrote when we went to the farmers' market: Click click, Market day, Pushing. It was a wooden lawn mower. He's two and a half. 'I'm mowing the lawn for you.' We said, 'Watch out for ankles!' Nan-nan cried, 'Too late!' [chuckles at the memory]

Oh, what a lot of fun!

[Scanning journal, picking out seminarias, naming the themes] So you know, questions, cable car, oh, a meditation—a memory of time:

Nearly
Five p.m.
Meditation time
Dark night, stars shine and wind blows
Internal landscape
Of what is
Angels.

Oh, so god, I've written a lot!

Low, I was just feeling a bit low in that one, when school started again. 'Oh, time to get ready for school.' Like:

Worry
About what?
I really don't know.
It consumes my very thoughts
Sometimes an answer
Comes this way
At last!

I just rabbitied on from this one into another one.

At last
What is meant?
That problems are solved?
It really should be simple
And it is you know
What problem?
No more.

You know [reflectively] I solved the problem. Sometimes I found that happened. I'd start off with a topic and *as* I wrote, it felt *less* . . . you know, that was what that did, or else it was just a way to show [me] 'Well, you don't *actually* have to worry about it.' And I remember distinctly thinking about that. Then it only had to flow or it felt really unfinished. So it flowed on, and at last, question mark, meaning what is meant? [reads aloud] That problems are solved; It really should be simple; And it is you know; What problems? No more.

I think, too, because I do try to be a positive person and by turning it around it was helpful. It was a helpful thing to do. Thinking about the five and the three and the two syllables. It brings you back to [pause] what's the word [pause] I don't know, without thinking about it, but it gets you aware there's a *pattern* to it. You subconsciously [pause] there's an awareness of the words and, oh, I don't know what I'm saying here . . .

Keep going, it sounds really interesting . . .

There's an awareness of the words and the words become *drawn* to you. You know, they become drawn *to* you [pause] as you're completing it. It starts [reflects], they become drawn *to* you. If that

makes sense. [chuckles] I know what I'm meaning but I can't quite say it! Does that make sense to you?

As a phenomenon, it does.

I think in the ordinary, everyday sense you don't have the ability to create that shape downwards, like the bottom of the diamond, you can allow it to get bigger than what it is whereas this way, it does help you bring it back down to [pauses]. Do you know what I mean? It does help you think in [this] shape. It's almost like, 'Okay, let's bring it down to where it really is and not allow it to continue.' It's not a diamond, a pyramid, it's more like the *star shape* so rather than allow your thoughts to become over [reflects], do you know what I mean?

Over what? . . .

Rrrrr, the word gets bigger and *Grrr* [makes a grating oversize sound] it allows you to shape it back into a more controllable process. The word gets bigger you know, it actually allows you to shape it back into [tapers off reflectively]

Sounds like you're indicating 'shorter' so it has to be simpler? or more condensed? Or . . . ?

I think *simpler* because you're not [pauses] you don't have a lot of time or space to think *too big*. You actually reduce your thought pattern to what it really *is* so it's less *energy* and less *worry*; less energy and less *stress*, because I find the most stressful part sometimes is the line with seven syllables so by being able to bring it *down*, I can get that latter part quite easy. It's like ah, I've done that part [makes a sound like something sliding curvily down into place] and I just bring it down to where it's meant to be.

So even when you show me that gesture with your hands, 'jjjshooonk!' like that [imitates Maree's gesture and sound], I get a sense something's happening, like a process is completing itself, or something. . .

Well, yeah, I mean, it is a completion of a process, absolutely. I guess because of the fact that it comes down to two syllables, you have to . . . not *have* to, that's the wrong word because there's no 'have tos' with this, it *allows* you to be more *precise* but not to let your imagination [pauses] go wild, you know? It brings it back down into a concise area, whereas if you're doing a narrative, you can go 'phoooooor' [onomatopoeia; gestures indicating writing screeds, showing relative unboundaried shape of a narrative]. You let it 'rip in' and whether there's an ending, I don't know

sometimes, to your narratives, whereas this *seminaria* form has concise ending. Does that make sense?

It makes sense. I can identify with what you're saying.

Right, right.

I hadn't thought of it in those terms, quite, but it does make sense. It's almost as though . . .

It almost avoids chatter. In your head. You know, it gets a bit big, wider, like your pyramid but then it avoids the 'over-chatter.' You've got to bring it back down to where it truly is.

So does that influence what you put where it's widest?

No [emphatically]

Because ?

I don't think so, but it influences what you put *underneath* it. For me anyway, what's on top you're allowing, you're allowing the expansion, so for me it's like the expansion of the pyramid is the initial part but then the condensing down is the [reflects] when I'm thinking about it is, the latter part where it brings it back to where it should be.

When you say it like that, it's as though there's a natural conclusion that feels right to you?

Absolutely. Whenever, and what I always tried to do was—and it usually was quite easy—I always tried to connect the top to the bottom; the bottom words to the top words so there was some connection.

So you mirror them when you've finished?

Yeah, there was some change that occurred—whether it was 'open eyes'; 'close eyes.'

Where's that one that says, 'New day'—'Goodbye' 'I sit there with qualms.' 'Relax.' You know, they're all sort of [drifts, pauses]. Well, I don't know [reflecting] and this is all before school started actually. I can't remember where this is [referring to the next lot of seminarias]. Raining, Oh! My son, my grandson! I must write that down. This is the granddaddy tree [reads *seminaria* quickly] Oh there was this beautiful arch created by a root. Step through the magic window into fairyland [laughs].

Staring
Back at me
Mother Earth is full
Offering abundantly
All the gifts we need
Giving life
To all.

[Looking carefully at that period of her journal] Now that's quite significant. That was WOW (World of Wearable Art) show. I went to WOW! It was very masculine, I thought, this year and I wrote:

Oh WOW!
Masculine
Supreme and extreme
Patience, imagination
Appearing on stage
Inspiring
Next year.

And then, it started to get a bit [implies hectic], you know, school started [laughs lightly like distant peels].

Oh, yes, tell me about this one.

That's Uganda because we're starting to fundraise. [Our] school gala was on the Saturday. I'd organised a stall [but] through the week we had nothing to sell so I said to the kids, 'Come on, we've got to make some stuff' and we did: loom bands, friendship bracelets out of little rubber rings and a whole lot of Ugandan cards—beautiful, from original prints that I brought back, and a big raffle. The kids were troupers though; they're amazing! About eight hundred dollars all up, with a donation from one of the parents that have got behind us.

I should show you a picture. The school had nothing, *nothing!* I mean it's totally different to what we have here. They're trying to build classrooms but they didn't have the funds so I came back and we raised five thousand dollars, enough to build three classrooms and start the high school. They're quite big classrooms but they've got no furniture. I think by the end of the year, I'll have another thousand to send across, which is quite significant to them. I send it direct to Zach, my Ugandan 'dad.' He's thirty six. While I was teaching there, he looked after me and his family.

Tell me, how did you decide to go there?

I'd always wanted to volunteer, in my heart, you know, and then when I turned fifty something, I thought, 'Holy crap!' [remembers we're recording] Oop! [little shrieking gasp, *Sorry about that recorder!*] I thought, I need to get on with this. I'm going. On my own because my husband wasn't all that interested, which is fine so I found a volunteer network who gave me connections. I paid for my safety and they linked me with Zach who picked me up but once I was there I was on my own basically. Two years ago now and we've raised about six thousand and that will continue. Once you go to these places, they hook into your heart. I'm really focused on going back next year. I think you have to keep the action going—'The Circle of Hope'—that's my little foundation.

Raffle
Uganda
Support if you please
Furniture in a high school
Necessity's real
We can help
One step.

And that's all it was, one step at a time. I took some money over. It paid for some bricks . . . 'cause that's all they can do, one step at a time with the money they get. Then it stops until they get more. Best thing I ever did. It was as safe as it could be, you know.

So you stayed at Zach's house while you were teaching?

It wasn't anything flash but it did have a little wall around it. It was a volunteer area. I mean, I was just in a little bunk room, in a little bunk.

And dangers, snakes, or scorpions?

There were snakes, yes, snakes. It was the Idi Amin era too and I didn't realise until I came back, Jimney Forest that I spent a lot of time in, was a major dumping area of bodies. When I go back I just want Zach to know my heart is with him, but I think he *knows* that. I talked to him a lot.

So this is all an important part of my biography and in terms of practising seminaria mindfulness, I felt as though it [implies something special, a bit magical] *came*, a little bit towards the end [reads one of her last entries]: Oh, where shall I land tonight? Oh! [exclaims] I didn't know [means remember] I'd written that! So calm, and peaceful. Oh I travel at night; I know I do, you know [laughter] to different places. To Mum and Dad [laughs lightly].

That's wonderful if you retain the images; if you don't wake up too quickly.

I'm not very good at that but, who knows . . . [shifting topic] I mean, I spoke recently at a summit about Uganda. A 'Girl Up' conference about my volunteer work . . . just two weekends ago actually, a seminar for young girls aged seventeen plus.⁴⁷

Girl Up
Way to go
Teaching self-esteem
Hold onto that so tightly
No one can hurt you
Just say, 'No,
Enough!'

Lesley Elliott, you know, Sophie Elliott's mum spoke.⁴⁸ She came across from Dunedin [speaks a seminary about her, voice emotion filled].

Sophie
You angel
Disappeared too soon
Your legacy still inspires
Those who couldn't see
Eyes open!
Say stop!

It did become harder, I must admit.

When school started?

It did. This was when Simon rang and said he'd broken his arm:

Tired
End of day
Teaching full of joy
Happy till the end of day
Bell rings three o'clock
Thank goodness
Head down.

⁴⁷ 'Girl Up': A United Nations Foundation. Its slogan: Uniting girls to change the world. Every girl, no matter where she's born, deserves to dream. You can make her dreams a reality. <https://girlup.org/>

⁴⁸ The Sophie Elliott Foundation, to prevent violence against women by raising awareness about the signs of abuse in dating relationships. www.sophieelliottfoundation.co.nz/

School starts
Things so change
Not much time to breathe
This living in the fast lane
Is this the way you
Really want
Your life?

Initially I must admit, sometimes, I found it a bit stressful to do. But I mean sometimes, I felt the *other way*. I wrote about Uganda on Saturday [reads out quietly]:

Nothing.
So little
No power, water, books
No backpack, shoes, pens or food,
No balls to play with
Beauty smiles
Sadness.

Oh yeah, this is *Friday*. This is all I could write.

So tired
End of week
Fish and chip Friday. . .

Then I stopped and couldn't even think any further. Then I actually picked it up the next day.

Sitting round and drinking wine
Eyes tightly closing
Time for bed
Good night.

[laughs appreciatively] I could feel the difference when it was flowing, to when it was a struggle and it was like, 'Oh, it's not there' and it felt very three dimensional compared to when it was more flowing and it *was* there. Does that make sense?

Perfectly. That's wonderful! Is there anything else you want to add . . . ?

Not that I can think of.

Thank you so much.

I hope that's been helpful.

[Two autobiographical seminaria Maree emailed later]

Soulmate
Mother, friend
Grandparent for life
Teaching young souls to survive
To be authentic
True and clear
Playful.

That's it
Life's journey. . .
Searching for the sign
Fear success so sabotage.
Move forward, head high
Life is bright
Advance.

A full moon, huge over the inlet as I drive home, 'dips in and out' of cloud, casting mysterious light and shadow on the landscape, akin to the undigested fullness of my time with Maree. My mind keeps returning to the mystery of her 'landing tonight' comment. And what she had meant by the implied mystery or treasure of something coming 'a little bit towards the end' (of her inquiry) that she linked with her biography. Respectful of her time and tiredness, I had not probed, sensing it best to incubate. On reflection, it seems that seminaria had perhaps supplied a key, but to what, I pondered; while the moon up ahead darted behind a bank of cloud as though keeping me in suspense. It would have to wait for our next meeting.

4.7 Co-researcher Mikaela

This is
Mikaela
Higher ed. teacher
Itinerant, and published,
Executive stress
She, through words,
Allays.

Mikaela suggests we can conduct the second and third interviews in Wellington whilst she is visiting briefly on business. Very much looking forward to seeing her again, I'm curious to know whether the deep engagement she had shown at the induction process has evolved into a satisfying practice for this strong, articulate, itinerant teacher in her sixties. Today, in transit between two distant cities, she has designated it a breakfast meeting. I arrive early at the Italian café-salumeria to secure a quiet table where we can voice record, undisturbed. Greeted first by the aroma of oven-hot ciabatta and fresh coffee, a gracious waiter shows us to an alcove where Mikaela slips her coat over the back of her chair and settles herself elegantly with a pot of tea.

How am I experiencing the mindfulness of seminaria? Well, the first session was phenomenal as you saw when you were there [phase one] and it's great to think, actually, that in the reversing of the lines (reading the words from the bottom line up to the top and back again), something dramatic shifts in that process which I can only describe as some huge energetic shift. It wasn't that I saw anything different really; it wasn't that I changed consciously, but in some sense subconsciously—something, anyway, shifted a huge amount, which was a very good way of advertising to myself that this is something that I *really wanted* to do.

I mean, I was completely enrolled at the beginning because that experience was so profound. I think I went on yawning for about half an hour, didn't I. It just went on and on and on. So the *effect* on me was quite like—clearing energy, shifting energy; shifting energy, clearing energy.

And then I have had no difficulty really. I think I've missed [only] two days out of the whole thing to this point and I would continue quite easily. That was when my grandson got sick when he was staying with me, and it was just—you know, by the time I got into bed—I was beyond thinking about anything. So I did quite a few when he was sick as well.

The first thing—I found the process really easy so I found it quite easy to *write* them. That wasn't a problem. (I did do a lot of counting of beats on my fingers!)

The other really exceptional experience really early on, I think, was four or five days after I'd started and I had to do three consecutive days of full-on adult teaching. First, in a large auditorium in the hospital with thirty people spread out across the room. It's a huge space. I don't have a microphone so I'm not amplified. I'm having to generate that voice in a space about as big as half of this area here [indicates with hands, sizing up the warehouse space in which we're seated], which is exhausting and I knew I had two days—of something deeply important to me—coming up in Auckland. So I had not only to leave Napier that night after having taught all day but travel to Auckland, meet someone at the town hall, go to their place and then set up the next day, for another two-day workshop, so I was *really* wanting to conserve my energy. And this hospital auditorium was just *draining*. You're standing for six hours, seven hours, and dealing with whatever; and at lunchtime when everyone was away, I just sat on some chairs with my feet up and I did a seminaria on my iPhone and that was just brilliant because it allowed me to actually—I just went into such a peaceful state, I mean, it was just so marked. So much so that I wrote another one, and again, there was a lot of yawning—it felt like a lot of clearing of energy—and what happened was, when a couple

of people came back into the room, the energy was *so still*, they just sat quietly there and did something quietly. They didn't come and talk to me or chat so I was able to actually *have* half an hour of complete *peace*. (So it's a practical way to *still* the mind.)

When I got to the airport, I did another one; well another *two*. I just sat there doing seminaria and so by the time I got to Auckland I was in remarkably good shape. I then did them through the process of the workshop (which itself was really challenging) and I found, I think, things that it solved. I think that it helped ground me really quickly. I think it gave me something to do when I was agitated rather than *be* agitated or *argue* with the agitation. (You know, I could *express* the agitation or *do* something about it.) It gave me again at the airport something to do in those empty [pauses] like, where you've got twenty minutes and nothing much happening. Normally I might read a newspaper but just to sit there and write a seminaria is like—it so much got me back *in touch* with myself and with the best sides of myself. You know, the deeper sides of myself, the wiser sides of myself.

And again, every single time, in reading it, in that reverse way, seemed to be a really powerful process as well. So those are just some of the things that have arisen so far.

That's so rich, the way you describe the immediacy, availability, accessibility. Can you describe how you experience it in your body—what happens while you're writing seminarias, because you've mentioned reference to quite a few shifts and changes . . .

Well, I would say, firstly, it calms me. So I think, firstly, it's something to do. And I have an active *mind*, so the mind's engaged but in something creative, in something that's an *opening* of the self rather than [pauses] well, another option would be for me to play Patience [a game of cards], which somehow never makes me feel better. So I do *consider* it and at some level quite enjoy it but—you know I can sit in the airport and do that or I could write a seminaria. So it's an alternative thing to do when you've got nothing much else to do, if I think about the airport for instance, but the minute I did it, it just opens it *up*. Now, I mean, I've brought that one with me . . . this one here where I just said:

Airport
Bags loaded
Today's work finished
Tomorrow prepared I hope
Breathe and breathe again
Relax, trust,
At peace.

So I've just said it's incredibly useful to you [referring to a journalled footnote], a form to focus my mind, and I think that sense of having somewhere to *go* that stills me, so that my body becomes stiller as well as my breathing. There's a lot in pretty much every semina. There's mention of *breath* so I become conscious of my breath if I think about it. I mean I could look through them but my guess is at least a third of them would mention breathing. Like, 'Breathe' so it returns me to my body in some way because I'm having to write about a *shape* of being so of course, that takes me back to my body doesn't it. I'll have to think about this. [Later writes in the transcript margin: The value of being returned to the body.]

Yes, I mean I've been busy *doing* them. I haven't really been processing it very much. I've just been doing what I've been doing and other things which is exactly the time in which you need to be doing this. So I think the sense of breathing, if I look [scans journal] through the *language* of it, there's a lot about, 'peace and breathing and silence, peaceful flow, relax, trust, breathe; relax, trust, peace, breathe; um, leap [laughs], um, space, inspiration, float, arms raised. I walk tall, tired, letting go' or for example this one:

I feel
The changes
All around the shifts
That leave me claiming the new
My will emerges
I watch in
Surprise.

You can hear that in all those words there's an enormous amount of awareness of the state of the body, so it returns me very much to my physical state and I think that's what I often *don't* do. And also, you know, you're sitting in an airport, you can always do, 'Feet on the ground,' you can always go, 'Remember to breathe' but I'm not actually the least bit interested in lessons on breathing, you know, but when I do this semina, it's like the form itself is so *restful*! I mean I have been *surprised* to be honest, by how restful it feels and by how calm I get and how quickly I get calm.

I think if I look at it, it's been a stressful time. All that work and my grandson coming to stay. He's not an easy chap, but even there I found it really *easy* to use it as a way to reflect on what's been going on. Then he got sick which was really stressful and I did quite a lot of semina about that. Then I asked my daughter to come up because I just found it too hard to deal with . . . but (and we

had a lot of fun together and all of that) again, just very grounded and there's something about being able to write about something like that, in a way that's *naked*. Poetry allows for a certain nakedness of emotion, so I could say when he was there and it was a bit difficult:

Grandson,
Straining at life
And me trying to
Control unstoppable force
Tension is building
I need skills
Of love.

Now you know, that's an amazing poem [poetic form] to be able to encapsulate the shock of it when he arrives because I don't know if he's got Aspergers or not but it appears [reflects] well, he's certainly intensely focused and demanding and not very good around limits in controlling his behaviour so you know, one minute I've got quite a peaceful life and the next minute there's this force 24/7 in my *life* and being able to *write* [seminaria], that is really *peaceful* and then you know, I read something about Aspergers and I just went, 'Poor darling, it's not you, it's this way that you're constructed,' and then I wrote:

Dear boy
You struggle
Being different
As we all do in our way,
My heart fills with love
For one who
Suffers.

You know, completely different state of being, and then the next morning I wrote:

My heart
Is softened
By information
Compassion for struggling boy
I say sorry, and
Explain my
Errors.

Which again is not just a lot of *body* experience but *emotion* which is a lot of healing because of, again, access of my *heart*. And I mean I would have said I don't have that much trouble accessing my heart things but I would say that this has been a really *fast* way of doing it. And a *true* way of doing it. And I think the other thing that is most marked is that I *want* to do it. In the evening when

I'm a bit tired, a seminaria, you know, and I go, 'Super!' And sometimes I wake up and do them in the morning but it's *not* been like a chore, and meditation would exist for me as a chore, otherwise.

You'd mentioned doing the U-lab (theory-U and presencing). It's still a mystery to me how the three-fold construction of seminaria, which includes theory-U (bringing the future into the present) could actually work, as I sense it does sometimes when I'm writing about a dilemma or some conundrum. What about you?

I don't think I've used them in that way. I've used them very much as a *witnessing*, I think. You know, to witness, to *capture* what's going on, rather than to *solve* anything. I hadn't really *thought* of using it particularly to solve something so that's quite a nice thought, using them in that way. Let me just have a look [consults journal]. No, I think I'm using seminaria much more to record, at this point, I think.

It sounds as though you're using seminaria phenomenologically?

Yes!

. . . tapping into its wholeness and essence in a useful way for you, whereas some may focus more perhaps on process and outcome.

Mm. Mm. Mm. I have a lot of problem-solving thoughts, I think. I just haven't thought of seminaria like that, I think. I'm using it more like *poetry*, I think. You know, to record a state or a mood or a feeling to *encapsulate* something. But what I'm *noticing* is that the *form*—in the fact that it's put within a meditation *practice*—is actually working incredibly effectively as a meditation tool.

You know, in other words, I'm getting that same sort of sense of being able to be *with myself as I am* . . . and to put some words to that. The very fact of the form, at times, to have to shift the words around and in shifting the words around—then having to get clear what the *feeling* is, because I want the word to be *exact*. So that again has helped me stay in touch with my feelings and my body. And given that my work is very cerebral really at some level, and I'm in my head quite a bit, this quick access—you know, that I can sit and write one in a café or an airport. I could try problem solving, and see how that went.

I mean I think the thing that's really *interesting* about it is I have *no* desire to *stop*. (Not like, 'Well that's that done, thank God!') [chuckles] It's absolutely *useful* and embedded. I think also, another thing I like about it—I don't get an awful lot of time to be creative in my life and I'm highly creative. I sit and write a few lines of poetry—is what it feels like—as a discipline, is almost like keeping an

artist's journal but it's like a creativity journal but it's mixed in with meditation. It feels very purposeful in a way. So I really *love* that. And I think the problem-solving bit probably comes to me in the reworking . . . reorganising the sequences. Sometimes it doesn't make so much sense but I still know from the first one, which in its first flowing form says:

Decades
Blank canvas
I know how to stay
Calm, listening, watching shapes rise
Now the new challenge
Myself blank
Empty.

And when I reversed it, I got:

Empty
Decades
Myself blank
Blank canvas
Now the new challenge
I know how to stay calm
Listening, watching shapes rise.

I get goosey all up my legs hearing you say that.

I know! I just got so *much* from that. I went Oooh! And there's something about the reversing of the words..?

Yes. Is this starting to move towards what you said at the very beginning; that form, that lemniscate that you saw..?

Mmm! Mmm. *Mmmm.*

Because, you talked before . . .

Before I knew what it was!

Yes, you talked about connectedness.

Yes.

If I had to extract from the essence of what you've said so far today, it would be this connectedness or ability to connect through seminaria with yourself or with something else. And I wonder whether you can say. . .

Which would be my deeper self. (I mean there's myself as an entity floating around having a drama in life) [joking as an aside] but I think it's very quick *access* to a *deeper* self and in a sense, an access point. So about this being peaceful, it's like its access is a reassuring voice, a wisdom really. And it feels different to have it in the poetic form and I think what I love—I like the possibility of magic arising from the reversal of the words [lines]. I think I like what opens up in that. So I've got one here I've just randomly chosen:

Tired
A full day
Insight, people, ideas,
At night the op'ra in bed
I learn many things.
About life
And me.

And if I reverse that, I get:

And me
Tired
About life.
A full day
I learn many things
Insight, people, ideas
At night, the opera in bed.

Now, somehow that reversing does an enormous amount. It opens up all sorts of new *connections*. So I suppose, you know if I think about that almost *neurologically*, the patterning is the way it comes out the first time. But, when I reverse it, I get, like, all these new brain connections. And so I never know what magic might happen in those. Why is it conscious or not? So I've got another one here related to that:

Tired
In my bed
The day ends with sleep
Resolving the challenges
I trust my being
It heals me
I know.

And then I go, if I reverse it:

I know
Tired
It heals me
In my bed
I trust my being
The day ends with sleep
Resolving the challenges.

Now, I mean, I just find that so *exciting!*

You've gone sequentially 2, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 2 and then 2, 2, 3, 3, 5, 5 so you've brought the heart, the centre [7] out in front of you. Is this something to do with your [lemniscate] question then? I mean I haven't thought about it quite like this before.

Mmmm. Mmmm. [mutual 'Aha!' laughter of discovery] Well, it's another pathway with the same sentence in the middle, isn't it? I think it just opens up new possibilities 'cause you do rearrange the sequence. But you rearrange the sequence in a form—in a logical form again.

When you say 'logical form' that seems like a reasoned left-brain kind of activity. But then something happens that . . .

That is right brain. Yeah! I'm thinking it probably ties the two parts together beautifully. I mean we could even go: 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, you know, so there's a lot of the structure needing to fit in that. Then within that, you've got no idea what's going to pop up when you move the words around a bit. So [pauses pensively]

So you seem now to be implying mystery or..?

Mmm. Mmm. Mmm. Mmmm!

And then out of that mystery you mentioned magic before, the unexpected . . .

Well, given that at the heart of life for me, is the *Great Mystery* [laughs appreciatively] anything that gets me close to 'the Great Mystery' . . . is *lovely*. I mean I was a textile artist for twenty years and a lot of that was just making a mark to *start* with, and then seeing where it *led* and I've spent lots of years now attempting to be logical and that's quite hard for me. I'm actually wanting a space to allow spontaneity and automatic writing, but not with that sort of randomness. So I think what's interesting about seminaria for me is that in saying something that's [not only] *important* to me . . .

but by *rearranging* it, I get *access* to different *combinations* of that. You know, to different *insights* into it and I never know. I wrote this really interesting one really early on. I was looking at being older:

Woman
Wooed by man
Male power controls
What of the bride and mother
Packed in pink tissue
Heart opens
To all.

When I rework that I get:

To all
Wom[e]n
Heart opens,
Wooed by man,
Packed in pink tissue,
Male power controls.
What of the bride and mother?

[Laughs] I could write a play out of that! [hearty laughter] You know, there's a kind of ballad in there and then the next one was:

Beauty
Fading fast
Power rises now
A world waiting to be healed.
Wisdom and knowledge
Packaged and
Mapped clear.

So when I reverse that I get:

Mapped clear
Beauty
Packaged and
Fading fast
Wisdom and knowledge
Power rises now
A world waiting to be healed.

[Sighs] You know, and I just go, Wow! they are so *powerful*, why would I not want to keep accessing that sort of wisdom! [laughs appreciatively] That was an interesting one because I was just having that thing, as you do about, you know, I'm getting older and I'm not mad about that. It's not, 'Oh, yipee!' My appearance *has* been important to me. It's been a source of power and this is pathetic because I like *decorating* myself. And there's bits of me that regret, you know, the passing of all of that, but writing it like that, I go: Yeah . . . ? So it's packaged up in a way. It's *past* but what's *rising* is so much more powerful. And I wouldn't have given a stuff about a world waiting to be healed back then. [laughs, highlighting the paradox of what's important at different life stages]. I was interested in a lot of *other* things and now, that's what I'm *driven* by. Well really, it doesn't matter what I look like.

Up to a point but for the part that you regret is drifting gradually away, go and see the film Iris, if you haven't already.

I have.

Wasn't it stunning! I just felt, I can manage the process now with an exemplar like her.

Exactly! and I mean I think there's other ways to deal with it. I just actually invented, at yesterday's workshop, the possibility of 'outrageous aging': 'Ok, I'm going to do this with the power and passion and magnificence that *she* has!' Also what I love about Iris is she's true to her own style. She's wearing her past around her body all the time, and her amazing eye that she's trained all her life. It's not like she's just getting herself up in weird stuff. It really *is* a very full expression of who she is . . . and she *knows* why it's working. So she's really smart.

So as a metaphor for seminaria, is there some kind of resonance there?

I think it's about [reflects] because it allows you to be pretty naked with yourself, you know, you can sort of *see* stuff. I'm amazed by the force of my own *will*. I've never had much will. I've had a lot of drive but not a lot of will and discipline and I'm just watching in amazement at the moment because it's just *there* and it will take me where it intends to go. And I've got this lovely bit where I've said:

Tired
Letting go
Day's end and lots done.
A level of intense flow
Through the hours of calm
I'm aware

Of change.

I am
Incisive
Surprisingly so
For one who has avoided
Action and attack
I don't know
The self.

When I reverse that last one, I get:

The self
I am,
I don't know,
Incisive,
Action and attack
Surprisingly so
For one who has avoided.

[laughs] So I think . . . the *other* thing I would say, it is quite *companionable*. It's a companionable activity because sometimes when I've been in the house alone in the evening, when I might often turn on the television, I've gone, 'Oh I might do my seminaria now, by the fire' which means that whatever it's doing, it puts me in contact with my *full* self rather than, 'Oh my God, it's the end of the day.' The house is empty and that feeling of emptiness and sort of tiredness, and so I think that's like a marked thing for me that I have enough energy to do it! I think it's because it's not very demanding. I can sit and easily write it, you know, and then I get *energy* from it.

How do you experience it when you get energy? Where do you feel it first?

Well, there is the whole *body* thing. My body goes, 'Oh, good! You're going to do seminaria, oh, right! That feels exciting!' Then I probably get a wriggle in my body and then that's a sense of energy and if it's half past seven, and I've been up since five working. We're talking about a *long* day and I can sort of snuggle into it really, either in a chair or in bed and at times for me, you know it does nourish the *inner* self. But I think [too], because I *will* be a lot on my own, you know, staying with other people, moving and travelling, possibly living alone, then having something that's companionable that's a way of dialoguing with the self which is rich and nourishing, as opposed to that which is, you know, less constructive conversation. I think it's a real *gift*.

With the television, you can have a dialogue or a bit of an argument in your head, but essentially, it's entertainment, whereas with this you're engaging your will in the way you said before, so you immediately have a connectedness that's more fulfilling. . .

Well, I had not really thought, till we started to talk, how much I miss creativity. What powerful *energy* I had for it, every evening, you know, and with this, I can *do* it!

And you said before, it gives you more energy.

Well, yeah, not a *lot* but for the time I'm doing it, I have. Then I write the journal part, after which I normally feel tired again and sometimes I write another seminaria after that so it's a good way to end the day. I think that's often why [for me] it's a reflective practice 'cause it's looking back over the day.

Now that's interesting, you said you write the journal bit and feel tired again. Is that some reflection on what you've written?

No. No, it's the end of the day. An amplification of the day. Sometimes that's just a recording, it's not doing very much with it. I mean I do have a diary in which I record things, a certain amount, and I'm just using this [seminaria research journal] instead of that. And I think I'll go on using this seminaria process. I think I'll just commit to this way of capturing and I do think when you said it was useful for problem-solving, I think it *does resolve* some stuff. So on the day when I'm having to go up to this friend's place, and I was *anxious* about it . . . at the end of the day I was able to write:

At Gail's
Now in bed
All went splendidly
Flight fast, concert, food, the bed,
Flowed and unfolded
All is well
Deep sleep.

And that's the end of a fairly stressful sort of day. So I think if I look back, I've written one in the class, one on the iPhone in the classroom, one at the airport, and one at the end of the day. . . and then *this* one which was at the end of the first day of the workshop—which was really challenging because everyone had very strong existing models. I've said:

Day's end
Shock, struggle
Strong minds, strong models
Dominate the space and hold

Strong frameworks against
Which I hold
My map.

When I reversed that, I got:

My map
Day's end
Which I hold,
Shock, struggle
Strong frameworks against
Strong minds, strong models
Dominate the space and hold.

but actually I get *I'm* dominating the space.

Mmmm, like it's given you your power back?

Exactly when centre stage, and I just wrote that and so, I go, 'Well, actually that wasn't so difficult!' and next morning:

All done
It went well.
Insights abound and
The map delivers meaning
I held the space and
Work is done,
I stop.

I stop,
All done
Work is done;
It went well,
I held the space and
Insights abound and
The Map delivers meaning.

[Both laugh]

You couldn't ask for more. An amazing rhythm when it's sequential, and reading it backwards, that gold in the middle.

Exactly. And then this next one after that:

The last
Exercise

Put me in centre
The space of inspiration
My colleagues around,
Clear questions
Transform.

Transform
The last
Clear questions
Exercise.
My colleagues around
Put me in centre
The space of inspiration.

[Laughs with recognition.] Reading them back again, that's the other thing: I find it interesting to read them back and to do that reworking.

It sounds so immediate; so powerful.

Absolutely! Yes! And I think that's why I'm enjoying this way of capturing the day. I think if I was to paint the day or something, you know, it's all too hard somehow. But the fact of *this*—it seems to be very purposeful in comparison with other forms of doing things, I think, if I look at this semina. That would be my experience. [pauses pensively] You know, all of those seminarias are purposeful. They were purposeful when I wrote them and they're purposeful when I rework them. And they come to that real nugget in the centre. I think it's also that my subconscious is on my side and therefore, when the thing's returned to me, and I read them back like that, there are gifts in them that I couldn't create for myself. You know? I think those'll be more powerful [when] looking back, actually. Like, reading those now, I'm going, Oh heavens! I can hear how much I held the space . . . in the face of all of that. Albeit that I felt quite fragile at times. But I did [it], and it worked and people got huge value out of it. So there's a sense of learning something *new* about *yourself*, mmm, or having it reflected back to you.

When you said that then, you . . .

I did this [repeats hand gesture in the shape of the infinity sign]

Mmm, you did that with your hands. So that's my last question: What is the meaning of that lemniscate movement you made with your hands often, seemingly subconsciously?

Yes, so I think that's what I'm noticing. So what would that be? If I look at that gesture, if I feel into that gesture, what does it mean? I suppose it's a *weaving together*, a bridging. Oh, okay! so it's a bringing up from the bottom [space below] into consciousness, isn't it, the unconscious to conscious; the conscious into the unconscious, [looking at her gesture thoughtfully as she replicates the movement], where it gets focused again. I think that's what that gesture was—like weaving those two together. So rather than dwelling in the conscious mind, and then going, 'Oh right, now I'm going to have therapy'. . . 'Now I'm going to *ask* my unconscious [mind] something', I think it's a *process*. This is certainly quite exciting because I haven't thought of it like that [before]. It's that I'm weaving the unconscious and the conscious minds together within that lemniscate, allowing for the miraculousness of my unconscious mind to give me gifts. Or, you could say my holy, you know, my heart or whatever you want to call it, but the bit that isn't in there in the forefront running round thinking it's running stuff, um, and weaving that into, you know, so that sense of giving it something from the day, and I think that comes more back to what you were saying about problem solving. Giving it something from the day and going, 'No, this was pretty troubling, I was a bit worried about this' and then looking at what it gives me back, so the rearranging of those words.

Yes, that [process] does give me a whole series of gifts and surprises and the like. I think you originally asked me about that painting I painted and what the process was when I start, and it's very much like [that]. I start and then I wait to see what emerges and then after a while I can see something, you know, and then I *follow* it. I miss that process because I don't do a lot of that [now]. [These days with work] I need to do quite a lot of managing and controlling, for me, (you know), that normally I'd do very little of. I think what's really interesting with this seminaria process, is I can get *quick* access to the unconscious or quick access to that 'surprise' mood.

I'd get that sometimes from doing a collage, and standing back, going, 'Oh, that's interesting, now why is that happening?' You know, the sort of juxtaposition of images but all of that takes quite a long time and you've got to have space to do it. This seminaria—the fact that I could do this on my iPhone, mail it to myself, I didn't even have to have paper. I could just be at work and do it. You know, in terms of practicality; but it actually feels really nice to make that weaving motion. I can just do it openly, [experiments with the lemniscate gesture] with my left hand [pensive, exploratory]

Almost a Tai Chi gesture?

It's Flamenco and Balinese dancing—those sorts of things. I think it's a way, again, of expressing creativity when I can't do it all that easily sometimes with my body and I have quite an expressive body and very expressive hands, but you know, how . . . *how* do we access *all* of that *information* in this linear, boxed sort of world we're forced to live in quite a lot. I think the seminaria just allow me to do that lightly and quickly at any time of the day really.

I wrote one when I was standing at a bus station and in that moment could access . . . create an opening for some unexpected (like doors opening), some unexpected *Wooh!* something that could just shoot in and be really *exciting*, because I think *that's* another source of *energy* for me. I mean, the reason that the Great Mystery's at the centre of everything for me is that I do not *want* to know what the world is about; I really want to be surprised, and I think one of the things about being older is that you've had a lot of experiences so there's [still] something left surprising. You know, when someone says, 'Don't you want to travel?' I go, 'I've actually travelled *a lot*. Fifty percent of my life I've been travelling and living other places. I don't really, you know.' Ah, but when you say 'No' to *that*, then there's a big 'No' to the *new*, and I was thinking of the philosopher Gurdjieff who said, there are three foods: the food of *breath*—without which we die, quickly—and then there's obviously, food and drink, and then the third one is the food of new *impressions*. [Mikaela glances at her watch and I can see in her expression a need now, to be on the road again. We rise and part with the warmth of mutual thanks.]

Totally heart-warmed by what Mikaela has conveyed from her lived experience of TMoS, I leave 'La Bella' with the food of new impressions which, I note in my research journal, will make a stimulating starting place for our next interview.

4.8 Co-researcher Murray

Murray
Creative
UK principal
Blends deep learning, compliance
Without compromise
First class school
Report.

I felt fortunate that Murray volunteered to participate in this study while visiting New Zealand. I had attended a talk he gave on educational wellbeing, including his school's innovative approach to assessment and the growing evidence of its beneficial outcomes recognised too, by his country's regulatory authorities. Afterwards we arranged to meet in person and thereafter to Skype.

(Synchronously, he'd once met the founder of seminar form, J.-P. Linde himself, in a different context and had no knowledge of the poetry.) The morning of our phase two interview, he travelled over to Wellington and we drove together to the quiet spaciousness of a city gallery. Lattes delivered, I turned on the voice recorder with preliminary formality followed by my note of sincere appreciation:

Welcome Murray, thanks again for volunteering your participation as a co-researcher. I was a little anxious we'd not had enough time to play with the mindfulness of seminaria sufficiently to get you started. Then I got your email, which was just wonderful! It sounded pregnant with possibility and connectedness.

Oh, *pregnant!* So, multiple *births* I've had. [a humorous aside]

So how's your experience of seminaria? Tell me about it.

Well, I sat down after meditation; I opened my journal. First, actually, I read over and over the background to seminaria and its influences: Aquinas, with the argumentum and things, Aristotle, Steiner, and U-theory. I think there are four voices in there. That was very interesting to read in its depth. But then I got into the *head* space of struggling with the logistics of it. The syllable nature of it came very quickly—two, three, five, seven, five, three, two. That was easy and the mirroring, as a second factor, was quite easy. The more difficult aspect was the sequential, start-to-finish progression; the nature of it . . . how it builds up, heightens, goes into a balance and then into a conclusion. I think that was the most difficult, to give *each line* a *quality* in itself.

So, what I did was just start writing [indicates prompt in the margin]: 2, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 2 and they just *poured* out, and then looking back, the accidental nature, the beauty, the coincidental nature, the synchronicity of the mirroring of the lines was *amazing*. Just how *obviously* they were all mirroring each other, even without *thought* or *plan*.

I thought, to start with, I'm just going to write and let it pour out as *intuition*, and hope for the *best*. The best came with the mirroring, but what I *do* need to hone, *consciously*, is the *qualitative difference* of each line, in progression. That's a tricky one. It's all very well just spouting out your thoughts and then landing beautifully in an arranged form but you need to have some consciousness now [of] the progressive, qualitative *difference*, from start to finish, of each line.

That's partly where the economy and rhythm come in . . . where the language asks for simpler words perhaps?

Yes! I think what's *beautiful* about *this*, is that it takes a kind of a [pause] say a cloud, a cloud of moisture—as thoughts go—a cloud of moisture as an analogy. It's kind of all disparate and stretched and fuzzy and it crystallises it down into a snowflake. You know, this form, it brings about an *individual* snowflake out of that moisture. I think that's a beautiful picture for what this seminar[ia] does. From a lot of disparate thoughts, fuzzy thinking, you find the *essence*, hone it down into an essential picture; distil it into a beautiful picture and what I did was, for each seminar, for each form, I did a little *fanciful* motif. A little *visual* motif like a tiny pictogram, somewhere in the writing like a little logo, just for fun because as an artist, I just wanted to put something visual in to make it a little bit light and fun. It's actually an essential logo of that form. Then at the bottom of each, I wrote one sentence of explanation (What was the *impulse* for that?) Some of them will not be structurally accurate I think, but you can give me feedback on that. I'll be able to find ways of making them more accurate.

At the moment, they're pouring out of 'the ether and the muse' but that's what usually happens I think when starting something new like this. Then you get to a kind of 'still spot' and a mental block and they dry up and I fully expect that to happen, or maybe it won't ..?

Maybe it won't. After this initial stage of outpouring, when you're back in that work space of, 'Oh! Here's a dilemma; here's a tricky situation.' Maybe you'll see a relational difficulty in a group or between students or something, who knows how.

Well, the thing is, Gaylene, I'm obviously on holiday and have the luxury of rest and inspiration and contemplation but at the same time I am involved in my work on a daily basis, remotely, online, sorting out problems and one of them was *exactly* that. Three girls have been in a clique for their whole school life and it's come to a head now, while I'm away. Letters, emails from parents, and so I've had to bring that into a mindful form, meditatively, those three girls causing strife in the school. So that's in one of them.

Have you found it helpful as a mindfulness practice? Has it facilitated any transition?

Well, I don't think so, being on the other side of the world. I don't know what effect it's having. I just read it twice before bed; took it into my sleep and you know, I have to just hope and expect that the ripples will go out and work.

You know, again [shifting his focus], I'm not aware of the *progression* of the *narrative* in sequence and quality. Do you see what I'm saying? I've read that discourse on the qualitative composition of

seminaria: The first line should express this. The third line has this quality and I keep *reading* it and *not* quite understanding it, or um [breathes in deeply], yeah, I'm not quite with the qualitative *flow* from [lines] one to seven.

Yes, I was exactly the same.

Really?

I thought, 'Well, I'm just going to trust . . .

Exactly!

. . . the process [both finish the sentence simultaneously].

So when I've run little workshops on seminaria I say, 'Forget about the technicalities. They're there if you want to analyse and edit later, but first, I want you to have fun!

Well, I think that's what I'm doing.

It seems the actual beingness of the form has a certain quality and it's more important that one is free from overanalysis, to discover this.

Yes! Play with it, yes! I mean, at the moment I'm in the *sandpit*. At the moment I'm playing in the sandpit! Just enjoying it and I think later on [implies 'I'll attend to that aspect']. I think it would restrict me if I got too cerebral about it, I think.

So this one was about an ongoing question for me—What is the purpose of school—data, information, knowledge, wisdom, or love? Our school means in Gaelic, the hill of poetry. Amazing isn't it! [Both laugh at the irony.] Oh golly—I've just clicked now! Amazing, isn't it!? [resumes serious tone and goes on sharing seminaria experience]

And this one was about rushing about all day trying to fit in too much. I may not have a choice in the quantity [of tasks] but I can choose my response. So maybe you just *have* to fit lots in but the way you *tackle* it, you do have a choice in the way you *view* it. So you might have loads of work to do but instead of going, 'Oh no! I've got loads of work!' You could just say [calmly centring his voice], 'I've got another thing to do . . . I've done it; now, I've got another thing to do. . . [I've done it.] I mean, I don't *practise* this very well.

Do you feel that this may help you?

I hope so, yes.

In terms of presencing?

In terms of *presencing* and *consciousness* like, 'Wake up. You don't have to be continually emotional about all this. Just accept it and take a step at a time.' So I wrote . . .

Like the Camino!

Yes, exactly, the Camino yes, so I wrote just a step at a time and I'll get there to the next albergue and then I'll think about the *next* one.

The world
Momentum
Dancing to the drum,
I and my consciousness choose
To find a rhythm
One to guide
The heart.

So yes, that was *lovely*, really. Just beautiful isn't it. I mean, they all speak just so deeply through their simplicity. Then that one was a realisation today of the preciousness of friends and friendship. They could be gone tomorrow. (And they will be because I'm leaving New Zealand and won't see them for at least a year), so I wrote:

This is
The present.
To me, the best gift.
Does it get better than this?
Why live in waiting?
Tomorrow
Is now.

So it's funny, the 'present' and the 'gift.' It's a lovely play on words I think. This *all* just comes *out* in one *go*, actually. [Said with emphasized amazement.] There's hardly any scribbling out or planning or [reflects] I'm just grateful to live in the *moment* in the gift of *inspiration*. [But] I know when I start working and the pressure's on, back to work, it will be a little more discipline needed.

I'm wondering whether, if you say to yourself, 'This is my mindfulness 'toolkit'?

Ooh, yes!

Integrated as a strategy when you have a tricky situation; part of your inner compass.

Y . . . e . . . s! [Long drawn-out affirmative 'yes.'] Inner compass—There!!! [Points to the word compass in his journal that he's already used in similar context; both laugh appreciatively at the synchronicity.] Compass point! So this has got compass symbols drawn on it. I got my syllables wrong but I've corrected it.

The south
Connections.
We speak of old friends.
Do you really know that man?
The chances are small
So distant
Up north.

And this one I wrote:

I am
Inside God
New Zealand, my rest.
In point and periphery;
God is inside me,
The UK
My work.

I got an email saying that two of our teachers have dropped out this week. That means four modules have been dropped and we need more teachers, so I wrote:

Teachers
I invoke
May you come to us
In service of this, our school
That young hearts may grow
In service
And love.

I looked out the window this morning and while staying here, looking out at the island every morning from our window; it's just *phenomenal*, I mean to stand there with these gigantic windows looking out on an island, and every day, *every day*, literally, there's a different drama of light. Astonishing! I mean, you couldn't get a flat screen big enough to see such a drama of variation. You know, and they are *breath*taking! Mist. Cloud. Heaviness. Light. Brightness, so I wrote:

Island
A backdrop
For daily drama
Without you, no scene or set.
The elements play,
Sea, air, light,
Earth waits.

Earth waits to receive the drama! Yes! [Laugh together.] That's beautiful! I mean, I anticipate ending on anticipation! 'Earth waits' is like a stage waiting for the actors to come on, and the actors are Sea, Air and Light. Yes! The backdrop of Sea, Air and Light, the daily drama and play. So again, the *mirroring* works accidentally. The only consciousness I'm putting into these, is the *syllable* structure. So the mirroring is not conscious, and the progressive quality of lines is not conscious but—as I said, for *now*—I think I'm just going to *enjoy* experimenting and risking.

I probably missed out seminaria mindfulness *one* day, but I did two in one day, the 31st and then missed the 1st August.

Fine. You've gone so deeply and fulsomely into the whole process . . . and it's working for you.

Yes. Yeah.

I was delighted to hear you excited about its potential.

Yes, it's not just about pragmatic help to one's inner life. It's actually—what's very important about all this, is that one is *being* creative—an opportunity in your life to *write poetry!* It's like it's not just a spiritual/mindfulness discipline or practice but a creative outlet like going to a painting class or learning violin.

Who knows what might evolve.

Yes, actually, to leave *space* in it for other possibilities to come in.

Sometimes you might want to do a whole series on one particular issue.

If I just wrote one for each of the three girls, like a little ministudy. Mmm. I must write that down. It'll be very nice if I can continue it as *my own* practice; to keep going but it's just good to know what the set parameter is for the research.

Three weeks' exploration, preferably supportive of the teacher's work rather than an add-on.

Yes! That's right, so rather than as an obligation.

To be joyful, playful, creative, as you've mentioned.

I drop Murray at his city destination for the day, unsurprisingly, a school where he has a number of appointments. Again, I am left feeling a sense of enormous gratitude for the depth of sharing, the openness, honesty and even the vulnerability these co-researchers are willing to share with me. Next time Murray and I meet will be across the globe via Skype. I ponder the coincidence too, that he once met the founder of seminar form [unconnected to his poetry] and ask myself, 'What are the chances of that?!'

Three weeks later we meet via Skype at 8 p.m. UK time. After a few preliminary exchanges of small talk, I ask:

How's it all going? What else have you been experiencing with seminaria?

I've just counted them. I know it's not quantity that matters, it's quality, but I did manage to do one per day. It's slipped behind slowly but surely because of the exhaustion of school. I mean, I was just wanting to go to sleep as soon as I got home. So all in all, I've got thirty-six of them but yeah [big in-breath] all I can say really is, I *really, really enjoyed* doing them. They've not been a chore at all, just that they've got less frequent as time's gone on. I think I've just been utterly, utterly exhausted. It's very difficult because my role and responsibility has grown beyond what I would have imagined. That means reinterviewing all the staff (I feel like little Frodo carrying too much at the moment.) So, with all that, with all that, you can imagine that these seminars, seminarias, have been less frequent [though] I so enjoy doing them. I just *love* them!

They suit my need for *simplicity* and *form*. This diamond shape is so beautiful. The diamond that it creates each time. Two triangles. It's so satisfying; a satisfying *form*. And because the limitation is the freedom it gives you. You know that you can just sit down and you've got to be very precise in what you're saying; essential, and distilled. So basically, what I've been doing, is going to bed, often, and then just getting this book [research journal] and whatever feeling comes up in me—the inner feeling of the day, it can be stream of consciousness—I just *respond* to that feeling. So again, incredibly satisfying not to [implies 'have to do more headwork'].

I'm working with the head very much, at school and if I allow my *feeling* to dictate this, it's acknowledging this neglected part, which is the heart. So, I wouldn't want to be 'all cerebral' about it. So to have to work out the structured reflection of line one to seven and two to line six, I just like

to [changes focus]; I'm enjoying the kind of *release* of the *heart* and I wrote one here. The third to last one I wrote is this:

The head
Makes up tales
To protect the heart
The head is really fearful
Scared of getting hurt
But, O heart
Brave heart!

Yes, it's kind of a taste of things general and also with my international relationship as well. You know, we often get into the head to get protection of our vulnerability and then, if you let go, then the heart is much more brave. You know, the head just starts to manipulate.

Yes, I'm so enjoying these! Well, here's another one. I've done so many of them; so many of them. I'm very proud of these I must say, and here's an interesting one:

My place
In the world
The question in me
Inferno or a candle?
Scorching fire or warm?
Maverick
Or monk?

You know it's a bit of a dichotomy between being out there in the world, fighting and dynamic, or a candle, or warm, or monk (rather than inferno, scorching fire or maverick). See what I mean, it's such a dilemma. The balance between [trails off pensively].

I've just *so* enjoyed these um, seminaria! And then, some of them are quite interesting because they go from the mundane to quite philosophical like this one:

Why not
Just say yes
A little more often
The capacity for fear
Pervades all life now
Just say yes
It helps.

And then the last one I did, the most recent one, was really because I'm so busy, I'm starting to disconnect with people. Friends are sort of diminishing and going off. I'm losing contact with lots of people. Meanwhile over here, this beautiful place where we have thousands of geese flying over at the moment. Thousands of them in V formations, honking away. Gorgeous. It's my favourite scene in nature, altogether. This last one:

Seeing
Things that shift.
Friends depart at once.
Chapters close; patterns emerge;
I saw lines of geese,
Dark omens,
Angels.

It's just so lovely to do these things . . . Oh, yes [identifying another]:

Right now
This moment
My intention rules
I choose to think the word, love
And why shouldn't I?
It feels good
Just love.

I mean they're a lot of fun! Oh this was another I wrote, reminiscing on the dark night of the soul a couple of years ago in New Zealand. But it reverses.

Only
Fire does this,
Breaking substance down
Surrender, then acceptance
The terror subsides
Death carries
No fear.

So I think it's a lovely vehicle for bringing out an essential gem; crystal shape.

Your grace
All I need
To overcome fear
To work from inspiration
To live out of love
If thy will
Be done.

So tell you what—another one:

Have fun!
Even though
There's too much to do
This conspiracy of haste
Tries to break our souls
There's no way
Jose!

[laughter]

It even allows for humour doesn't it [the mindfulness of seminaria]? To mediate from activity to stillness. Yeah. That's a good idea. I suppose it's kind of exhaustion in part. I just want to sleep but actually, maybe to just *allow* words to come. It doesn't have to be [cerebral]. You know, I'm involved so much with my head now with all of this stuff (and they've asked me to be principal for *both places*. I think I'll just allow seminaria to be stream of consciousness, you know, and see what comes.

Sometimes, I must say, an interesting element of this has been that I've tried to write them last thing in bed and because I come to it in a nice meditative space and I get half way I fall asleep but still that's fine because I trust that the next day I'll pick it up refreshed and it can be altered, so that's fine. It's worked well. Did I read you one about the seminar?

A gift
Seminar
When the formlessness
Longs to take shape and arrive
To give the circle
A centre
A point.

So I'll read that again because it's about the seminar itself. And because the formlessness is the circle (it *can* be the circle) but to give the circle a centre, a point—it distils the circle of nebulous feelings, emotions, thoughts and distils it down to a single point. Well it's not a point it's a diamond but [extended pause]

Might it be the centre of the diamond? a crossing point of consciousness? (Which connects it with the Camino and discovering the subtlety of lemniscate movement.)

Ah, Yes!!

You know, with the lemniscate, it was discovered we create it when we walk, energisingly, which leads to what I was going to ask you before. You know you were talking about exhaustion and it's a reality I've experienced in similar situations to you. You say this seminaria is such a vehicle for fun and enjoyment and you really love doing it, I just wonder what aspect energises you?

I can certainly respond to that. I think when I've finished a seminar form—a feeling I get is one of fulfilled satisfaction that I've actually done something very purposeful, significant, and meaningful. Created. It's like you've just brought something to birth in the world. Amongst all the utilitarian, pragmatic [pause] you know, mundane, chore-like business [of managing a school] you've brought something into the world for a moment that is truly, well, metaphysical. It's above physical. You've brought 'down' something from the spirit into the metaphysical and then into the physical. You've brought it *down*. I mean it's just like a little birth, which is very satisfying.

And the nature of creativity is of incredible importance, yes, that's right [self-talk affirmation], what the mindfulness of seminaria *does* is gives us a little skylight. It's like one of those 'Velux' windows. A Velux window, you open, a *tiny* Velux window you can open to let some light in and close again once a day or twice. That's what you're doing, you're letting some light through the thickness of cloud, into your life, for a moment. It feels just like you've let some sunshine in from out of the cloud, especially the way I'm writing seminaria *large* and tidily. It's also very satisfying. Oh yes, [locates another example he wants to share to illustrate his discovery], this is about being *not* in the present:

Yearning
Is to wish
Other than what is
Fighting the present moment.
You can't win this one,
Present rules
Okay.

[Mutual appreciative laughter]. This is a bit mundane, it's:

Hear this:
There is now.
Now is all there is.
Does it get better than this?
This is all there is.
This is it
Listen.

[both laugh] *Eckart Tolle in one seminaria!*

Even now, I have to remind myself—seeing you across the planet [Skyped]. Does it need to be better than this, at all? This can potentially be everything that there is. You know?

Exactly, it embodies everything.

It doesn't need to be: 'Well, tomorrow it'll be okay 'cause I'll do this and I'll be happy or at the weekend I'll be fine. Or, when I'm retired, I'll be fine. . . ' [It's like] Now! I am fine *now!* Ah, that is such a blessing. [Looks through journal.] This, when I was mowing the lawn:

Easy
To subdue
Nature and its gifts
Petrol engine all I need
Power over love
May I learn
Patience.

It was really this feeling—as soon as you've got a machine in your hands—you know, even a car, it gives you this power—power over love, and it's so easy to subdue nature with all its gifts basically through . . . [laughs]

But don't become a 'petrol head'!

That's right. It was just a warning really. And oh, here's a nice one:

There is
Something else
Other than flesh and bone.
The force of light that fills me
Living images
In my mind
So real.

Again, proof of the metaphysical; something else other than flesh and bone. The force of light, so real. You know, and no one can understand what the living images are made of.

Then there was one, about freedom, hope, optimism and love. That was the reason for it.

Time heals
It was dark
I had become small

Contraction in centre
Slowly, a sunrise
Expansion
Time heals.

So that starts with 'Time heals' and finishes with 'Time heals,' but it was really about times of depression and then coming out of them. And to me that embodies an appreciation that's bigger than you would have had, had you not gone into that depression. So it embodies the shadow side, not pushed away but embraced. Seen as useful, it becomes very useful.

My three
Good children
Stepdaughter came too
Feeling such love for all four
This is my treasure
Money can't
Buy love.

And then . . . I'll tell you this: I left 'Rowena' and it was a surprise seminaria for her:

Murray
Rowena
Truth, two names, one heart
Across the land, sea and sky
Distance has no place
Presencing
One love.

Distance has no place. We talked about how love presences the other person, irrespective of time and space. *You* heard that with the experienced knowing of your own. Yes, and that's a lesson in a way, isn't it? We don't need to rely on physicality, with presence. We can learn intellectually all about at-one-ness but until you're put in a position to feel it, it's not real, is it? Just kind of reading books and things and spiritual tomes [reflectively].

Exactly, and that evokes a story which I will share because it's in the moment.

Okay.

[Shares story illustrating presencing.]

Amazing, yes, and because you put yourself in that state of presence. You know, you may not have been so open to speak to him had you not been in that state of surrender.

That's exactly it. Well, I thought afterwards, I'd have been contracted, frustrated.

Closed, closed.

Yes, and you've epitomised it with the seminaria. Could you read it once more?

But um, do you think I'm on the right track? Because I'm just wondering, one could just write prose but broken down into parts. It could all be just sentences. Do you know what I mean? Prose. I don't want to get stuck in that. I want each line to be a being in itself. Do you see what I mean? That's what I meant when I wrote:

The head
Makes up tales
To protect the heart . . .

So that's one sentence of prose, broken up into three lines but maybe it's good if each sentence, each line of a seminaria can stand alone as well, as a statement. The head. That could be just a statement but the second one can't stand alone (makes up tales) and the third can't stand alone (to protect the heart). See what I mean? So, there's different ways of doing it. You could just write a whole lot of prose—the head makes up tales to protect the heart—and then another sentence so it just rolls through to the end. It's just a sentence divided by the lines but for instance, this last one I did, the lines *can* stand alone as well.

Seeing
Things that shift
Friends depart at once.
Chapters close, patterns emerge.
I saw lines of geese
Dark omens
Angels.

And in that form, it's not just prose because each line can stand alone if it wants. 'Seeing' can stand alone; second line, 'Things that shift' so it can also be seeing things that shift. Or it could be 'Things that shift.' It can be a stand-alone statement. 'Friends depart at once'—that can stand alone. 'Chapters close, patterns emerge,' that can stand alone. 'I saw lines of geese,' 'dark omens,' 'angels,' so . . .

I get the feeling it's how you embody each line, if that makes sense.

Ah ha.

Even though it might be stand-alone prose, the fact that you examine it; that you stop and you give each line its own importance; could it be something to do with the writer's consciousness? I think, the being of seminaria is somehow flowing through in a more embodying way when you give each line its own true individuality, and significance. The characteristic syllabification of each line is complete in itself, filling each line with its own consciousness. It's not just a slurring carry-on.

Exactly. It's flowing. So that's a nice challenge for me—to make each line an individualised statement in itself.

Do you know, the list of questions I had to ask you—you've actually covered them all—energy, opportunity, aspects of life and work, new ideas, focus, realisations, I mean honestly, you've spontaneously covered those areas of discussion.

Good! Good. A natural then am I?

Exactly! It's in the nature of heuristic inquiry that the interview takes the form of a living conversation not a sequence of predetermined questions; but an embodied conversation.

We're going off to a conference today, the topic of which is, 'What Matters.'

That's another word for seminaria, isn't it? (What matters.) Because it's condensing all of the stuff you could say for hours and hours into what matters.

Thank you, that's brilliant! Thank you so much for working with seminaria; for being a collaborator and co-researcher of this process.

Thank you for the lovely quote by Rilke about living with the question. [reads paraphrased version from his journal]

I beg you to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart; try to love the questions themselves as though they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers which cannot be given to you now because you would not be able to live with them; and the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then someday far in the future, you will gradually without even noticing, live your way into the answer.

Passion
Scorpio
Extremes of desert
Drama plays out on life's stage
Communication
Larger world
Than this.
(Murray)

Nice work
Murray Forth
Encapsulating
As you do, such heart forces
Moving worlds through words
United
Through love.
(Author)

4.9 Co-researcher Olivia

Teacher
Of children
Deep, dedicated
Discovering this word form
From colleague Gordon
Mining gold,
Told me.

I felt excited travelling up to Olivia's place, wondering what was in store. It had been a thrill to receive her email and find that, as a colleague of Gordon's, she'd not only found the *seminaria* practice she'd learned from him useful, but obviously extraordinary enough for her to make time to meet with me in the last week of term. Moreover, she was willing to sign up as a late participant which meant following the ethical process including voice recording our conversations. After searching out the letterbox number along a long road of houses tucked back behind hedges and trees, I enter through a side gate into an enchanting garden. Lulled by the distant 'breathing' of the sea, I take a deep breath myself, before knocking at the front door. Welcoming me warmly, Olivia leads me through to a space she has cleared for us at the table, and begins by brewing a hearty pot of tea.

Thanks ever so much for getting in touch! From what you said in your email, you've been practising the mindfulness of seminaria for some weeks now, so if someone asked you, 'What do you know about the mindfulness of seminaria?' what would you say to them?

I know it to be a meditative, soul and spiritual practice [pause] in terms of how it *resonates* and how the writing *changes*.

Your writing changes while you're doing it?

Yes. Sometimes, when I do it, I'm processing my emotions but sometimes there's a different experience [pause] of a spiritual vessel. *That* experience of it [pauses thoughtfully], as a *form*.

Can you give me an example.

Sometimes the writing is very different. It doesn't feel as if it's anything to do with my *personal* being. It *is* to do with a certain ah, sense *at* the time.

Go on. . .

It's a feeling of something coming to me when I'm working with *seminaria*. Often it'll be after a staff meeting at school. Not *always*, but a sense of something *else* coming if I have a *question*, for example, with *seminaria* towards the end of this year, with report writing. I spoke with 'Gordon'

about it [colleague, co-researcher Gordon, who'd shown her the practice]. I said, 'Well I'm *writing* seminaria for the children but they don't feel as though they'd be anything I would put in the report. Then we looked at it together a bit *further* and came to the idea that the top half [of the poem] could be a reflection but also a resolution, somehow, of what the question is. So if there's a *question* in the *first* part, then an answer almost [always] comes in the second part. Or *can* do. Or, the next poem that you write directly after it, *answers* the question that's in the first.

Like, for a child, when you want to find the right thing to say in their report to reflect . . .

Yes!

. . . what they've achieved and also what they're developing, still need or most need?

Yes, yes. Sometimes if that's done, if I use seminaria as a meditative practice, like the reflective practice at the end of the day. If I'm writing about a child, if that child comes strongly to mind during that *writing* time, then the *next* day, something will be answered [pause] in the class or in the playground, or something will come, so [with seminaria practice] it's also working within the framework of working at school.

A catalyst then?

Yes!

Is it sort of like holding the space between?

Yes. Yes.

. . . is the sense I'm getting from what you're saying.

Yes, yes. [pause] So each time I came to write seminarias for the children, they *flowed*. If I *stopped* to *edit* and go, 'That doesn't make any sense' with my analytical, *ordinary* mind—it would have stopped the *flow*, but if I just *wrote* what *came*, then they just *flowed* and the *resolution* to the question of report writing for each child was easy for me when I expanded it again into a report. So, going from the condensed to the expanded.

Wow, do you realise the founder of this poetic form as a senior student himself, was often asked to thank visiting lecturers and the like. He wanted a form more condensed than a sonnet, but more expansive than haiku—somehow complete, 'contained.' You know how haiku finishes like this [gestures arms open wide] completely open whereas seminaria seem to finish resolved.

It brings it *back*; it brings it *back* and *down*.

Would you say grounds it?

Yes!

And, just to finish off about him—say, if he gives a presentation, he'll work it out first through the form. He may use that same creative process you've just alluded to, to condense it down so he doesn't need screeds of notes. Knowing the substance, it flows as he speaks, the essence captured first in seminar form.

Then he speaks from it.

'Free renders.' Yes.

Yes, I can see how that would work. That's exciting. I love it. I absolutely *love* it. As soon as I *started*, because I've done other poetry in the *past*, I think I came to it thinking, 'I *love* poetry, but then—what *is* it about *this* particular form? Why does it work so *well*?'

Because it's simple enough that you're *free* in it. You're not thinking about the composition and yet you're completely *held* by it.

A sense of 'containment'?

Yes, it's like it's a *vessel*. It's a vessel for reflection, or spiritual or soul 'sorting,' I would say. And I have a real range of how I practise seminaria from very *mundane* through to—'I don't know whose this voice is, but it doesn't sound like *me*.' [laughs appreciatively] Do you know what I mean? It has this *range*. Yet, it's *held*, somehow, in that form. So it never becomes, um, grotesque? or something that I would reject. It's an *honest* appraisal of that ordinary everyday kind of experience; not 'airy-fairy,' too 'away' [as in] gone somewhere. It still has to be *connected*. [Reflectively, quietly.]

These are examples of the children's reports. So this is the poem, and then, in its expanded form. [Looking at the organised dossier of notes.] I didn't know, I thought you might like to see that as well, and when you mentioned trauma sensitive mindfulness earlier; this has been *very* helpful for me with the little fellow in my class who has had a very traumatic background, and I had no way of knowing how I was going to approach his report. How was I going to approach the deeper aspects? And so this *form*, this beautiful *form* helps to bring my *sense* of what he *needs*.

And so you work with the mirroring?

Yes.

So you'll write that [seminaria] in his report as well?

I won't. I won't write that *in* the report. That's for me, and I'm not sure. Somehow it feels almost precious. Maybe I would give it to the children at the very end when they graduate from primary to secondary school, you know?

Thank you for these reflections. What qualities or dimensions of seminaria mindfulness stand out as being vivid and alive?

For me, the *entry* and the *exit* point of the poems, are the places where it is at its most, um, I want to say 'pure'; I *think* that's what I mean. I think you have to bring everything *in*, and then you *expand* it, and then you [have to] *resolve*, and in the same way in both those moments in the first line and the second line, and then the second to last line and the last line—it's the bookending, the *holding* of it, and it's the [pause] I can't quite explain it—I'm making lots of gestures but, not really describing it.

'Bookending' sounds an apt metaphor. We tend to think of bookending as a horizontal space [gestures with hands like a bookshelf] but what you've done with your gesture, also shows it vertically, maybe three dimensional, maybe more?

Mmm. Mmm, I think the final part of it, while it brings it *down*, it also *ignites*, or brings in the next [pause] *calls in* the next stage.

Okay, you use the word 'ignite' . . .

Mmm [reflectively].

Because when you were talking before about the triangle, that was an ancient symbol for fire. Seminaria could be seen as two triangles, if you look at the diamond as two triangles.

Yes; yes.

Might the igniting come in the middle at what I call the 'crossing point of consciousness'?

Yes. [thoughtful pause] Yes. So it may come then, and then it brings it back up. [contemplative pause] I do find it very *vivid* as a form. I see it as [trails off reflectively]

So do you see it?

Yes, I almost see it.

So what does it look like, apart from what you gestured before? Like, if you had to describe what you see.

Often the starting point is in nature. That's the first place, but then it will go somewhere else, like, within the *form* itself. It *can* do. I remember describing it. I'll find it for you, one about a flower, looking at it, and realising that the yellow was condensed sun and then suddenly you go into [pause] the form is taking you somewhere *else* because you have that limitation of syllables and words you can use. Suddenly, the form *itself* is indicating, 'See, look where we can go with this.' [Reflective pause.] And I find that really exciting, so that—not only was there the reference to nature, but to something sacred, to the energy of life, to all the many meanings there can be in the sun and the warmth that comes with that. So there's lots and lots of layers that you can feel in it as well. Colour's very strong.

So what events, situations, people—are connected with the experiencing of seminaria?

Well, for me, if I speak with my ordinary self, I would say it connects me to my *family*, back to my *children*. I've had some *really*, really lovely moments where I've been able to write poems encapsulating *very intimate* moments with my children; intimate moments of *change* and *growth* and a place just to observe them respectfully, joyous, a *celebration* of them. So that's about my *own* children and then also within my *relationship*. I haven't done so many about Jeff, but that connects me there and also connects to *place*, a sense of place, either here or at Manawai. I write a *lot* when I'm there, working in the garden, connecting to the children I teach and sometimes their families as well. So that's talking about my *personal* experience, but then when I read other people's work with seminaria, then I'll go, 'Wow!'

I love the way in which the form is both open and *specific* so you're connected through that person's experience. Gordon did a great exercise with us in a staff meeting. He got us to consider what the children of this next generation are asking of us. When I read all of everybody's work, I just saw how this seminaria form is *so* beautiful because *in* it, you could still see the *question* [and] you could see everyone's *individual response* to that particular question. There were *themes* that went through them all. Everyone had their expression of individuality within a wider collective response. *That's* what I really liked about it.

Like the whole being greater than the sum of its parts?

Yes!

This forward-thinking exercise was kind of evolutionary work then?

Yes. It's like, 'How do we do this together as a practice and a healing art?' It's a healing art. [pause]
That's what it feels like—a healing art! That's what I *know*.

You've already said some of those things, but just what specifically comes to mind? What feelings and thoughts?

For me, I can let *go* and there is a resolution to the *day*, a sense of *calm* that I have honoured something. Therefore I can go to sleep having worked in that way and out of all the practices—and I've done lots over the years—yoga and breathings and 'diddle-iddle-iddle-iddle- ah' [said very quickly, intimating too many to enumerate].

This practice I can maintain, and that's what I really like about it.

Me too. It's so simple. I come back to the Camino metaphor, 'Less is more.' Simple—the new elegant? So now, any other feelings or thoughts or anything that comes to mind?

I look *forward* to it. I look forward to it! I look forward to the time that I can *be* in that quiet space. You know, which often there's not very *much* time for in my day and particularly not during the school term but it's like it creates space. So it creates a space for me . . . *Olivia*—that's not just 'Olivia Mum' and 'Olivia Teacher' and 'Olivia Partner' [pause] just to *be*, and *listen*. *Check* in, listen to what is trying to come through. Yes.

That deep connectedness again?

Mmm yes. It *deepens* as I go along.

In a specific sense with each seminaria? Or overall, the longer you work with this type of mindfulness as a practice?

Yeah. [reflective pause] *Also*, *alongside* it, I still occasionally write other poems, and then sometimes I'll have a situation where I'll want to write *four* seminarias. If I've had a very big experience of some sort, it takes more, and in a way, I can't condense that down. If I *don't* connect with it, then some 'wheel falls off' somewhere. [Both laugh at the reality and humour of the metaphor.]

So it's a reliable practice then? It's something that you can say of seminaria, 'This works for me and I honour it'?

Yes.

For me, that highlights the difference between a 'practice' and an 'experience' because with the randomness of something, one can describe the experience, whereas a practice is something else. Its discipline builds a rhythm, which is different. It becomes you and you, it [pause] like the Tao.

Yes, it absolutely becomes that centre of your being. This is the other thing that happens when I do the seminaria practice. I should show you. [Gets up.] I'll be back in a minute. [Returns with diagram of human body showing the meridian points.]

So what do you call those points?

The lung meridian in Shiatsu.⁴⁹ From there, on the collar bones, it opens out and if my head is overworked, then it releases all that tension physically from the back of my head.

And you feel the backspace, you said before . . .

I feel the backspace, yes. And before I write, in the third-eye area, often I'll get a buzzing or a sensation of [pause] like a spiralling, a spiral.

Which way is it going?

Right . . . ?

Right from your perspective?

I think so [does the movement, checking the direction]. That's right. Sometimes I get it on my hands too.

In the palms of your hands?

Yes. I do, I've got it now, even talking about it. In this area here [shows her open palm, indicating where the moving energy of the spiralling is experienced]. Like if I do this [demonstrates palms placed in tension with one another], incredible heat and warmth, like the healing energy comes through and then I feel I have to gift it.

That's a great response to the question of bodily states I was about to ask you, as well as, 'What time and space factors affect your awareness and the meaning you make of the seminaria experience?'

⁴⁹ A form of therapeutic massage in which pressure is applied with the thumbs and palms to areas of the body used in acupuncture. Also called acupressure, Japanese shiatsuryōhō : shi, finger + atsu-, pressure + ryōhō, treatment.

Well, I can't ever rush it and I need to do it at almost the same time every day.

So it's become a daily rhythm, a regular practice?

Yes. I'm making the commitment to meet my practice pretty much between nine and it wouldn't be later than ten at night. It's always in that time. If I do write seminaria at other times, it's when something is happening or I'm not at work. In general, though, that's when I do it. [laughs appreciatively]

Oh, honestly, it just seems such a deeply embedded, authentic part of you.

Mmm. I love it.

And I notice that you look so beautiful when you're talking about it; do you know what I mean? You just glow with it. There's a radiance about it.

When I'm in the writing of it, it's like time is suspended. The sense of 'ordinary' time is [pause] it's like stepping out of ordinary, linear time. Mmm, and I think that's what its gift is. That's *part* of its gift, that it creates space, outside of linear time to whoever is doing it. So therefore there's something very healing about that.

Sounds energising for you?

Mmm. Mmm.

Restorative?

Yeah, all those things, because there isn't that pressure to watch the clock—meet a deadline within the school bell. Sometimes, too, I fall asleep with it. Sometimes—I have to be honest—I'm *really* tired and I get to the middle and I think, 'I *have* to find the resolution.' I do push through sometimes and I might even write, 'My eyelids are reamed with sleep.'

Do you want to read out a few?

I'll find some. I'll read you two early ones. Then I'll find some that describe my work. So these two come from early on:

Still dawn
This quiet earth
Soft cloud on distant hills
My breathing on the windowpane fades
Quiver moon in blue sky

We are ready,
Earth, I.

[The form learned from a colleague appears to be numbers of words in the line rather than numbers of syllables.]

Tiny bud
On slender stem
Fragrant promise of the coming Spring
A world in miniature lens
Creamy green cup
Drinking you.

But this is the first one that came through that was about a child, so maybe I should read that because sometimes with the form in the beginning, I wasn't quite sure. I don't know if they're all strictly seminaria.

In terms of their syllabification?

[reads some out quietly to herself and then says, 'No, that's too long, too long.']

What you can do is shorten a word by replacing a vowel with an apostrophe. I do that sometimes. [e.g. ev'ry]

To find
Within me
Heroes depths warming
Chaos of life's unfolding
Spirit, before me
Shows the un-
Swept path.

I'm trying to find one that feels like it's just coming through. Oh, here is one where I did not know [the outcome] of an event with my class:

Sheet mist
And white light
Ribbons on the sea
Pulsing silent spirit light
Raising the dark cloud
Violet haze
Island.

This is about a marae we went to:

French glass
Light filtered
Each wooden woman
Holds a string of stars between,
Together, time's tide
Open field
Young run.

That was very special. Here's one that's fun!

Present
Cast, piglet
A stream of children
And parents wide-eyed, attached
The expectant air
A ripple,
We play.

Very A. A. Milne-ish! [both laugh heartily]

Gifting
That which can
Given in Love's grace
Light weaving on wing's swift sight
Protect those that need
Dreams lasting
Aft' glow.

It's a transmutation. That's its purpose. Yes. Absolutely. Stillness and motion. I think that describes it really beautifully, because I think that stillness—if we look—so often things *seem* still as though they're not moving but actually *everything, everywhere, is* in movement. And we are always in movement. And how do you capture that and not be weighed down by the technicality of writing?

Well said.

And I talk to my mother! I'll read you that one.

Oh hear!
An armful
Three precious children
Lean on me for a story
Your grandchildren warm
Star on tree
Christmas.

So beautifully contained; says so much. You've inspired an idea! not quite the same but of that ilk, talking with someone who's across the threshold [via seminaria].

I've been *looking* for that. I *like* it. I like to *celebrate* it. To celebrate the connection. Shall I bring you one or two from the children?

Well held.
Warm circles
Strong roots and footing
Time to be in one place, rest.
Responsible for
Only her
Sweet self.

I can see from that, seminaria's form can make a good framework for a report.

Here's another one:

Moon eyes
Deep pools of
Knowing, all-seeing
Awake mind, asleep body
Lethargy tugs limbs
Valiant
Captain!

Bird flight
Duck and dive
Adrift on the breeze
Weathering the storms and squalls
Radiant heart shines
Upright now
Stand tall.

So I'll give you an idea of how I expanded it, if you like. I won't say the child's *name* but I'll say what I *wrote* for that one. I said, 'So and so' moves swiftly and gracefully through the world. When he experiences a true sense of his own space, he can find quietness within and the focus he needs to complete a task. Hunger affects his ability to concentrate so by morning tea time he's very hungry and in need of sustenance. He's a kind advocate for friends and is beginning to recognise other steps he can take during conflict, i.e. to choose the right way and to involve an adult. When immersed with one or two others he struggles to find himself, but once given clear, direct, individual instruction, he stands tall and does what is asked. He is observant, sensitive and kind with both boys and girls. He would benefit from daily reading and times tables practice throughout the holiday.

I'm trying to be more economical with the reports this time, but that's to show you how it works. You go, 'Well, what needs to be said?' It feels like you're bringing something down (from the child's guardian angel). 'What is it he's working with at the moment and where does he need to go?' Through writing the seminaria, you have the condensed version to expand into a report.

So has your report writing been more efficient this year, as a consequence?

Yes.

The whole process, because of seminaria?

Because of that, yes. [looks through research journal] I won't read that one but you can look at that one and I like what happens at the end with it [pauses, reads another seminaria and its expansion into the characterisation section of a child's end of year school report.] Yes! That's also what seminaria form can do. I love the fact that as you're writing it, you don't know where it's going.

The surprise element? So you're being conscious, conscious of process?

Yup!

and its leading you somewhere you don't know where it's going to end up?

Yep!

Like the Dalai Lama says, 'What we speak, we already know, but if we listen, we might learn something new.'

. . . there's a listening quality in this too, isn't there. [pause]

Do you feel like reading that one out, just so that it flows on?

Bird call
Greeting me
Split the kindling well.
Kowhai carpeting the steps
In search of fam'ly
The key turns
Inside.

So that's coming from the outside [pause]. Thank you so much for doing this project!

Thank you! I sensed seminaria's potential needed investigating so any discoveries people make can be honoured (with its founder) and be of service to others.

Well, I'm really happy for you, in whatever way you need, to use this personal work of mine, to use it. I just want to read you one more and then I'll stop! [chuckles]

My hands
In water
I hear your quiet
Thread-thought nudging me onward
Forgotten list'ning
If I grasp
You're gone.

If something arises, well and good; there's gratitude for the grace, but never is it taken for granted.

Yes. If you did, it wouldn't work.

Why is that? the wrong gesture or attitude, or . . . ?

It becomes something that's not true. It becomes something clichéd maybe or it has a sort of contraction in it, whereas when you stay open, then something can expand.

. . . to do with that gesture you were showing before. [the 'Ah' movement of amazement gesture of opening from the collar bones]

True. I'm sure it's probably here too. [indicates centre of her back] I can feel when it's out of balance. [Reflects. Extended pause of completion.]

Oh, thank you so much!

You're so very welcome! As I say, when I first started doing the mindfulness of seminaria, 'Ooh, I don't know if I'm allowed to be doing this, but I'm really loving doing it!'

Well, I felt honoured when you contacted me to say you were practising seminaria and wanted to share your discoveries with me.

More tea?

Thanks, but I think I need to be heading for the airport. Do you mind if I first take a couple of photographs of your beautiful seminaria journals?

Sure.

My way back is first on foot to the station where I wait for a train to the city. Enriched by Olivia's observations, I need time to digest them. I could feel in my chest a new sense of the totality of the data set suggesting its core was complete. Illumination had begun but it was accompanied by a

sense that further incubation would enrich the process. As I stood waiting on the deserted platform, a movement high up in the tangled green of the hillside opposite, caught my eye. From a rocky outcrop came a surge of recognition: It was the exact spot of the turning point of the leopard in my recent dream. I was grateful then for the ten-minute train wait giving me time to recount the internal scene, compare it with the outer observable phenomena, and question what lay between, that is, what, in a heuristic sense, it might mean in the context of this study.

4.10 Summary

This chapter focused on the research participants as co-researchers. Openly and frankly, they recounted their experiences of working with the phenomenon. The result is a composite picture that contributes to the heuristic phase of illumination. My role as the researcher was to enter into a 'process of effort' to understand the detail and meaning behind the participants' expressions of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 30–31). In presenting the body of data in this way that allows the character and being of each co-researcher to authentically express him or herself, I sought to:

- Show that the co-researchers' voices and my own were present in the exploratory, conversational manner of HI;
- Create space for their detailed recall, sensitive to the flow of their narratives, and to be encouragingly facilitative;
- Portray an evenly-sized characterisation of each participant, so that the 'individual portraits' were unique in their own right whilst presenting an overall 'composite depiction' of the mindfulness of seminaria;
- Present the individual portraits in such a way that both the phenomenon investigated and the individual persons emerged in a vital and unified manner (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52); and thereby
- Allow phenomena to be illuminated in their own right, rather than prematurely explicated, classified and abstracted; and thus
- Leave the reader free to assimilate the participant experiences as data that were generated through richly nuanced conversation.

It is in this form of authentic narrative that McKee (1997) maintains that the text is brought alive with its currency of human contact. 'All texts are personal statements,' posit Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p. 413), and from the heuristic perspective of Moustakas (1990, p. 16), form 'the critical beginning [of] self-discoveries, awarenesses, and understandings . . . the initial steps of the process.'

As such, I found these living conversations to be the life blood and pulse of this inquiry which ultimately led me to various phases of illumination.

The next chapter is presented in the form of exemplary portraits. These are co-researcher vignettes (artistic representations that capture each person's unique expression), created by the primary researcher, that reflect further experiences of the phenomenon studied, and provide another layer of complexity. Exactly how is now explained and exemplified in Chapter five.

Phenomenological text succeeds when it lets us see that which shines through, that which tends to hide itself. . . . The words are not the thing. And yet it is to our words, language, that we must apply all our phenomenological skill and talents, because it is through the words that the shining through (the invisible) becomes visible. (van Manen, 1990, p. 130)

Chapter five Exemplary portraits

Explicating patterns of connectedness from a portrait gallery

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present a ‘gallery’ of seven differently sized exemplary portraits. What makes the portraits exemplary? Each offers its own reflection on the research question. First, to distinguish them from the depictions presented in the previous chapter, it is important to note that in this chapter, exemplary portraits:

- Explicate (explained in 5.2 below) the co-researchers’ lived experiences of the phenomenon supplemented by demographic and autobiographical material gathered during the period of preparation and gathering of data (Moustakas, 1990, p. 76), or in the follow-up ‘validation’ stage of the process (Conlan, 2004);
- Reveal patterns of connectedness by shining a light for the reader on additional layers of meaning;
- Illustrate how the mindfulness of seminaria has influenced an important aspect of a co-researcher’s life extending beyond the parameters of the three-week practice they undertook for this study.

In essence, whilst these exemplary portraits are also a source of illumination, what differentiates them, and this chapter, from the last, are two strongly characteristic features: first, they were chosen for their (tacit or explicit) expression of relationships to time and space; and second, they include the researcher’s explication of the phenomenon (TMoS). Further, an image (or ‘seal’) has been provided either by co-researchers or designed by the researcher in collaboration with the participant. The idea was inspired by co-researcher Murray’s comment about the uniqueness of individual snowflakes as an analogy for seminaria, ‘like a little logo’ (see 4.8). Placed at the end of their exemplary portrait (as a seal), it highlights their work with seminaria, graphically expressing something of their own essence as a co-researcher and honouring the uniqueness of their contribution. The seal, then, becomes a component of the explication, as does the portrait’s ‘screen-saving’ seminaria, as explained below.

5.2 Heuristic inquiry phase five: Explication

The term 'explication,' from the Latin *explicat*, meaning 'unfolded,' and the verb *explicare* ('*ex*' meaning 'out,' and '*plicare*,' 'to fold'), describes the effort we make both to understand and explain the phenomenon under investigation in order to reveal its meaning. In other words, the heuristic researcher seeks 'to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand [and elucidate] its various layers of meaning' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). It becomes even clearer why the term 'explication' is used when the co-researchers' reflections on their seminaria experience reveal a tacit use of 'focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure' (1990, p. 31). These core processes of heuristic inquiry (Table 3), whilst not introduced to nor asked of the participants, nevertheless were clearly engaged in, by them, during their earnest striving to understand their lived experience of TMoS. I attribute this evidence of depth to their reflective attitudes, including that they had existing mindfulness/contemplative practices before embarking on the enquiry.

Explication recognizes that meanings are unique and distinctive to an experience and depend on the participants' internal frames of reference, thus underscoring their role as 'co-researchers.' In turn, I honoured the co-researchers' reflections by striving to comprehend their meaning through my own cycles of focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure.

Although other phenomenological methods also value researcher subjectivity, the heuristic approach puts it, explicitly, in the centre of the investigative process (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). The researcher becomes engaged in a search for patterns and meanings starting from one's own experience with the phenomenon studied. The result is a description of the essential elements of both one's lived experience and those of the participants. Thus, I became 'involved with the research in such a way as to perceive and understand it in a new way' (Gomes, 2007, p. 229), and for this reason I have included an exemplary portrait of my own that includes examples of the above elements.

The reader is now invited into the imaginary setting of an exhibition opening at a portrait gallery where the exemplary portraits (defined in 5.1) cast further light on the co-researchers' investigations of TMoS, and thereby provide another layer of meaning. Here I ask for the reader's discernment. Although the enactment of this event is imaginary, it must be emphasised that the words of the co-researchers themselves are strictly verbatim and have been verified by them as true

and accurate representations of their intended meaning in these explications of their experiences. The subjectivity specified in the paragraph above refers to the ‘poetic licence’ of portraying their narratives thus. (Because of the extent of authorial text in this chapter, ‘exemplary portrait voices’ are italicised with 1.5 line-spacing, the first of which is indented. Their emphatic words are bolded.)

The event by invitation:

The scene opens at ten to six on a wet and windy Wellington evening. As guests pour eagerly through the door of the Thistle Hall, dripping wet coats onto its century-old totara floor, it only highlights the glow of its patina, reflecting the social warmth and sparkle of anticipation as people mingle around the hall, peering curiously at the seven portraits. In the form of lightboxes, wall-mounted at intervals, they defy the traditional definition of a portrait. Each presents a poem moving and forming, with colour and light; distinctly different and yet designed as one might imagine a postmodern illuminated manuscript, an artefact of beauty, depth and mystery in the minimalist style of ‘less is more.’

Milling with the rest are the co-researchers themselves, incognito, except to the researcher and curator, Rudie Thomson who, still in her green dust jacket, screwdriver in hand, thanks the crowd for coming. With a brief explanation of the study (pointing to a table of takeaway leaflets), she pays tribute to the founder of this poetry form, J.-P. Linde; to Mariel Rosalind, who will shortly present a musical item; and to the six co-researchers, all teachers from diverse settings and locations, whose work with the poetic form, mindfully adopted, has highlighted a number of outcomes and illuminated the practice that she herself has been working with since 2013. The composition of their respective exemplary portraits, she explains, has evolved from the enduring discoveries that they have formally agreed to share in this artistic format.

‘Looking at them now,’ Rudie gestures widely—a sea of eyes take in the broad sweep of work—‘they represent the highly individual outcomes of the six co-researchers who each agreed to spend 15–20 minutes daily, for three weeks, investigating this 27-syllable poetic form. Of course, their respective findings affected how they felt about its value to their personal and professional lives as teachers. Some continue its practice to this day. Moreover, these exemplary portraits were selected because they characterise a complementary set of relationships to time and space. Each screen is pulsing a poem in a colour palette appropriate to its composition. I see how fascinatedly some of

you have been comparing them!’ she adds, and ‘by the way, I’ve been encouraged to include one of my own since the method of this inquiry asks the researcher to stay visible.’

Now they will be unveiled, each in turn, illuminating an essence of this poetic phenomenon. From the heart of each, the co-researcher’s voice will be uniquely heard, not always in sound, but through a multimedia mix. As you link in with your own thoughts and impressions, they’ll explain and interpret (sometimes in discussion with me), their ongoing work with the mindfulness of seminaria.

Of the seven exemplary portraits six are of individuals, (known by their research pseudonyms as Hope, Maree, Mikaela, Murray and Gordon); there is one dual portrait of Olivia and Gordon; one of the researcher by her pseudonym [used only in the context of this present chapter], and the last created by Gordon, a good eighteen months after the study. With these few words foregrounding the portraits, she introduces the opening guest speaker, visiting New Zealand for the first time, Jens-Peter Linde, founder of this intriguing word form that has given rise to this project.

‘At least a dozen applications of the seminar form (seminaria) have been studied through this “mindfulness in education” focus, and the portraits being unveiled this evening,’ he contends, ‘may have far-reaching consequences.’ Nodding humbly in his acknowledgement of the hearty applause, he walks to the back of the hall and sits comfortably on an old school form while Mariel and Bernard, professional musicians, take up the flute and oboe respectively and begin to play a bracket of seminaria, extemporising in the liltingly liminal rhythm of 2, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 2, true to its syllabic composition. The last three seminaria are accompanied vocally by sopranos Ceejay D. and Pere B. who sing Hope’s portrait screen saver poem as a duet:

Lacking
Mindfulness
In a busy rush
No time for contemplation
Self-consciousness hides
Always there
Waiting.

5.3 Hope recovers the birth of her self-awareness and transforms self-consciousness

Rudie explains, ‘I chose to explicate this portrait of Hope because she was adamant it is her practice of seminaria that—after nearly four decades of her life—had brought to light for her for the first time a clearly recalled defining moment of self-awareness, the moment of the birth of her own self-awareness. In so doing, it has helped and healed her relationship to a long-standing issue. That is, her challenging feelings of acute self-consciousness, sometimes in relation to other staff members where she teaches. Hearing her explain the process was a revelation of the depth of her seminaria practice, of its biographical significance, extending back over decades. But the timeline stretches forward, future focused, with her prediction of its usefulness from here on, out.’

The question asked of her was: *Name an issue you have as a teacher, and describe your experience of it in relation to the mindfulness of seminaria.*

As Hope hears the question relayed to the audience, she casts a quick glance in Rudie’s direction then at her portrait, thus activating the rhodopsin (visual purple) sensor in the lightbox mechanism. Author sensitive, Hope’s portrait responds, the words light up and, voice activated, one can hear the depth of experience in her nuanced narrative:

[As] much as I try to not think about what people think, it’s not so much that I’m consciously thinking about what they think of me, it’s more to do with how I’m relating and things that I think about. A big one is comparisons, getting into my head where I compare myself to the other staff. I’ve always had a bit of an inferiority complex. When I compare or judge, I’m always inferior rather than superior (whereas some people tend the other way!), and this ties in with the teaching. I’m very reflective, often overly self-critical and that creates another barrier.

Thinking about my overall teaching, the barriers are: I go there [an early childhood centre] once a week, so the children don’t see me that often; the pace, the rushing . . . the schedule . . . all the jobs that need doing, it’s very, very busy. So how can I slow down and be more conscious and mindful?

The issues of self-consciousness are: my connection with the children; comparing myself with other staff members; the hurried pace, and what’s preventing me from being in the moment. So I

started to do some seminarias around those. Self-consciousness, comparing myself with the other staff—it doesn't really matter what their experience is, it's my perception of them and how I consider and compare myself. There's something of a disconnection, not allowing myself to just be.

*Also, unfamiliarity working in an independent preschool. My natural way would be more confident if I just had free range to do what I want and act how I want, rather than, 'Oh, we need to do it like this. . . .' I'm still learning about [that mode of] teaching . . . about letting children have certain space to play. That's probably why this is coming up . . . there's **space** for it to come up [whereas] as a high school teacher . . . six periods a day, 'boom, boom, boom!' . . . now I'm able to think more. I'm not actively teaching in the same way. In that sense, it's quite a **helpful experience**, so I started to write some seminaria around that. Looking back through what I had written, where [they] flowed, one from the other, in sequence:*

Pre-school
Place of child
Innocent beings
The garden of exploring
A space to be free
Nurturing
Haven.

Teaching
In this world
Where child meets adult
Consciousness arises now
Bogged down by theory
In my head,
Blocking.

Lacking
Mindfulness
In a busy rush
No time for contemplation
Self-consciousness hides
Always there
Waiting.

Watching
Wondering,
How others do it?
Comparisons never help
They fail to show

Or inspire
My work.

Let go
Of ego
Be in the moment
And watch self-consciousness fade
A ghost of the past
Surrender
To now.

Aged three
As a child
I started to watch
From outside of my small self,
Hesitance rising
Observing,
I judged.

The last one brought awareness of where that self-consciousness stems from—from my childhood, and then an experience of when actually I was at preschool. All the children were coming, running through a sprinkler. Everyone just took all their clothes off and ran, back and forth through the sprinkler and it was my first conscious memory that I can recall, where I actually stood and watched and was completely paralysed by self-consciousness, something stopping me. I was at nursery [school] so I would have been about three. So that's where the sequence of seminaria started off with the here and now, my teaching, and the barriers I'm feeling and trying to explore and work out through doing those seminarias, one after the other.

It was all very quick and it led me to the root of the problem. So I can look back and [ask] 'Well what's that about? Why did I start feeling like that?' And it continued over my lifetime—that sense of watching, being very reflective but it getting in the way because of the comparisons and not allowing myself to just let go and 'be' in the moment and enjoy; but observing and judging and [pauses reflectively] yep! So, that was an example of how I've been using seminaria.

Obviously when you think around a certain subject, you do go into more depth but honestly, the speed at which I wrote all of those, it must have been like, literally, a few minutes—boom, boom, boom! So it wasn't about my conscious self coming out and talking to me; [or] overly thinking and analysing and exploring a subject in my life, but about something coming out very spontaneously! Otherwise, so much stuff gets in the way! How much overthinking and distraction there is in this

theme of self-consciousness. The stories in your head can be time consuming—taking you off on tangents—distracting.

Rudie interjects: ‘Such an insightful example of how using seminaria has touched the root of your self-consciousness, taken it right back to a biographical, first recollected memory of your own self-awareness. What a profound discovery.’

Yes. Well, the crux of this seminaria practice is that it led me straight to a snapshot memory because I wasn’t getting bogged down with lots of thinking. I was just going to that place and writing—not analysing what I was writing. I was just, like, ‘spitting it out.’ It came out so quickly. I don’t think I was in a particularly meditative state when I started . . . and I’d been rushed. The children kept coming in and interrupting me so I wasn’t necessarily in a meditative space, but by doing this, it actually connected me to a place of mindfulness and I felt more centred and more grounded by the time I’d written the series of these. Illuminatingly, I understood my self-consciousness for the first time, and reaching back, like, to the birth of my own self-awareness through the mindfulness of seminaria, has been transformational. Now I have the tool to continue transforming my own feelings about it.

A new screen saver on Hope’s exemplary portrait glows with her words of potential:



Figure 7. The seal of co-researcher Hope

Sung now as a duet by the two sopranos, backed by flute and oboe, people are visibly moved. Leaving a reflective pause, Rudie thanks Hope and the performers, adding, 'In summary, I chose to explicate this portrait of Hope because she was *adamant* her practice of seminaria had brought to light, for the first time, a clearly recalled moment akin to the birth of her self-awareness, her consciousness of her separate self. In so doing, it has helped her relationship to a long standing/abiding issue of self-consciousness. She now describes TMoS as a tool, and elsewhere (4.4) as "a talisman" to access "other parts" of herself . . . a way she has discovered to deal with what arises in life . . . a process she maintains brings her understanding and wellbeing.'

Seminaria practice is like a threshold that I'm going through and like my talisman I'm taking with me.
(Hope)

5.4 Maree uncovers a sense of belonging beyond normally acknowledged boundaries

Rudie notes Maree and Hope are standing side by side with no cognisance of each other's participation in the study. Both look radiant, cheeks slightly flushed in the growing humidity of the warmly lit hall. Rudie now points to the portrait of Maree: 'While expressing commitment to social change beyond her role as a teacher, Maree also finds, through seminaria, a link to a sense of belonging beyond what we tend to regard as the usual boundary of grounded experience. Her portrait is a multidimensional account of her breakthrough at the end of the study.'

All eyes are on her screen saving seminaria. Subtle at first, it begins to twinkle viridian, lilac, lemon, violet, purple . . . like gazing into the Milky Way from the heart of the countryside on a moonless night. Maree's voice is exuberant as she reveals the mysterious entry she's made in her research journal:

Here is that scribble! [She exclaims, laughing heartily.] *That's weird!* [She laughs again.]

Oooohhh! [She makes a sound like the arrival of the diamond shape, pauses and adds,] *I just had to fill in the space. And, [she emphasises,] I liked doing it, it's got a very natural, fluid movement, whichever way you look at it. And there, Look! I think it was this one here . . .*

Please please
Answer me
What is my role here?
Looking round full of despair

What is happening?
Relax, calm
Breathe in.

Then the next one was:

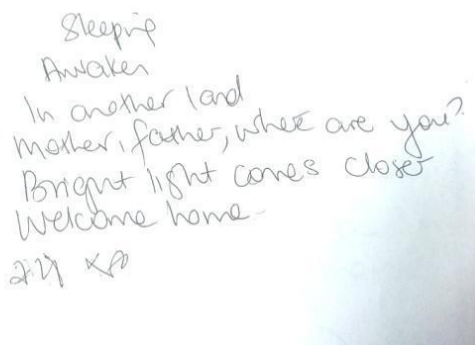
Sleeping
Awaken
In another land
Mother, father, where are you?
Bright light comes closer
Welcome home

2/17 ✖️

It just . . . I couldn't not write that. I couldn't not do that.

Rudie adds empathically, 'I can feel there's something quite "other world-ish" about it.'

There is right, definitely. See there's a break there, a break there and I could not change it. And I'd started in the middle and I went da, da, da [last three syllables and before I could find the final two] . . . I thought, 'Oh, I've just got to let this go,' but yeah, it was quite nice. When I read that, I really love that—Sleeping, Awaken, In another land, Mother, father, where are you? Bright light comes closer, Welcome home. I remember, Mother, Father, where are you? Bright light comes closer, Welcome home and then I just did that last two-syllable line in squiggle language.



Sleeping
Awaken
In another land
Mother, father, where are you?
Bright light comes closer
Welcome home
2/17 ✖️

Figure 8. A journal excerpt of co-researcher Maree

Rudie is silent. She responds with an exploratory inflection, that she feels this quite movingly. . .

It is, isn't it. It is and I love it! It's really beautiful [Maree, reflective, looks radiant.]

Rudie asks, 'Are your parents alive? Did you feel some sort of connection with them in this poem?'

With them? No, no. It felt like I'd gone home to my star, to where I was home, and they were my light parents. Parents in the light. It did. I'm serious, when I say that. When I say that, I haven't thought of it as my own earthly parents, even though I love them dearly and they're gone. Actually, I didn't even think of that, it was more where I'd come from before that. [She pauses reflectively again, then laughs as though with the surprise of hearing herself say that.]

Here Rudie interjects seeking absolute clarity, 'So . . . just tell me, with the mindfulness of seminaria and this experience—you didn't know that you were going to do anything like this before you did it?'

No! No way!

Her voice is high pitched, emphatic. While the screen pulses a colour sequence, they examine the rhythm of the movement—the way the squiggle writing is formed, its patterning like a foreign language of even-shaped diamonds, whereas Maree's own handwritten seminaria weren't consciously diamond shaped, these spontaneous ones are all diamonds.

Rudie asks if she may photograph the page to which Maree readily agrees emphasising that the experience:

. . . did start here though:

Please please
Answer me
What is my role here?
Looking round full of despair
What is happening?
Relax, calm
Breathe in.

And then . . . I remember they did flow basically on from one another. [She chuckles.] *You're not taking a photo of me **with** it though! I'd get **locked** up!* [She laughs.]

Despite her laugh with the words, locked up, Rudie feels their poignancy reflective of the hegemony Ngata's (2014) words express: '[T]he simple diagnosis of spiritual experiences as mental illness [poses] broader challenges within psychiatry concerning the claims of the scientific validity of many of its diagnostic concepts and assumptions' (p. 317). As Guba and Lincoln (1994) rightly point out, 'Differences in paradigm assumptions cannot be dismissed as mere 'philosophical' differences;

implicitly or explicitly, these positions have important consequences for the practical conduct of inquiry, as well as for the interpretation of findings' (p. 112). Rudie makes a mental note of the need to stay discerningly open, while Maree continues.

*So anyway, that was like I had to fill the whole page. It was like . . . I had to fill it; I had to fill the whole page. I had to make sure the spaces were filled. I remember distinctly, that. They had to be complete . . . like that was my last one (she identifies, pointing). I remember that. And that was my first one. Anyway . . . that was kind of . . . [She chuckles softly, appreciatively at the unexpectedness of it.] Is this **different** for you? [She asks, suddenly searching Rudie's face, inquiring in a centred, conscious, probing way followed by a little laugh.]*

'Meaningful,' Rudie replies, 'When you put it in that context.'

*It was **very** meaningful. I really love this page . . . you know. Mmm, mmm . . . and that **wellbeing** . . . Yeah, that's the whole thing isn't it. Oh, I **loved** it. I remember thinking . . . well, sometimes you get a bit three dimensional and . . . you have to . . . break out . . . follow your heart. It's about following your **knowing**; being true to your authentic **self**. Well, it's fifth dimensional, vibrationally, and there, there's no worry; no fear. It's like being in the light; the vibrational energy is high that you sit within. It feels like . . . I want to say, pure bliss . . . that true state of being, I also want to emphasise authentic. It's safe. I feel it in my heart, and actually my whole body . . . an elevation of my mood, joy, it's like breathing deep peace. Consciously, it's connecting to my higher self; surrendering. My aim is for total surrender to my higher state of being.*

Asked whether she experiences this state sometimes while teaching, she responds,

Not at school, no, but when I meditate, when I'm at yoga, breathing, and also sometimes when I'm in 'doze mode.' I travel at night, I know I do.

'This instance where you say, "It felt like I'd gone home to my star, to where I was home, and they were my light parents, parents in the light," can you explain what you're referring to?'

Well, it's on Sirius, definitely, I travel quite quickly. It's in the fifth dimension. I communicate with my star family through my mind and in my knowing. I'm up there with them. My heart definitely comes into play, how could it not! [She explains,] I was awakened to Sirius when in Taba, Egypt once. I received ancient memories. They were like 'opening-keys.'

Rudie questions her, ‘When you describe this travel, with a light coming closer, can you describe this light and is it accompanied by any sound or other sensation?’

*Well, with Sirius there’s a subtle white light then an intermingling with bluish violet light. And, [she adds,] With those diamond seminarias, I was being ‘downloaded’; that **happens** to me (not a lot lately, I’ve been a bit tired and stressed) but that **does** happen.*

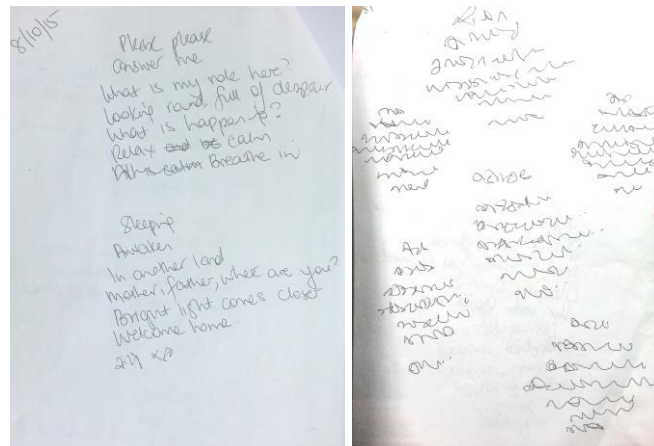


Figure 9. Co-researcher Maree’s seminaria become diamond-shaped ‘squiggle-writing’

In terms of our state school understanding, Rudie adds, ‘Although Maree’s experience has no apparent precedent, Māori educationalist Rangimarie Rose Pere has written (2003, p. 20), ‘There is no doubt in [my] mind that [my] elders knew about space travel and [have] detailed knowledge about other time frames and other cultures.’ ‘They told endless things about the stars and their place in terms of time and space’ (Pere, 2003, p. 20). Her associate Ron Ngata (2014, p. 172) quotes Rosemary Guiley, ‘that mystical experiences tend to transcend the bounds of ordinary consciousness to an effable awareness beyond time, space and the physical’ (p. 384). Rudie continues, ‘Further, a contemporary Māori New Year practice that Dr Pere follows is ‘the ancient New Year ritual . . . acknowledging the Takirua (Sirius) star. Many other indigenous cultures also link into Sirius with a ‘knowing’ that the healers around the world are, indeed, the star people’ (Mildon, 2014).

A purplish screen on Maree’s portrait shows the swirl of the Milky Way with an array of tiny, silvery seminaria. Twinkling diamond-like from a distant star, Maree’s conscious wordsmithing sends them in return, like a cosmic ‘postal’ exchange in thought form to her family from afar. The sopranos stand smiling and sing her screensaving seminaria:

Sleeping
Awaken
In another land
Mother, father, where are you?
Bright light comes closer
Welcome home
Maree.



Figure 10. The seal of co-researcher Maree

5.5 Mikaela accesses ‘the food of new impressions’ to counter aging

Rudie points across to the other wall and says, ‘We’re both present in Mikaela’s portrait too. Surveying her stage of life (the final third), and the nourishment she derives from ‘the food of new impressions’—one outcome of her seminaria practice—Mikaela offers a portrait of refreshment. What does she mean by “the food of new impressions”?’ As Rudie reiterates the term, Mikaela, resplendent in flaming red silk, casts a knowing look, activating her screensaving seminaria that flashes flecks of gold light. The energetic shift is sudden. Some, wide-eyed, emit appreciative gasps that ripple the room.

I feel
The changes
All around the shifts
That leave me claiming the new
My will emerges
I watch in
Surprise.

*To see life anew [responds Mikaela]. To see **anything** anew. **Ourselves** anew. I think for me, that's hard to access and the older we get I think, the harder it is to get access because we've got less physical energy to go, 'Oh my God, I'll just run down that side-stream!' Or you think, 'Do I really want to ..?'*

So are you suggesting seminaria has . . .

*. . . the ability to feed . . . [Here she references the food metaphor to her study of 20th Century philosopher, Gurdjieff] . . . to give me the **food of new impressions**. **Yes**, and I would say that was **invaluable** to me. In a fairly **easy** way. You know, in a fairly easy way. [She repeats the phrase in a quiet, pensive voice like an echo.] *But I think with the seminaria, **yes** . . . it's the **reversing** of it in **particular**.**

Here she refers to the practice of reflecting on a seminaria poem by reading it through in the reversed order of paired syllables (2, 2, 3, 3, 5, 5, 7), that she discovered (see 4.7) can reveal new connections and possibilities. Rudie is watching her gesture in the way that the mindfulness of Hakomi (3.4) suggests may reveal more about the storyteller than the story.

'That movement you just made . . . mindful that movement is the precursor of all form . . . '

Right. . .

'I've noticed your hand frequently making these lemniscate forms and now that we have a better understanding I think, from what you've said, about potential that is expressing itself.'

I do too! [She laughs appreciatively.] Yes, I think it's doing that. I think it's very powerful, and it's lovely to see that because I think . . . I think that bit is the easiest to miss and especially as I get older. But you know, I was noticing the other day—well I noticed a number of times, the way I sit in the chair, and the chair that it is, is like a lair, you know, like animals have these little runnels that lead into their places, and then they have their patterns and the whole thing . . . you could run it like

clockwork really, and I can see that **part** of me where the patterns are really **established** and partly because of my years of reading Gurdjieff, I'd like to break them up a bit if I can, but I also find it quite hard because I'm fond of patterns as well. Patterns have their use. It's easier to get up in the morning and do your teeth and everything if you've got really well established patterns but I remember when I was younger and one of the joys of being self-employed was I'd get up at five in the morning and drive out into the country and have breakfast there by myself and then come back by, you know, 6:30 in time to get the family up. You know I was really quite outrageous in what I would get up and do at different times of the day or night and so I lived a lot with that sort of sense of **aliveness** and what I'm seeing is that as I get older, it's easy to get more **patterned**, and I'm really interested in anything that helps me break that up a bit. So that I can experience the amazingness of life that this is.

'And therefore, seminaria, you're suggesting, is helping you to . . .'

*Enable that, mmm, **enable** that. You go, 'Good lord! Oh, **that's** interesting! Oh, look at that surprising . . .'* and I think if I do seminaria a bit more consciously, with **that** in mind, perhaps look at the seminaria and then write what opens up out of it.

Potent with potential, her portrait pauses. Now, a full colour spectrum arched like a double rainbow, crosses the screen coming full circle. An involuntarily, 'Wow!' surrounds the room, fading to contemplative silence. One of the Alamandria founders (see the Prelude) standing at the back with a Tibetan sounding bowl, strikes a solitary C in the second octave. Mikaela's seal fills the screen. Faces in the gathered crowd are glowing with recognition.

So that I can experience the amazingness of life that this is. (Mikaela)



Figure 11. The seal of co-researcher Mikaela

5.6 Murray finds food for renewal beyond the hegemonic ‘carrot on a stick’

This exemplary portrait, Rudie remarks, was chosen for its quest of future-focused or emergent education. Murray continually questions the status quo of schooling and through his practice of TMoS finds what he calls ‘food for renewal’ as he seeks to grow a more principled education, grounded in practice. He’s back at work in the UK now and the content of what we are about to see came through a Skype conversation three weeks after the study’s conclusion. Exploring what he regards as an existential question, he is adamant that his school’s responsibility for educating students for an emergent future is a socially *imperative* task. His shoulders relax as he shifts attention from the topic and says, endearingly:

You know I read all these seminarias every now and again, back again. I review them and see how they feel. It’s a lot of fun! It’s such a lot of fun, actually. [He smiles broadly.] At the moment I’m ‘playing in the sandpit’ just enjoying it . . . it would restrict me if I got too cerebral about it, I think.

A sense of lightness, renewal?

Yes. ‘Feeding,’ yes, and in one of them, I was contemplating the nature of . . . I mean this is an existential question. Even though I’ve been teaching for twenty eight years, there comes a point this week [when I still ask]: Why do children go to school? It’s big. I reviewed the whole question. Why do children go to school? We have to ask ourselves this. I’m really doubting that many of us actually go deeply, deeply, deeply, deeply, deeply into that. Why do children go to school? So I wrote a seminario on it after about twenty minute’s meditation—following an earlier heated discussion on credits, tests and exams—I came up with:

Question
All my deeds
The motivation
Inward spark, or outer need?
To learn for love’s sake
This my work
To grow.

So it's really a question of whether everything we do is external 'carrot on a stick' or an inner impulse? How many of our deeds are from inside [self-motivated] or from an attitude of, 'Well, if I do this, I'll get that' . . . ?

Why do children go to school? Implicit in the words of the seminaria (above), 'for love's sake,' [he contends,] is that learning needs to be love- rather than fear-based. [He acknowledges that our relationship to credits, tests and exams is often not love-based, but in fact, rather, tends to be fear-based, or at least, the incentivised model he characterises as 'carrot on the stick,'] an outdated, industrial model whereas the 'inward spark' gives greater raison d'être, harmonious with the cultural foundations of education.

A Government audit deemed his students well motivated with high expectations; extremely proud of their school and their work; who take an equal role in regularly evaluating their progress with their teachers and parents, articulate their high aspirations and participate enthusiastically and confidently in their learning, building portfolios of evidence that showcase their learning skills and achievements.

'Utterly exhausted,' however, is a description of how he's been, and it sounds as though at the current level of input, burnout may be only a matter of time.

Rudie says, 'I've been looking at the basis of well-being for us as teachers, teacher educators and so on. I was looking at Antonovsky's work . . . Salutogenesis, the origin of well-being.'

Oh yes! [Murray responds.] Preserving the wholeness of well-being rather than plucking things out . . .

'Yes,' says Rudie. 'Three components: Manageability (Can I manage my work?); Comprehensibility (Do I understand what's actually required of me? What am I meant to be doing?) and, Meaningfulness (Does it nourish me, meaningfully?) And I've been looking at teachers' work through a lens of this holistic model too, *The Map of Meaning*,' she says, drawing a diagram.

I like this, responds Murray, because it's got the arrows going out from the centre. So it's this light in the centre of inspiration. Exactly that! The core impulse comes from within the person (not externally, in). That's the point I'm trying to make. Latin 'educare' in its purest sense means to lead out. We need to educate children to become human beings who can act out of an inner impulse of

... serving and love and passion and inspiration rather than always reacting . . . responding. Well you have to respond, but this always acting out of . . . self-interest, or for some sort of reward . . . the reward-based system seems to be so much part of the psychology of education now that delayed gratification—in terms of the bigger motivation for learning, is an aspect students have difficulty with.

The emergent future and the health of society will be defined and shaped by the very same young people who seek different answers from the current mindset. I wrote this following a meditation—a school issue regarding three students in a clique, excluding others—a long-term problem. So it's basically:

Three girls
In the point
Loyalty or fear?
May angels bring peace and strength,
Love casts out all fear
The circle
Opens.

It's kind of point and periphery. They're in the point and they need to go out into the periphery (from a social perspective) and you see regarding the meaning of each line: Are they together through loyalty? Or are they together through fear? And then mirroring the lines, it goes: In the point . . . the circle . . . (nicely balances there). Love casts out all fear—Loyalty or fear? Three girls, Opens. (This is all accidental!) [He emphasises delightedly. He reflectively repeats, mirroring the lines in reverse for added depth of meaning:] 'Opens, Three girls, The circle, In the point, Love casts out all fear, Loyalty or fear, May angels bring peace and strength.'

I so enjoy doing these seminaria. I just love them! They suit my need for simplicity and form. The diamond shape . . . such a beautiful form, and as I think I said earlier, the limitation of syllables is the freedom it gives you to be precise, essential and distilled. It feeds my creativity, nourishes me in this role that's hugely demanding as we grow the school.

Rudie interjects, 'I read a publication the other day describing your school as being at the forefront of educational change. After reading the audit reports, I sense what you're aiming for but can you say briefly in your own words, what those aims are that you were exploring through seminaria?'

Our school aims to develop self-knowledge in students through acquiring world knowledge. We support our students to become confident leaders and healthy collaborators, and alongside rigorous academic and technical learning, balanced with physical coordination and athletic skills, music and artistic work—students learn directly applicable skills for a practical life. We educate them so that they can discover their potential, learn self-care and care of others. Our aim is to teach students clear thinking through which their own moral compass can evolve. As I wrote, ‘. . . To learn for love’s sake, this my work to grow.’

So in growing this work, seminaria has been the tiny Velux window I open to let some light in and close again, once or twice each day. In your daily life . . . it feels like some sunshine let in from out of the cloud . . .

The screen has shown this conversation thread in light and shadow. Metaphorically, moral initiative glows with colour and vitality; its antithesis casts shadow. Now Murray’s seal, an amalgam of his seminaria and symbols, rises from the base of his portrait as one might see the sun rising on a clear horizon. A single, full-hearted note of F resounds from the sounding bowl. Simultaneously, a collective sigh is just audible above its resonance.



Figure 12. The seal of co-researcher Murray

5.7 Olivia and Gordon explore what the next generation is asking of its teachers

‘This dual portrait,’ explains Rudie, ‘is composed from a topic Olivia raised in her last interview, the staff Professional Learning (PL) exercise that Gordon led in the primary school where they both teach’ (see 3.10.4 and 3.11). Describing it now as ‘forward looking’ and ‘future focused so that our teaching and learning is relevant,’ Olivia, brushing back a wisp of fair hair from her face, explains:

*I love the way in which the form of seminaria is both open and **specific** so you can connect through another person’s experience to a common theme. Gordon did a great exercise with us in a staff meeting. He got us to consider what the children of this next generation are asking of us. We used the mindfulness of seminaria in a considered way, by everyone applying it to that same question. Afterwards, when I read all of everybody’s work, I just saw how this seminaria form is so beautiful because **in** it, you could still see the **question**, you could see everyone’s **individual response** to that particular question, and there were **themes** that went through them all. Everyone had their expression of individuality within a wider collective response. **That’s** what I really liked about it . . . the whole, being greater than the sum of its parts.*

You may ask whether this forward-focused exercise is evolutionary then, says Olivia. Yes. It’s like, ‘How do we do this mindfulness of seminaria together as a practice and [she pauses reflectively], as a healing art?’ It is a healing art. That’s what it feels like, a healing art! [she pauses reflectively then adds], That’s what I know.

Gordon later comments on the same event, concluding:

I will continue to use seminaria as a tool to get beyond my presumptions and prejudicial ideas. Like anything profound and deep they are limited only by my ability to open, receive and capture in words these echoes from beyond. I’ll conclude with a verse written during the staff meeting where we used a child study format to explore the current generation.

Plastic
Fantastic
Action star hero
Come, let’s make believe and watch
Wind scattered seeds fly

Toward the
Rich earth.

Future
Leadership
Care-community
Creativity valued
In freedom, service
Knowledge wave
Love based.



Figure 13. The seal of co-researcher Olivia, an amalgam of journals, flanked by Gordon's blue seal

A seal of Olivia's seminaria research journals and colour explorations accentuates the significance of creativity and the importance of the human hand besides digitally produced work. The musical duo now plays a rendition of the last two seminaria before the two sopranos stand and sing them softly, unaccompanied.

5.8 Rudie's dream of escaping a leopard leads to a poetry secret

Rudie announces, 'I'm going to unveil my portrait of a curious dream I had. Because in this type of enquiry it's not uncommon for metaphoric dreams to provide clues, I assumed the dream to be of value despite not fully comprehending its meaning. If you have any particular resonance or insight, please see me afterwards. I'd be glad to hear from you.'

‘It happened a few days before interviewing Olivia for the first time. Then, when on the Saturday after meeting her, I found the frock that the woman in the dream was wearing, on a rack in the Underground Market on the Wellington waterfront—it sent goose bumps up my arms to see the garment in reality on the rack. (Curiously, the market was set up by the daughter of the woman who introduced me to my Australian supervisor.)’

I must have taken the train north because I found myself striding up State Highway One, alone, enjoying the colours of the day. A verdant hillside to my right displayed a festive array of Michaelmas daisies dotting the landscape lilac, magenta and mauve. I felt free and happy. Where was I headed? Possibly to interview the colleague of a co-researcher who wants to tell me about her semina discoveries . . . who knows. . .

Next thing, crossing the intersection of a country lane on my left, and glancing back down it, I saw Dr Richard Brown [my former Massey BEd colleague] approaching on foot. Calling out to him, he soon caught up and we walked together for a bit, when suddenly, from left to right, crossing our path came an enormous leopard. Seemingly preoccupied, it moved with stealth and shot away up into the hillside. Warning Richard in a lowered voice, ‘Keep your eye on that tiger, I mean leopard [I corrected, cognisant of its spots, not stripes], if it sees us we could be mincemeat.’ I spoke not a moment too soon, for as though it read my thoughts, it turned on its hillside path, caught my eye and moved toward us!

‘Run!’ I urged, ‘Fill your heart with love so its hunger isn’t fuelled by the smell of human fear.’ I felt the leopard close now but chose not to slow my pace by looking back. Striving to stay strongly centred in loving-heartedness, yet still take the precaution of removing myself from danger, I turned left into a cul-de-sac, suggesting we scale the crib wall to the garden of the first house. It had suitable foot holds. I don’t know what happened to RB. He hadn’t heeded my suggestion, and presumably had made his own way to safety. Up on the front lawn now, neatly trim and weed free, I glanced back from this promontory and sensed the leopard lurking. I knew I must find refuge inside the house. If not this one, then another and smartly! I knocked urgently—yet not so loudly as to alert the leopard—but was not answered. I tried the door handle and to my relief, the door swung open and I shot inside to safety.

There was no one about in the living room, and feeling self-consciously intrusive I made my way upstairs calling out as I went, in case someone was home to whom I could explain my presence. Not a soul. I found a bedroom with a comfortable looking double bed—one of the children’s with soft toys aplenty, teddies, animals, dolls. A soft cotton pillow, cased in crimson attracted my weary head. Kicking off my shoes by the gauze canopy at the foot, I climbed in under the duvet and fell fast asleep.

When I awoke, in early morning light, my husband Paul was there beside me and I remarked how strange this leopard event had been, causing me to seek refuge in this unknown house. Seemingly unmoved by the circumstances, he simply got up, dressed, and went calmly off to work. I rose then too, and looking out the picture window above the bed, saw the light was lovely; the leopard gone.

Remaking the bed immaculately, I replaced the toys in their former positions, plumping them up, pushing their stuffing neatly into place. Shoes on, I was about to take my leave when the mother entered the room. She gasped in shock at finding me there while I pleaded, ‘Please let me explain. I’m not a bad person . . .’ but before I had a chance to say what I was doing—a middle-aged intruder in her home—she’d rushed off downstairs and the next moment reappeared with her husband in tow. They looked sternly at me as though at any moment they might decide to call the police but gradually it dawned that I was bone fide.

They were a good-looking couple—late forties or early fifties, she, as tall as him, perhaps a little taller, slender with wavy, fair hair framing an English-rose complexion. She wore a knee-length summer frock of crimson

roses burgeoning bold against a pale turquoise background. Bare legged, her feet were clad in low-heeled classy sandals (the likes of which I've never owned). He wore dark jeans and a light, short sleeved summer shirt untucked. (I thought to myself later, he would do well to lose weight from a rather too obvious paunch.) As they turned to go downstairs I followed, explaining how I came to be in their home. We stood in their open plan kitchen–dining room for a few minutes of small talk before going outside into an enclosed courtyard across from their garage. Here they readily shared with me information about an invention the woman had been working on.

The sun was higher now. We stood bathed in its strong light, my back to their backdoor, the woman on my left and the man to the right. Between them they supported a metal device that they wanted to demonstrate to me. The woman described its operation while I looked on amazed. It was a pole-like arrangement with an opening at one end through which she could produce poetry! By turning a handle, a single page of verse emerged from the end her husband was supporting across his right knee. Each sheet was received with gratitude . . . a sort of 'endless pole of possibility,' not yet known about or understood. The husband stood supportively watching and commenting on the process. I felt honoured to be party to this enterprise and knew implicitly that they completely understood my reason for being there though not once did they allude to the whereabouts of a leopard on the loose. [Then I awoke.]

'The following weekend, considering whether to try on the turquoise frock—such a symbol of synchronicity—I decided, No, without real need, it would be counter to the seminaria spirit, "Less is more." (The dream was richness in its own right.) One morning, weeks later, I woke at 3:30 reaching for inspiration in the form of the right Rumi poem for my friend Sally's birthday. Not only did I find two perfect for the occasion (she is dying from cancer), I came across *The Snow Leopard*, instantly evoking the memory of the dream above. Were there links to be understood . . . patterns to discover? Again,' encouraged Rudie, 'if you have particular thoughts, then please see me afterwards.'

The Snow Leopard

Left to its own ways, the snow leopard will not move
from its kill until it is satisfied.

I understand it may sound strange to speak of a lover
of God controlling light,

the way a lion might a deer in its mouth, or the banks
of a river, the water,

and then, being able to store God in a safe place for
when one's divine hunger returns,

when the slightest desire ever arises again, to be
with Him.

Sweetpies, the reason most cannot touch Effulgence
At will—do with God as ever you may please,

hold the Infinite as tenderly as wished,

is because your thinking has cut short your reach,

does undermine your power,

because your beliefs of right and wrong have impaired
your spirit's needed agility for union. (Rumi, 2012, p. 20)

'Was this investigation of TMoS forging a way to reconnect with the potential for my own thinking's [intuitive] further reach?' As Rudie poses the question, it evokes her purple and gold screen saving poem, 'After Rumi':

I am
Silent, still
Yet, as Rumi told
In silence hides the thunder
Allow enough time
That you hear
Its boom.



Figure 14. The seal of researcher Rudie

Rudie turns to face the last portrait, declaring, 'This last portrait epitomises the richness co-researchers found when the mindfulness of seminaria was more permanently embedded in their personal–professional practice. Sometimes profoundly independent of Coordinated Universal Time and three-dimensional space, this final portrait from Gordon speaks volumes.'

5.9 Gordon more than a year later finds he is still walking the talk

With a voice as though from the stillness of a deep well, Gordon speaks:

Let me share with you that since being introduced to the mindfulness of seminaria in August, 2015, I have used it primarily as a means of connecting more deeply with the children I teach. I use it to:

- try to understand the children and particular challenges they may be facing;
- research and evaluate for a specific child study;
- write student reports (with accuracy and depth of meaning).

As a poetic form I have found its simple composition allows for a reasonably quick and less considered process to take place, which seems to allow for more intuitive and potentially insightful responses. Having said that, one of the important personal revelations I have discovered on this journey has been the importance of the question. In my experience, the deeper and more considered the question, the deeper and more illuminating the seminaria. This led me to a threefold process which is probably best described in metaphor:

I am standing on a rocky shore where I very carefully choose an almost perfectly round stone, which I pick up and weigh in my hand. Satisfied, I move to the edge and take aim into the perfectly smooth water, throwing the stone as far as I can before becoming completely still. I wait in complete confidence that eventually a resulting ripple, however small, will become visible. Then, when it reveals itself on the water's edge, I quickly capture the ripple's movement: its colour, vitality, and curves, before it disappears.

In this image the choosing of a stone is synonymous with the crafting of a question. The more well formed the stone the greater the chance of it being cast further into the not yet known where, like a lake or the sea, depth increases the further you are from water's edge (or ours in the case of insight). Once the stone has been thrown, a second stage begins: waiting for a response to appear from the deeper, clearer water beyond. This requires stillness and patience as well as resistance to fabricate or imagine a ripple that isn't there. Finally, when a real and potentially faint ripple appears, its dynamic image is quickly captured in the form of a seminaria. If its form was longer I think there

would be a risk of missing the fleeting, temporal appearance of the ripple, its short-lived echo from beyond.

As is often the case (in my experience anyway), there is an element of openness and flexibility when learning something new, that is lost once it becomes more familiar and the mind starts to take control. This was most certainly the case for me and seminaria. I think that as I wrote more I found it became increasingly difficult to subvert my intellectual mind, which led to potentially cleverer (relatively speaking), but less insightful poems. This being the case, I found that more time was needed preparing the space through meditation. As time has passed I have essentially added another stage at the beginning, one of grounding myself and of allowing my inner monologue to settle. This might also be true at the other end of the process where I have sometimes found it necessary to reflect deeply on the image that has presented itself in order to understand its meaning. This was especially true of one poem, which presented as a clear image that I didn't really understand. It read:

Turning
Inwardly
Shadowy fingers
Point in many directions
Angelic guidance
Brilliant
Steadfast.

The picture I received was very much like people making shadows on a dimly lit wall. The shadows seemed slightly ephemeral and chaotic. In contrast to these was an image of a light illuminating the wall and outshining the flickering shadows, creating a sense of something clear and steady. It was only when I wrote her a birthday poem some weeks later that the image became clearer. It read:

Across the ball of the silver moon.
Above the water of te tai timu.
Glides a white heron with wide spread wings;
Into te ao tūroa from te pō she brings
Gifts from beyond the world of light,
Her pure white shadow a wonderous sight.
Behold he kōtuku rerenga tahī;
Once in a lifetime we are lucky to see.

The subject was chosen using an intuitive method based on therapeutic sounds. The more I read about the kōtuku the clearer the sense that this child could perceive the spiritual world and

that, at her current stage of growth, this was possibly more confusing than helpful. It was with this in mind I asked her parents if she could see ghosts. Whilst surprised at the question they told me that she had been able to see spirits since she was a young girl and they had once employed the services of a tohunga to get rid of a spirit that was disturbing her.⁵⁰ In another similar instance, only reversed, a seminaria shed light on a report verse I had written earlier in the year. It read:

Beyond the cavern of swirling tide
with a golden glow-worm galaxy inside
Lies Te Anau's crystal clear lake,
beautifully still in the light of daybreak.
Reflecting a secret this Takahe knows
within mighty mountains capped in white snow;
A glacial valley grown in grass,
So peaceful no peril comes to pass.
Where in a cloak of green and blue
She discovers a gift she already knew.

When I wrote her report verse [seminaria below] it became clear that this child worked from the inside out. Her tentativeness and hesitation weren't an indication of an inability or learning difficulty, which was a concern at the time, but of a deeply personal process whereby she would only truly reveal her potential when she was ready. This has been a very helpful insight into her particular world and, I am happy to say, has turned out to be very much the case. As a result of these verses I consciously gave her as much space as she needed, confident that each flower would quickly blossom when it was ready.

Watchful
Reluctant
Beautiful witness
Brilliantly breath-taking
Self-recognition's
Enabling
Embrace.

'Here', adds Rudie, 'is a case of TMOs deeply embedded in the personal–professional reflective practice of a dedicated primary school teacher. Such exemplary portraits hold a promise of hope for

⁵⁰ Amongst Māori healers, tohunga are a particular group of specialist healers. The word tohunga comes from whakato meaning to plant, or lay out an issue; and kahunga, to remove one's personal interest from the issue (Hohepa Kereopa, in collaboration with Paul Moon, cited in Sanson, 2011).

the renewal of teaching and learning for learners, teachers as learners, and as an honoured vocation.'

Now, as the colour violet-white gently lights the screen, a white heron alights as the performers sing and play the last poem: 'Watchful, Reluctant, Beautiful witness, Brilliantly breathtaking, Self-recognition's, Enabling, Embrace.' The last tone of G resounds and fades, evoking a powerful motif designed by Gordon. Influenced by his experience of Japanese contemplative traditions, it fills the screen to complete his portrait.



Figure 15. The seal of co-researcher Gordon

Afterwards . . . silence.

Rudie steps into the centre of the surrounding portraits. Thanking everyone warmly for the gift of the parts they played in the opening of this living portrait installation, she announces the date of a workshop wherein the mindfulness of seminaria will be taught to anyone who wants to learn. A hearty round of applause reactivates the light and colour mix in all seven portraits. Refreshments are served as people mix and mingle among the exhibits. Outside, the rain has stopped. Vibrant colours streak the wet streets and bells peal out promisingly from the carillon on the hill above. Aptly they are named: Grace (Aroha), Hope (Tūmanako), Remembrance (Whakamaharatanga) and Peace (Rangimārie) (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2018).

5.10 Summary

In this chapter I have presented a ‘gallery’ of seven differently sized *exemplary portraits*. Each offers a reflection on the research question and illustrates the retaining of some element of the person’s co-researcher experience in the process of conducting this research. The reader can evidence, for example, that engagement with TMoS has resulted in Hope’s portrait of overcoming self-consciousness; Gordon’s new capacity for pursuing his own questions; Maree’s revelations about her unexpected ‘squiggle’ seminaria and what that might mean; Mikaela’s insights when discovering access to ‘the food of new impressions’; Murray’s nourishment for renewal as he strives for educational practice beyond the hegemonic ‘carrot on a stick’; Olivia’s and Gordon’s exploration in a staff context that questioned how they can more appropriately meet what the next generation is asking of its teachers; a dream narrative from Rudie (as a relevant heuristic component), and finally, from Gordon over a year later, a picture of how his seminaria practice has become embedded into his personal–professional life.

My explication describes my effort to understand and explain the phenomenon under investigation. In presenting another layer of data, these portraits more fully illuminate the meanings that these six participants have given to TMoS. They reveal both the uniqueness of their individual differences *and* the common qualities of the phenomenon that I sought to illuminate. Thus the lived experience of seminaria has reflected a far broader and richer application and outcome than that with which I had initially set out. While the content differs in the way their stories have unfolded, the key themes of connectedness, self-realisation, and meaningfulness are illuminatingly well demonstrated. Moreover, as stated in this chapter’s introduction, these exemplary portraits (of working with TMoS) characterise a complementary set of relationships to time and space, summarised as follows:

- Hope goes back biographically nearly four decades to discover a key to self-mastery for her future wellbeing;
- Maree connects with cosmic relationships beyond generally acknowledged boundaries, that bring her joy;
- Mikaela spatially shifts her emotional response to time’s advancing process of aging;
- Murray discovers a metaphoric sandpit of playfulness whilst striving to evolve an education practice suited to an emergent future;
- Olivia sees evolutionary potential to realise ‘the whole as being greater than the sum of its

parts’;

- Gordon crosses spatial boundaries to recognise new questions of depth for student wellbeing;
- Rudie’s heuristic inquiry evokes dreams with curious links across time and space.

At this stage of the pilgrimage I feel full of gratitude for the quality each participant/co-researcher has brought to the research process. In the next chapter, the qualities and themes they have highlighted will be addressed.

Once more, as I set out at dawn with the richness of the data as freshly gathered fieldwork, my focus is, first, on how to continue to shine an accurate light onto the findings as they are interpreted. Given that in heuristic inquiry the central component of analysis requires ‘a continual though gradual layering of understanding of the phenomenon under investigation until a synthesis of all its aspects is revealed’ (Conlan, 2004, p. 142; Hiles, 2001a; Moustakas, 1990), the reader will recognise that, accordingly, the last two chapters have been fulfilling that function. The next chapter continues this ‘layering’ process until a creative synthesis is reached.

The greatest hunger of all, is the hunger for meaning . . . because meaning transfigures all. Once what you are doing has for you meaning . . . you are not alone in your Spirit—you belong. (Laurens van der Post, quoted in Lemle, 1997)

Chapter six Explication, interpretation, analysis as synthesis

Forging substance from a diamond word form; realising its social resonance

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses five key features. First, I explain the process of explication used to interpret the data (commensurately, explication is continued from the previous chapter). Second, I explain the role of a creative synthesis (the sixth, and commonly the final, heuristic phase); third, I explicate the themes and patterns found in the participants' nuanced narratives that, fourth, are freshly distilled to a crystallisation of the key findings. Last, with reference to what it means to be on this heuristic research path, guided by the leading question that continues to unfold its layers of meaning, I explicate and present my creative synthesis.

6.2 Interpreting the data in heuristic research

Common to all qualitative heuristic methods, the analysis is directed toward discovery of similarities to find where there is coherence (Kleining & Witt, 2000), hence the importance heuristic research attaches to synthesis. Notably comparable to both mindfulness (Fig. 2) and holistic education and its assessment (see 1.1.3), the processes of HI involved the mindful interweaving of my cognitive, affective and physically active modes in the process of unfolding the common qualities and themes. As its designer describes, 'From the beginning and throughout, . . . heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery. The research question and methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning and inspiration. . . . My primary task [was] to recognize whatever exists in my consciousness as a fundamental awareness, to receive it, accept it, support it and dwell inside it' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11).

Consequently, it was important for me to note at the outset that a caveat is cast on the term 'analysis' for two reasons. First, the term 'data analysis' in the traditional sense is avoided because from this perspective, analysis—which usually means breaking something into its constituent parts and thereby losing the wholeness of the phenomenon—has damaging connotations for phenomenology (by risking loss of the integrity that constitutes a particular phenomenon in the first place). Second, it is for this reason that Douglass & Moustakas (1985), Hiles (2001a), and Moustakas

(1990, 1994) prefer the heuristic term 'explication.' It required me as the primary researcher to fully examine not only the fruits of the fieldwork but also what awakened from them in my own researcher's consciousness in order to understand their various layers of meaning.

As Conlan (2004, p. 148) reminds us, Pliny, Cicero and Horace all used the term *explico* meaning 'to unravel a complicated matter in order to render it intelligible and clear.'⁵¹ Contemporary usage defines explication as a 'process of analysing and developing an idea or principle in detail' (en.oxforddictionary.com). Thus, the elaboration of the qualities, meanings and themes from this study of the mindfulness of seminaria was the task of this next research phase.

Thus, continuing this fifth heuristic phase, explication (from 5.2), refers to the process of examining the themes and qualities that have surfaced during the previous illumination phase. Consequently, I needed to engage in focusing, indwelling, self-exploration, and even self-disclosure (with reference to the remembered dream experiences that were relevant to the study's focus at the time). All these inner and outer activities, in turn, supported my recognition of the uniqueness of the lived experience of TMoS.

Continuing to explicate the phenomenon

Explication, then, challenged me to thoroughly examine the constituents (see Table 1) of this phenomenon while keeping the context of the phenomenon whole, as Hycner (1999, p. 161) so well describes. Explicating the mindfulness of seminaria thus evoked a heightened sense of vigilance. As a pilgrim new to the ground of this research path, I took care not to be seduced by the apparent simplicity of TMoS, that by its appearance—a mere 27 syllables!—might suggest a simplistic outcome. Neither did I wish to layer the elegance of its simplicity with a complexity that did not belong, because of some thesis connotation or even denotation. I found myself re-sonating with, and therefore re-examining, an aphorism by Dee Hock that Mikaela had paraphrased to me: 'Simplicity on this side of complexity is banal; simplicity on the far side of complexity is profound.'

Mindful too, that meanings are unique and distinctive to each person's experience and depend upon their internal frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990; Randall & McKim, 2008), I was therefore watchful. I sought not to jump to conclusions about the coherence of co-researchers' experiences.

⁵¹ Pliny, Cicero and Horace were Roman exemplars of moral and practical reasoning (Urban, 2011).

The process of explication in its entirety encourages researchers to attend to their own awarenesses, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgements as a prelude to the understanding that is derived from conversations and dialogues with others. Discernment became my motto, just as my father would 'read the sky' before sowing or harvesting a field of fescue. In my role as a heuristic pilgrim exploring new territory, I valued both this inner and outer processing, and its Jungian echo (Sabini, 2005) as voiced in the Prelude. Having practised seminaria for several years now as a part of my early morning contemplation, and observed the different qualities of its experience, I continued to be amazed and enriched by the applications and discoveries of my co-researchers that left me feeling full of life after listening to their individually nuanced 'colour.'

Harvesting meaning from the fieldwork

My main aim was to listen deeply to the respective co-researchers and to ensure that the relational space between us was held in a way that fostered their telling of what it is like to engage with the mindfulness of seminaria. There were a total of 18 interviews, of which the 12 from phases 2 and 3 are recorded. These 12 ranged in length from one to almost two hours' duration (averaging 1.5 hours), and yielded a total of almost 18 hours of voice-recorded interview data.

I transcribed all interviews myself in order to listen deeply and become more strongly acquainted with the substance of each co-researcher's experience and their sharing of it.

Returning the transcripts to each for verification or amendment, minor adjustments were made by two of the participants (Hope and Mikaela), in order to clarify a meaning, to simplify the way an idea was expressed or to elaborate a thought. Otherwise, all transcripts were readily signed as a true and accurate record of what had taken place.

Once all the interview transcripts had been verified by the respective co-researchers, they were physically laid out on the spare bed in my study with my journal notes and, in keeping with the method for organising heuristic research, placed into a sequence telling the story of each participant as well as the story of the group as a whole. As I knew to expect, the task 'involve[d] timeless immersion inside the data, with intervals of rest and return' to it 'until intimate knowledge [was] obtained' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 49). What made the process doable whenever I reached saturation point, enabling me to rise above an initial impression of 'drowning in data' that can be characteristic of HI, was to go walking for new perspective. Setting out into nature with the recording of one live

interview playing through my ears was nothing short of exhilarating. The inspiration of co-researchers' content 'walked mindfully through' provided ongoing gratitude. To know, too, that through discerning listening and careful reflection, patterns would emerge and take shape just as Moustakas himself describes (1990, p. 49), was heartening.

Listening to all the tapes for several weeks before beginning to take notes on them was experienced as another immersion phase (Moustakas 1990; Hiles, 2001a). Just as in Chapter two, I characterised the literature reviewing (especially my 'monastic'-type immersion in the mindfulness literature), and, prior to that, the long immersion in the Seminar Form itself, as a mindfulness poetry practice (revealed as poiesis [Whitehead, 2003], with its live, mobile, transforming capacity)—this was another immersion in which I learned to 'swim strongly with the current.'

The aim of this immersion in the narratives was to select verbatim excerpts, descriptions, illustrations, conversations and suchlike, that 'accentuate the flow, spirit, and life inherent in the experience.' It was a salutary feeling to find that the data themselves met Moustakas' (1990) criteria for the composite depiction of 'vivid, accurate, alive, and clear, and encompass[ing] the core qualities and themes inherent in the experience' (p. 52). I found, just as he states, that:

The composite depiction includes all of the core meanings of the phenomenon as experienced by the individual participants and by the group as a whole (p. 52).

Listening and re-listening to the complete gestalt of interviews again and again, I dwelt anew in its richness, aware to eliminate common pitfalls such as preconceptions, halo effects, and bias. By being very 'present' with each co-researcher I could recall the room where we were sitting together, the quality of light and sound, of colours, both visual and emotional, and associated smells. I could hear their intonation of feelings and visualise the accompanying body language and gestures, many of which are noted in their narrative accounts. I found it a totally energising, consciousness-raising activity, coming freshly focused again and again to these narratives, mindful of the subtle layering of nuanced meaning that occurs through reconnecting mindfully with the living (albeit now recorded) voices.

While examining the common themes (set out below in 6.4), I began noticing commonalities between and among our experiences, which encouraged me to revisit what I had documented in the four journals I had almost filled since beginning the investigation. Keeping track with journaling (Progoff, 1992) was a personal discipline that I and many of my former student-teachers value to

this day. It was helpful to have my own audit trail of questions, reflections, poems and ideas in development, relating to the topic of the research as a whole.

I handwrote the themes I extrapolated from the data onto coloured card and taped them to my north-facing study door. By grouping them, cross-referenced to the research narratives, I began noticing that elements of the seminaria phenomenon constituted an evolving process in the lives of the co-researchers (and wondered how it might be for them now, a year later). A more complete picture of the phenomenon began forming. Interpretation uncovered new views and nuances. Patterns of connection appeared. In heuristic inquiry this is how a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon is 'painted.' (Hope, the first of the co-researchers, had herself used this same painting metaphor (see 4.4). Experiencing this phase was an enriching adventure, not without its symbolic growth experience (SGE) (Frick, 1983, 1987, 1990; Randall & McKim, 2008), when noticing the synchronicity of how some themes belonged together. New ideas kept emerging, and the existing themes acquired new qualities. Suddenly, after weeks of 'living into the data afresh,' everything found its place; I began grouping the themes as they cohered, and journaling preliminary sketches for the creative synthesis.

6.3 Heuristic inquiry phase six, creative synthesis

Creative synthesis, the final phase of heuristic inquiry, to be presented in the form of an artwork, or some other creative form, represents the integration of the data, qualities, and themes discovered in the explication phase, and, according to Moustakas (1990, p. 31), 'can only be achieved' tacitly and intuitively. It not only honours the heuristic researcher's inner life and outer evidential experience, but the creative interweaving of both is the goal. How would I do it justice when ideas for its expression burgeoned like a bulging backpack? Whilst I valued how the data spoke for themselves, I knew that the creative synthesis must convey the 'life blood' of seminaria in a way that not only held its potential accessibility for others but also incorporated my own research narrative. In the end I knew, again, it was best (in the pilgrimage vein) kept simple. Presented at the end of this chapter, the creative synthesis is preceded by an explication of the pattern of themes followed by a crystallisation of these themes into the main findings—all of which were seminal to its design.

6.4 Explicating the themes and patterns

The following clusters of themes were formed through the process described above (in 6.2), by aggregating the co-researcher depictions and grouping together the units of meanings (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 1998). The themes, with their accompanying qualifying descriptions, highlight the co-researchers' experiences of seminaria. They are listed as described, mostly adjectively; some as nouns. Seminaria, adopted as a mindfully aware practice, was found commonly to be:

- Surprising—delightful, unexpected, enjoyable;
- Calming—grounding, peaceful, slows the pace;
- Refreshing—enlivening, alert awareness, energising, being in the flow energetically;
- Transformative—a healing art;
- Purposeful—significant, meaningful;
- Creatively insightful—therapeutic witnessing;
- Accessible—simplicity of form, infinite possibilities;
- Containers—for the process with completeness or closure;
- Opens up—consciousness, perceptive awareness, transcendence;
- Connects me more fully with myself/higher self/students/nature/the 'Great Mystery';
- Fulfilling—a sense of completion, feeling resolved;
- Suspends time—creates space, outside linear time;
- Mysterious—with potency, presence, opening;

These thirteen themes are now elaborated by aggregating the co-researchers' 'exemplary narratives, descriptive accounts, conversations, illustrations, and verbatim excerpts that accentuate the flow, spirit, and life inherent in the experience' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32), bearing in mind a small number of obvious and unavoidable overlaps.

Surprising—delightful, unexpected, enjoyable

At the moment I'm 'playing in the sandpit' just enjoying it, . . . it would restrict me if I got too cerebral about it, I think. (Murray)

I love it; I absolutely love it! Because I've done other poetry in the past, I think I came to [seminaria] thinking, 'I love poetry.' But then, what is it about this particular form? Why does it work so well? (Olivia)

I love the fact that as you're writing it, you don't know where it's going. I look forward to it! (Olivia)

I was completely enrolled from the beginning because [the] experience was so profound. (Mikaela)

I really, really enjoyed doing them. I just love them! (Murray)

And I haven't answered this question yet but it seems like such an obvious thing in a way [chuckles at the surprise discovery], that 'revelation' and 'the question' are related but I've certainly never taken that on as a personal practice. The practice of forming questions. I don't think that I saw that until I started writing these seminaria. (Gordon)

[Like] semi-lightning . . . it was quite interesting! Absolutely flowed . . . straight from the pen. I didn't even think about it. (Maree)

[And] there's a playful quality to it. (Hope)

Calming—peaceful, grounding, slows the pace

Seminaria slows the pace of life, reminds me to see, to remember what has always been in front of me. (Maree)

I feel calm, more alive and alert; resolved. (Mikaela)

It's like a quick grounding exercise. (Hope)

[Through the mindfulness of seminaria] I can let go and there is a resolution to the day and a sense of calm that I have honoured something. (Olivia)

You're letting some light through the thickness of cloud, into your life . . . for a moment. (Murray)

There's a change in the body . . . a flow of ease . . . where, maybe before that, your body had felt quite uncomfortable, on edge, stuck, or whatever. (Hope)

I felt in a really nice place of being . . . serenity. (Maree)

Refreshing—enlivening, alert awareness, energising, being in the flow energetically

[A] shift in energy, often a release of tension and an opening up; a gut feeling of satisfaction; increased energy in my head and heart. (Mikaela)

I was able to relax and go inward a bit more, . . . allow it [seminaria] to flow really. And that's what happened, . . . they did . . . flow on from one another. (Maree)

If I practise seminaria, they feel more fluid, and I can certainly see . . . there could be a time [when] I've mastered it. . . . I . . . can enter the flow [and] I don't have to leave it. (Gordon)

I started using seminaria to write about how stuck I felt and how there weren't any words coming . . . and then I could feel my energy flowing. Then I would either write another seminaria or I would then actually start writing one of my stories . . . and that just created a different energy flow. (Hope)

Sometimes . . . an interesting element of this has been . . . I get half way and I fall asleep but still, that's fine because I trust very much that the next day, I'll pick it up refreshed. (Murray)

If I'd stopped to go, 'Oh, that doesn't make any sense!' it would have stopped the flow, but if I just wrote what came, then they flowed and the resolution to the question . . . was easy for me when I expanded it again. (Olivia)

Transformative for wellbeing; a healing art

With seminaria, it's almost like I stop thinking about what I'm writing and I just write it . . . if I have time to read it back, either I get left with a feeling I don't need to . . . because it's done something in me for having written it. It's that transformation. It's healed something within me, or I feel a sense of rightness, or [where] I'd felt stuck . . . I can feel my energy flows so I can move on. (Hope)

Having someone witness and be empathetic, ask you the right question, is healing and can be transformative. (Hope)

That sense of having somewhere to go that stills me, so that my body becomes stiller, [and] my breathing. (Mikaela)

You know I solved the problem. Sometimes I found that happened. I'd start off with . . . a topic and as I wrote, it felt less [problematic] . . . that was what that did, or else it was just a way to show [me], 'Well, you don't actually have to worry about it.' (Maree)

When I'm in the writing of it, it's like time is suspended . . . like stepping out of ordinary time . . . I think . . . part of its gift [is] that it creates space, outside of linear time to whoever is doing it . . . there's something very healing about that [reflectively] . . . It's a healing Art. (Olivia)

Purposeful—significant, meaningful

When I've finished a seminaria a feeling I get is one of fulfilled satisfaction that I've done something very purposeful, significant and meaningful . . . brought something to birth. (Murray)

I sit and write a few lines of poetry . . . as a discipline is almost like keeping an artist's journal but it's like a creativity journal mixed in with meditation. It feels very purposeful in a way. So I really love that. (Mikaela)

You know all of those seminarias are purposeful. They were purposeful when I wrote them and they're purposeful when I rework them. And they come to that real nugget in the centre. (Mikaela)

There's an awareness of the words and the words become drawn to you . . . they become drawn **to** you. (Maree)

Seminaria make images, expressing what's inside of me but also reflecting back to my inner being what I have expressed . . . the relationship between inner and outer. The point of the lemniscate is for me, the seminaria, because it anchors the meeting point between the inner and the outer. (Hope)

I know it to be a meditative, soul and spiritual practice in terms of how it resonates and . . . the writing changes sometimes when I do it. I'm processing my emotions, but sometimes there's a different experience . . . of a spiritual vessel. (Olivia)

Through writing the seminaria, you have the condensed version of it . . . to . . . expand into a report. (Olivia)

[W]here the practice of seminaria has been and continues to be for me: seeing the necessity to work in both . . . the heart and the head—opening up to the object or the theme, allowing something to become apparent that's from outside, and then interpreting it; putting it into words but then going back; opening up again. (Gordon)

Creatively insightful, realising, recognising, reflective, therapeutic witnessing

I enjoy the creative insights that come from reworking seminaria. It opens up new and interesting insights. I've used them very much as a witnessing . . . to capture what's going on. (Mikaela)

It's almost like seminaria takes on the quality of being a witness to you. You don't need anyone else . . . to say, 'Oh, I really hear you; I see your struggle with that.' . . . seminaria when it's written, is reflecting that same . . . quality back to you. . . . So if you're working on your own and you use seminaria . . . it's . . . that kind of witnessing. (Hope)

I have not previously been as mindful of the importance of refining the question that arises from my contact with a child, my contact with myself [and] my contact with other aspects of the world. Seminaria [is] a form of inquiry that's leading me to recognise more fully, the children . . . and their particular needs. [Seminarial] starts with an object to gain insight into that [some]thing. (Gordon)

It felt like I'd gone home to my star, to where I was home, and they were my light parents, . . . where I'd come from. (Maree)

I think what's beautiful about this, is that it takes a kind of a . . . cloud of moisture, as an analogy . . . all disparate and stretched and fuzzy, and crystallises it down into a snowflake . . . an individual snowflake out of that moisture. I think that's a beautiful picture for what this seminaria does. From a lot of disparate thoughts, fuzzy thinking, you find the essence. (Murray)

It feels like you're bringing something down, bringing down the message from the child's guardian angel . . . what's he working with at the moment and where does he need to go? (Olivia)

Accessible—simplicity of form, infinite possibilities

I mean I got stuck in traffic and wrote one the other day. So it's quite accessible, quick and easy to use. (Hope)

[This] form . . . this beautiful form helps to bring . . . my sense of what [students] need. (Olivia)

It suits my need for simplicity and form. I mean they all speak just so deeply through their simplicity. (Murray)

I'm noticing that the form . . . is working incredibly effectively as a meditation tool. (Mikaela)

I found it very easy to sit down and think [and] not think. I just allowed the momentum to flow. Thank you seminaria for the gift you are giving. I tip my hat with respect and my wings expand. Who knows where this may lead? (Maree)

It seems like there's no limit to what can be experienced. (Gordon)

Containers—for process with completeness or closure

Having a symmetrical form . . . the sheer completion about it I think is quite healing. [There's] something about the containment of seminaria . . . that's helpful for my wellbeing . . . the structure of having a form to write in . . . it's like packing a suitcase. [Its] containment . . . gives . . . freedom. (Hope)

[It's] simple enough that you're free in it. You're not thinking about the composition and yet you're completely held by it. It's like a vessel for whatever needs to come in terms of reflection, or spiritual or soul 'sorting,' I would say. (Olivia)

This diamond shape is so beautiful. The diamond it creates each time . . . two triangles. It's so satisfying a form. . . . The limitation of the form is [its] freedom. Again, you have to be very precise . . . essential and distilled. (Murray)

Now you know, that's an amazing poem [poetic form] to be able to encapsulate the shock of it . . . one minute . . . a peaceful life and the next . . . this force 24/7 in my life . . . being able to write that . . . access my heart . . . a fast way of doing it . . . a true way of doing it. (Mikaela)

It does help you to think in shape. For me it's like the expansion of the pyramid . . . the initial part . . . then condensing down . . . brings it back to where it should be . . . to connect the top to the bottom . . . the bottom words to the top words so there was some connection. (Maree)

I think every poetic form has a 'beingness,' if you like, . . . a collection of subtleties and dimensions that are particular to that form. So you have a structure . . . but that's never the object. The object is to become so familiar with the structure that you can leave the structure behind . . . That's the idea in all of 'the Ways'; . . . in every moment, an opportunity. (Gordon)

Opens up—consciousness, perceptive awareness

It opens me up to the unconscious. It allows you to be pretty naked with yourself . . . you can sort of **see** stuff. (Mikaela)

[A] whole page of diamond squiggles. . . . I'm sure there was some meaning to it, . . . like semi-lightning . . . quite interesting . . . a lot of dimensions . . . lots of dynamics. (Maree)

In letting go [because one has mastered the form], the possibility of transcendence arises. So the idea is, you learn this form and gradually you try to imbue the form full of love, until in the end, the form and the love and the person are inseparable. (Gordon)

It's a transmutation [metamorphosis]. That's its purpose. (Olivia)

To leave space in it for other possibilities to come in. What the mindfulness of seminaria does is gives us a little skylight . . . a tiny Velux window you can open to let some light in and close again once a day or twice. (Murray)

It can have a sense of transformation. Seminaria practice is like a threshold that I'm going through and like my talisman I'm taking with me. (Hope)

Connects me more fully with myself/higher self/students/nature/the 'Great Mystery'

I think it's very quick access to a deeper self, and in a sense, an access point . . . [to] a reassuring voice. A wisdom really. And it feels different to have it in the poetic form. (Mikaela)

[Just] to sit there and write a seminaria is like . . . it so much got me back in touch with myself and with the best sides of myself . . . the deeper sides of myself . . . the wiser sides of myself. (Mikaela)

One of the things I'm reflecting on a lot . . . is the nature of connectedness within this experience . . . I know when I'm there, and [conversely] when I'm not able to maintain connectedness and it becomes just a head experience. And . . . I know when I've written something . . . maintained an openness and am happy with it. (Gordon)

Seminaria. . . . It's like a hotline to my essential self. When I use seminaria in a meditative . . . rather than in an intellectual way . . . I tap into that inner meaning . . . inner resource . . . the connection between the

inner and the outer; it's a spiritual thing . . . like the vehicle for something . . . where your mind becomes empty . . . then the vision comes, whether it be words or picture. (Hope)

It felt like I'd gone home to my star . . . and they were my light parents . . . It is [quite moving] and I love it. It's really beautiful. (Maree)

[Given] that at the heart of life for me, is the Great Mystery, anything that gets me close . . . is **lovely**. (Mikaela)

[I] think what's interesting about seminaria for me is that in saying something . . . important to me . . . [and] rearranging it, I get access to different combinations of that . . . to different **insights** . . . and I never know. (Mikaela)

The 'present' and the 'gift' . . . there's hardly any scribbling out or planning. I'm just grateful to live in the moment in the gift of inspiration. (Murray)

[A] feeling of something coming to me when I'm working with seminaria . . . after a staff meeting. Not always, but a sense of something else coming if I have a question. (Olivia)

It creates a space for me, Olivia—that's not just 'Olivia mum,' 'Olivia teacher' and 'Olivia partner'—just to be and listen, check in, listen to what is trying to come through. (Olivia)

Fulfilling—a sense of completion, feeling resolved

It's changed something in me for having written it. It's healed something in me or I feel a sense of rightness, or . . . I'd felt stuck and I can feel my energy flows [again] so I can move on. (Hope)

It was very meaningful. I really love this page, you know [referring to her 'astral travel' poems]. (Maree)

I solved the problem . . . or else it was . . . a way to show [me] . . . you don't have to worry about it. I had to make sure the spaces were filled. I remember distinctly that. They had to be complete. (Maree)

Exactly! When centre stage [I have my power back] and so I go, 'Well actually, that wasn't so difficult.' (Mikaela)

I certainly think that seminaria [is] a way of moving people into an experience of something deeper. (Gordon)

I read all these seminarias every now and again . . . I review them and see how they feel. It's such a lot of fun, actually. [They're] feeding [me]. What I've been doing is going to bed . . . getting this book and whatever feeling comes up in me, the [predominant] inner feeling of the day—it can be stream of consciousness—I just respond to that feeling. So again, incredibly satisfying. (Murray)

We looked at it together a bit further [with Gordon], and came to the idea that the top half could be a reflection but also a resolution . . . of what the question is. (Olivia)

Suspends time—creates space, outside linear time

When I'm in the writing of it, it's like time is suspended . . . like stepping out of ordinary time, linear time . . . and I think . . . part of its gift [is] that it creates space, outside of linear time to whoever is doing it. (Olivia)

Oh I loved it [the 'astral travel' poem]. I remember thinking, well sometimes you get a bit three-dimensional . . . and you have to . . . break out . . . follow your heart [implying into an/other dimension/s]. (Maree)

So it's a point . . . that empty . . . mindspace. (Lots of people would probably call it lots of different things) but that's what I've experienced with seminaria. . . . honestly, the speed at which I wrote all of those . . . literally, a few minutes, boom, boom, boom! . . . like spitting it out. It came so quickly. (Hope)

It captures something which is beyond one thing. . . It seems like there's no limit to what can be experienced. . . . Whether [the research subjects in his story] felt they had linear time or not, undoubtedly plays an enormous role in our ability to soften our edges . . . to do a 'practice' we have to create time. That's inescapable. . . . [t]he person who has made depth their purpose in life, has time . . . and space. (Gordon)

I wrote one when I was standing at the bus station . . . and in that moment could access . . . create an opening for some unexpected . . . like doors opening . . . some unexpected Wooh! Something that could just shoot in and be really exciting, because I think that's another source of energy for me. (Mikaela)

That's another [term] for seminaria isn't it? 'What matters' because it's condensing all of the stuff you could say for hours and hours into what matters. (Murray)

Mystery, potency, presence, opening

Lately they've definitely been . . . helping me . . . create a sense, or feel a sense of things that are beyond me, in a way that's useful. I have come to see it as the process of residing at my personal edge (of what I know) and throwing a pebble into the unknown. The deeper the question, the further it penetrates . . . and the deeper the answer. (Gordon)

It's been an interesting experience. One page . . . I'll show you . . . there . . . was a whole page of diamond squiggles . . . there was . . . meaning to it, . . . I was doing it like semi-lightning . . . a lot of dimensions . . . Who knows where this may lead? (Maree)

Among all the utilitarian, pragmatic . . . mundane, chore-like business [of running a school] you've brought something into the world for a moment that is truly, well . . . spiritual, then metaphysical . . . and then . . . physical. I mean it's just like a little birth which is very satisfying. (Murray)

[The] entry and the exit point of the poems are the places where it is at its most . . . I want to say 'pure' . . . You have to bring everything in . . . expand it . . . resolve [it] . . . and it's the holding of it . . . I think the final part of it while it brings it down . . . ignites . . . or calls in the next stage. So there's lots and lots of layers that you can feel in it as well. (Olivia)

I think what I love . . . I like . . . the possibility of magic arising from the reversal of the lines . . . what opens up in that . . . (Mikaela)

You're tapping into a source . . . I go into a meditative place with seminaria . . . your mind becomes empty but then the vision comes, whether it be words or picture. (Hope)

So, in letting go, the possibility of transcendence arises. (Gordon)

This section has identified key themes of connectedness, self-realisation and meaningfulness. A sense of vitality, sometimes the experience of feeling viscerally energised, commonly occurred for co-researchers (as it had, from time to time, for me). As a consequence of the totality of lived TMOs experiences came these common experiences of self-realisation and meaningful connectedness, out of which arose a deep sense of meaningfulness. These eudaimonic, flourishing, life-satisfaction measures reflect Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs (Koltko-Rivera, 2006; see 1.3), where the

importance of belonging (connectedness), self-esteem and self-actualisation (self-realisation) feature towards the top of the hierarchy.

Recognised by the OECD (2013) as key subjective wellbeing indicators (i.e. self-realisation, meaningfulness and vitality), these thematic outcomes render the essential being of the practice of the mindfulness of seminaria as ‘wellbeing.’ Characterised by feeling well and functioning well, wellbeing in this context is multidimensional.

The following vignette exemplifies the accessibility, simplicity and effectiveness of seminaria for subjective wellbeing.

The other really exceptional experience . . . four or five days after I’d started . . . I had to do three consecutive days of full-on adult teaching. First, in a large auditorium in the hospital with thirty people spread out across the room. It’s a huge space. I don’t have a microphone so . . . I’m having to generate that voice . . . which is exhausting . . . just draining . . . and . . . standing for six [or] seven hours and . . . at lunchtime, when everyone was away, I just sat on some chairs with my feet up and I did a seminaria on my iPhone and that was just brilliant because . . . I just went into such a peaceful state, I mean, it was just so marked . . . so much so that I wrote another one, and again, there was a lot of yawning—it felt like a lot of clearing of energy—and what happened was, when a couple of people came back into the room, the energy was so still, they just sat quietly. . . . They didn’t come and talk to me or chat so I was able to actually have half an hour of complete peace. (Mikaela)

Three additional themes from participant engagement with TMoS were of particular interest in terms of providing understanding of what might sustain or curtail the practice. These follow under the next three headings.

Seminaria’s creativity encouraged continuity

Hope asserted, ‘I know that I’ll keep using it. It has such value; it’s such a good tool for so many different things . . . I enjoy it as well . . . the “feel good” factor but essentially, it’s more than that. I will continue to use it now as part of my creative practices. It has huge potential.’ Mikaela’s response, ‘I have not done it as religiously as I did during the research period and I find this reminder useful [meeting to verify the accuracy of a transcript] . . . a great way to start a session on writing for example. I plan to fit it into my day again.’

Postpractice ‘confessions,’ a reliability check

Both Maree and Murray confessed to falling asleep in the middle of the process sometimes late at night after a long school day. Both joked about how they’d awaken next morning and complete the seminaria with ease and insight. Olivia later too admitted, ‘Sometimes I fall asleep think[ing], I have

to find the resolution. I might even write, *My eyelids are reamed with sleep.*' The fact they could resume the seminaria process seamlessly after sleep suggested that co-researchers, rather than resenting the interruption, learned to rely on its calming, peaceful supportiveness, which appeared to increase their trust in its potential for connectedness.

Seminaria as a self-rewarding process

All co-researchers were philosophically oriented in their approach to the mindfulness of seminaria. There was a unanimous surprise element, too, that it could connect them so deeply with themselves. Gordon talked at length about a question it evoked in him concerning the 'effortlessness of effort,' while Murray, through seminaria, explored the very *raison d'être* for schooling itself. On a practical level, Mikaela found it had calming effects between one demanding teaching task and the next, especially when travelling. Hope knows now how to dispel her 'writer's block' simply and effectively with a few minutes of seminaria. Gordon and Olivia found, among other self-rewarding benefits, that seminaria facilitated student report writing.⁵²

Rather than feeling they were taking on something extra, the effect of seminaria was to streamline and thereby speed up the time-consuming process of end-of-year reports. Speaking about their work, each teacher revealed a passionate commitment to making a difference to their students' lives as well as for a greater common good. As Gordon pointed out, 'The poems lately are . . . trying to penetrate to the heart of what a child's needs are. I've come again and again and again to the seminaria.'

'I'm trying to be more economical with the reports this time,' declared Olivia. 'You go, "Well, what needs to be said?" It feels like you're bringing something down. . . . What is it he's working with at the moment and where does he need to go? Through writing the seminaria, you have the condensed version . . . to . . . expand into a report.'

⁵² By reports, they were talking about those that are evidence-based, meaningful, honest and encouraging for students and their parents—not simply the 'tick box' statistics.

Taking stock at Lookout Point: Preparing to enter the next research phase

Thus far, this chapter has explained explication from a heuristic perspective, including an outline of the researcher's responsibilities for data interpretation. It has explained analysis as explication, and the purpose of synthesis: to reveal the essence of the focal point of the inquiry.

My next step in the process towards a creative synthesis was to dwell freshly in the explicated thematic patterns from the co-researchers' experiences, and then leave them completely aside. Using the examples of Moustakas (1990) and Conlan (2004), I returned again and again to the phases of incubation, illumination, and explication (often whilst walking, in a rhythm that evoked insights, through native reserve to the open coast, reminding myself that such processes have their own innate timing and my role was akin to a vigilant midwife). This enabled me to find the patience to distil the fieldwork afresh so that the themes and patterns crystallised clearly into the main findings of this study, providing another layering of understanding of the nature and being of seminaria mindfulness. I now present these findings (evidenced by brief co-researcher narrative extracts). As necessary, they are defined or explained. Some findings are composite. (All are elaborated and discussed in the final chapter.)

6.5 The findings

The main findings of this inquiry, guided by the central research question—What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice?—are set out below in three categories:

- from a broad mindfulness and teacher education perspective;
- those that pertain to the poetic form itself; and
- what it meant to engage with the mindfulness of seminaria as a regular practice.

Distilled from the data provided by the co-researchers in Chapters four and five and from the themes and patterns explicated in Chapter six, the main findings from this study of the mindfulness of seminaria, were that the practice—

I From a broad mindfulness and teacher education perspective:

(A) *Revealed a novel form of mindfulness*

What the co-researchers illuminated were fresh, complex, rich descriptions of the phenomenon (TMoS) as it was concretely lived by them. Compellingly, their accounts (Chapter four's depictions and Chapter five's exemplary portraits) are coherent with this freshness. Each co-researcher found not only an effective mindfulness practice, but in it, something interesting, new, and unusual (a common definition of what it means to be novel). The following exemplifies this finding:

What's interesting about seminaria . . . is that in saying something . . . important to me . . . [and] rearranging it, I get access to different insights . . . and I never know. . . . I can get quick access to the unconscious or quick access to that 'surprise' mood.

TMoS was new to all of the participants (no one had come across anything like it before). One described it as a way to access 'the food of new impressions' and, '*To see life anew, to see anything anew, ourselves anew.*'

(B) *Supported teachers and leaders as reflective practitioners*

Teachers who used TMoS to reflect on their day's teaching, or students' learning and particular needs, found it provided surprisingly helpful insights for their understanding and consequent planning, as the following examples show:

[Going] to bed, getting this [seminaria] book and whatever comes up in me . . . the inner feeling of the day—it can be stream of consciousness—I just respond to that feeling . . . enjoying the . . . release of the heart. . . . [It's] changing the way I teach . . . I understand the children better . . . I'm able to respond in very different ways.

This finding includes both personal support for the teacher (the first example above), and professional support for the students. Sometimes, TMoS simultaneously supported both personal-professional elements of the reflective practitioner, as the last example indicates.

(C) *Embodied three mindfulness axioms and three domains of knowing*

This exploration found TMoS to contain three key axioms of mindfulness: intention, attention and attitude. It also found TMoS to incorporate three domains central to human functioning: cognitive, affective, and volitional activity. These six elements (elaborated in the discussion section) were tacit, nuanced in the intentional ways co-researchers were attentive to 'present moment experience' with heightened sensitivity to their thought patterns, and open to experience what was arising for them,

before responding to their thoughts and emotions. In terms of the domains: cognitive focusing of an idea was expressed in words with consciousness of the need for accurate syllabification; a stillness and sensitivity to emotions often preceded cognitive and affective processing; and the active will was employed in the writing and reflecting. Thus, three axioms and three domains provided for an integration of movement, emotions, intuitions and cognition. *How* such integration was experienced was variously described by all the participants:

It distils the circle of nebulous feelings, emotions, thoughts . . . down to a single point. From a lot of disparate thoughts, fuzzy thinking, you find the essence . . . an essential picture.

(D) *'Worked' without special beliefs, breathing techniques, body positions or mantras*

This finding highlights the inclusiveness and simplicity of the mindfulness of seminaria for those who enjoy working with language. The human heritage of language, creatively engaged in this formula, was seen to be independent of various elements associated with traditional mindfulness and meditation practices such as beliefs, breathing techniques, specific body positions and mantras. How *did* TMoS work? Besides the participant descriptions in finding (A) above, others that support finding (D) also show how it was found to work, practically, emotionally, mindfully, and in terms of self-awareness:

I . . . use seminaria to work out what my story is, in a very simple form. . . . [A] good tool for when you don't feel mindful . . . a good de-clutterer . . . in my physical [space] that has too much stuff in it, or in my head—too many ideas. . . . [L]ike time is suspended. [C]reates space, outside of linear time to whoever is doing it . . . becomes that centre of your being.

In an increasingly secular and global society, with increasing freedom in cultural life to determine one's own ways of being and knowing, institutional beliefs may be less relevant than an individual's quest for his or her own ways of knowing. TMoS, which employs the person's own language and cultural context, is thereby free from imposed, organised religious constraints and beliefs. Equally, TMoS would suit soteriological use because of the depth of connectedness it engenders (as finding (J) elaborates).

II The nature and being of seminaria's form as experienced by the participants:

(E) Functioned as a diamond-shaped 'receptacle' with midline transitional point and mirroring device

The significance of seminaria's shape was expressed by the participants in terms of its form and function. That is, the pattern of poetry on a page or screen that tends to be diamond shaped when symmetrically arranged, accentuated the notion of a receptacle (vessel or container) as conveyed:

[Instead] of . . . restricting [it's] incredibly . . . liberating . . . it creates an opening rather than a restriction because of the containment, a bit like with a small child . . . creating a boundary for them actually gives them freedom.

Significantly, four of the six co-researchers mentioned experiencing some sense of a transitional point in the middle, seven-syllable line of the form. That is, when they took a (sometimes difficult) feeling—through the movement of writing about it—a resolution was felt at this point, recognised through the words they had used and the change in feeling. Or this occurred when reflecting on a poem, that some likened to a mirroring process:

[The] meeting point between the inner and the outer. In the symmetry of its lines and syllables it's like a reflection, and this certain point, like a mirror perhaps.

The mirroring process meant reflecting on the poem (expressed in lines of syllables as: 2, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 2) in reverse order from the bottom up, in the syllabic line sequence: 2, 2, 3, 3, 5, 5, 7. It highlighted the importance of the space in the middle line. When the middle, seven-syllable line was 'brought to the surface' in this way, it sometimes evoked an 'Aha' moment as the co-researchers reported:

Somehow that reversing does an enormous amount. It opens up all sorts of new connections . . . almost neurologically. . . I get . . . all these new brain connections . . . so I never know what magic might happen in those.

(F) Incorporated a lemniscate movement as a symbol of revitalisation

This lemniscate (figure of eight, continuous energy, infinity symbol)—that the co-researchers variously gestured and depicted experiencing—appears to be a vital clue to the potency of seminaria's effectiveness. During interviews, several of the co-researchers spontaneously made the movement as a hand gesture either subconsciously or with some awareness whilst speaking, and others made specific mention of it with regard to their lived experience of seminaria (4.7; 4.4), thus exciting my heuristic interest:

It's a process. I'm weaving the unconscious and the conscious minds together within that lemniscate, allowing for the miraculousness of my unconscious mind to give me gifts.

(G) *Transformed challenging feelings via stress reduction*

Practising the mindfulness of seminaria was found to transform challenging feelings such as worry, agitation and stress into (grounded and centred) feelings: calm, ease, restful, serene, or a peace that is at the same time alive and aware. Participants variously described how:

A lot of my seminarias written when things have been really tough . . . have been about coping and processing difficult things. You feel the clouds overhead and seminaria has helped me find a way through. . . . There is a resolution . . . and a sense of calm.

A change in the body . . . a flow of ease . . . where . . . before . . . your body had felt quite uncomfortable, on edge, stuck, or whatever.

(H) *Illuminated key differences between haiku and seminaria*

A significant finding was the quality of participants' expressions of the differences they found between the deceptively similar 17-syllable Japanese haiku and the 'Western European' 27-syllable seminaria. Three participants, experienced in haiku, described what they found from a mindfulness, as well as a teaching, perspective. Two examples follow:

[Because of the form of haiku,] I didn't feel . . . things were quite finished . . . they were left hanging. Seminaria feel . . . finished . . . the two syllables up to seven and back to two . . . creates a completion . . . the gestalt of . . . completion . . . for . . . wellbeing . . . having things that are not left hanging. The sheer . . . completion [of seminaria] I think, is quite healing.

The haiku at its zenith is an attempt to convey nonduality. That's its purpose . . . the objective of a nondual experience is uttered onto the paper . . . transcends the head . . . and . . . the experience isn't lost. With the seminaria . . . very different as a form . . . the way I'm using it anyway, is more as a form of enquiry . . . which is very different. (I don't think a haiku starts with a question. In fact, I think a haiku would fail if it started with a question.)

III Engaging with TMoS as a regular practice, participants found it characteristically:

(I) *Embodied physical grounding and led to a heightening of awareness*

Engaging with seminaria as a regular practice resulted in numerous co-researcher reports of grounding and centring:

[There's] an enormous amount of awareness of the state of the body.

Seminaria was recommended as:

A quick grounding exercise . . . looking after yourself in the work you do in education.

The importance participants placed on the discovery of embodiment that they experienced by practising TMoS was a significant finding. Implicit was that the embodying nature of seminaria meant it was conducive to heightened awareness:

[An] awareness of the words and the words become drawn to you. . . . [It] brought awareness [from] where that [self-conscious feeling] stems.

(J) *Meaningful, fostered new meaning-making, connectedness and experiences of self-realisation*

Meaningfulness was key. Every participant was unequivocal that practising TMoS was memorably meaningful in a number of ways and interwoven with examples of *new* meaning-making, experiences of connectedness, and elements of self-realisation (that is, glimpses or lived experiences of their essential or higher self as distinct from the everyday ‘constructed’ self).

Not only was there the reference to nature, but to something sacred, to the energy of life, to all the many meanings there can be.

Connectedness was variously explained:

I have not previously been as mindful of the importance of refining the question that arises from . . . my contact with a child, with myself, my contact with other aspects of the world . . . as I have through seminaria. . . . I’m trying to connect with the ripples that that object’s creating—the layers of connections that I can perceive.

Self-realisation was explained by participants mostly in terms of deep or suddenly significant, insightful realisations about themselves that were inspired by TMoS:

[It] so much got me back in touch with . . . the deeper sides of myself . . . the wiser sides of myself. . . . Like a hotline to my essential self. I’m just grateful to live in the moment in the gift of inspiration.

(K) *Transformative with potential for ‘aha’/flow experience/existential profundness*

All the co-researchers reported differently, yet coherently, that, as a phenomenon, seminaria’s nature and being had potential to be transformative for them in some way.

It seems . . . there’s no limit to what can be experienced. . . . I was completely enrolled at the beginning because that experience was so profound . . . the effect on me . . . clearing energy, shifting energy; shifting energy, clearing energy. . . . It’s that transformation. It’s healed something within me, or [if] I’d felt stuck . . . I can feel my energy flows so I can move on.

In summary, this crystallisation of findings (A–K), distilled from the discoveries on this unique poetry path, has a key cognitive role in developing the creative synthesis as Table 3 amplifies, noting that ‘cognitive’ in this context (Conlan, 2004; Hiles, 2001a) includes the tacit dimension, and different

ways of knowing that ‘supports the researcher’s knowledge, passion and presence’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52).

6.6 Forming the creative synthesis

The creative synthesis of the whole investigation into the mindfulness of seminaria, had so much expressive potential I had to start another journal to document all the ideas that came. Meanwhile, when the platform poster (Figure 1) that has retained its currency called out for a ‘Mark II,’ I saw value in honouring their bigger patterns of connectedness.⁵³ Poster II, ‘Seminaria Mindfulness,’ seeks to encapsulate the creative synthesis for academic, artistic and poetic criteria by capturing the synthesis of the study harmoniously through its art and scholarship. In order to determine the poster contents, another cycle of heuristic phases was necessary—from immersion in the data to incubation and explication.

Reviewing the stories of my co-researchers, their individuality and also their commonality of experience was a vital step. The common experience of connectedness—a strong feature in the themes of self-realisation and meaningfulness, and with associated events that were energising and transformative—convinced me that the poster would do it. I knew it must be consistent with the question evoked by my Camino walk (how its ‘well of being’ could create such wellbeing), and the energy experienced by my body that I recognised when meeting the seminar poetic form at first light that March morning. The creativity of the heuristic process, that includes taking questions into sleep and being open upon waking to receive and process anything of relevance, required patience.

One morning with the crystal clarity of a Tora dawn (see Figure 4), came a diamond image. With its colour-graduated sequence, I saw and heard the words, ‘From alpha to omega’; its interiority irradiating the crystal-clear light of cognition, akin to neural pathways in which transformative consciousness occurs. I heard the echo of co-researchers’ lines. Among them:

I’m weaving the unconscious and conscious minds together within that lemniscate, allowing for the miraculousness of my unconscious mind to give me gifts. (Mikaela)

⁵³ The poster continues to resonate for the author and, anecdotally, for others who reference it.

Returning to my research journals, kept as integral elements of this inquiry, certain entries were now helpful in the content formation. As follows, these are self-explanatory.

From practising *seminaria* mindfulness new connections were forged. Through the constellation of the word form, each creator experienced meaningfulness, more or less revelatory depending on circumstance and depth of connectedness. Reflecting on the whole experience, gratitude is strong for the unanticipated 'grace points.' In hindsight they dovetail perfectly; in advance, ask only for attentiveness, with trust between the signs—mindful of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's, 'It is only with the heart that one can see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye.' And of the ear, most inner sounding remains private, as Janet Frame (1995, p. 97) profoundly shared; 'I know there is a moment when sound slips down the torn lining of itself into silence, is carried unheard and secret in its own pocket' (Journal entry, June 8, 2016)

The entry point: descending dusty into Santiago 8th June, 2012 where the inner voice spoke earnestly that the purpose of my Camino, now conquered *sans* blister, was a metaphor for my next thesis. Twelve days later inside the Great Pyramid: an inner sounding and outer resonance—fusion of 'I am' and 'All is.' In its wake, around dawn on 9th March, at the Alamandria course when the seminar poetic form presented itself to me as if on the wings of morning light, I felt free, whether or not, to heed its call. (Journal entry, April 18, 2013).

Denise Levertov's (1987) poem, 'Variation on a theme by Rilke,' epitomises that introduction to *seminaria*:

A certain day became a presence to me;
there it was, confronting me—a sky, air, light:
a being. And before it started to descend
from the height of noon, it leaned over
and struck my shoulder as if with
the flat of a sword, granting me
honor and a task. The day's blow
rang out, metallic—or it was I, a bell awakened,
and what I heard was my whole self
saying and singing what it knew: I can.

Through the following creative synthesis, then, I have sought to capture the essence of the nature and being of *seminaria* mindfulness as experienced by the co-researchers and myself. The joy of eudaimonic wellbeing, a transformative process from engaging with this *seminaria* word form that lemniscates between the conscious and subconscious, the inner and the outer, in a manner of mindfulness that combines movement and stillness. I recognised how Hammarskjöld's words mirrored my experience:

The 'mystical experience.' Always: here and now—in that freedom which is one with distance in that stillness which is born of silence. But—this is a freedom in the midst of action, a stillness in the midst of other human beings. The mystery is a constant reality to him who, in this world, is free from self-concern, a reality that grows peaceful and mature before the receptive attention of assent. (Hammarskjöld, 1964, p. 108)

In reference to Hammarskjöld, my next question was, What about those, though, who *are* stressed with self-concern? The co-researchers had mentioned points of personal–professional stress and described situations where it was ameliorated by the mindfulness of seminaria.

You know. . . I solved the problem. Sometimes I found that happened. I'd start off . . . and as I wrote, it felt less . . . you know, that was what that did, or else it was just a way to show [me] 'Well, you don't actually have to worry about it.' And I remember distinctly thinking about that. Then it only had to flow . . . So it flowed on, and at last, question mark, meaning what is meant? That problems are solved; It really should be simple; And it is you know; What problems? No more. (Maree)

It was all very quick and it led me to the root of the problem. (Hope)

As earlier explained, the symbol for infinity, simple and profound; the triangle, ancient Egyptian symbol for fire, two placed together creating a diamond, evocative of the seminaria 'mirroring' process that participants found so enlightening; and the way words can effect new meaning in different combinations. The self-realisation resulting from meaningfulness created an opening for new possibilities—pathways that were not just neural and physical but 'sparked across,' heartwarmed by a 'feeling life' at the centre.

[If] I think about that almost neurologically, the patterning is the way it comes out the first time, but when I reverse it, I get, like, all these new brain connections and so I never know what magic might happen in those. (Mikaela)

Thus inspired, I journaled the following seminaria towards finding a creative synthesis:

Would you
Teach me how
Seminar Form works
Lemniscating energy
Service to others
Yourselves found
Enriched.

6.7 Creative synthesis

SEMINARIA MINDFULNESS

What do we know about

1) seminaria?
27-syllable 7-line poetry construct
Seminar Form/Verse
J-P Linde, (1988/2013)
Aquinas (1225-1274)
Argumentum
Steiner (1861-1925)
7 life processes
Scharmer (2009)
Theory-U, presencing

2) mindfulness?
Paying attention in a particular way on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)

What is the essence of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice?
Three mindfulness axioms
Intention (volitional will)
Attention (focused cognition)
Attitude (open, equanimity, positivity)
Simultaneously engaged
Three ways of knowing

Heuristic Inquiry
Moustakas (1990, 1994)
Teachers and school leaders
Who were mindfulness meditators
Practised the mindfulness of seminaria (TMOs)
15-20 minutes daily for three weeks

Co-researchers found TMOs

- * Surprising
- * Calming
- * Grounding
- * Opens awareness
- * Refreshing
- * Purposeful
- * Transformative
- * Creatively insightful
- * Changes energy flow
- * Accessible quick easy
- * Fulfilling
- * Suspends time
- * Mysterious
- * Connecting – Self/Other/Nature/the Great Mystery

**Vitality Self-Realisation
Meaningfulness**
Eudaimonic/Subjective/Flourishing

WELLBEING

Thank you
Jens-Peter
Your seminar gift
I shall tenderly safeguard
That others may find
Creative
Insights

Building a bridge to the theory while walking across one step at a time

Investigating principles of a practice-based research

SOCIO-COGNITIVE
(Langer, 2009)

CONTEMPLATIVE
(Forn, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2009; Zappone, 2009, 2018)

SOCIO-POETIC
(dos Santos & Gauthier, 2015; Curtis & Meager, 2019)

**The Word
In the World
A World in the Word
Know Seminaria's form
Transformational
Potential
At work.**

“What it does is gives us a tiny Velux window you can open to let some light in...”
MURRAY
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Applications

- * Observational/Phenomenological
- * Recording events
- * Contemplative Enquiry
- * Reflective practice
- * Processing your feelings
- * Solving Dilemmas
- * Child study
- * Conversational
- * ‘Bookending’ your day
- * Planning ahead

Could TMOs add to empirically supported mindfulness benefits?
e.g. Calmness, clarity, concentration (Welsh & Shapiro, 2006)
Focus (Moore & Malinowski, 2009)
Cognitive flexibility (Siegel, 2007)
Boosts to working memory (Jha et al., 2010)
Stress reduction (Hoffman et al., 2010; Williams, 2010; Farb et al., 2012)
Self-care to prevent burnout (Gaymer, 2017; Shapiro & Carlson, 2009)
Positive teacher-student relationships; fosters resilience (Jennings et al., 2011)
Trauma-sensitive mindfulness (Britton, 2014; Burrows, 2018; Lindahl et al., 2017)

Wellbeing

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE & THE LANGUAGE OF EMPOWERMENT

The MINDFULNESS of SEMINARIA
Art of Socio-poetic Transformation

walking-wording-thinking integration

Flinders University / Inspiring Achievement
© Gaylene Denford-Wood / Teachers' Seminaria Mindfulness / gaylenedw1@gmail.com

Figure 16. Poster, seminaria mindfulness, a creative synthesis

6.8 Summary: Glancing back, taking stock before the final frontier

With the creative synthesis came a sense of completion. I knew that the study's core was intact when, waking one morning, an image of a golden, multifaceted container surrounded by light shone before me, and I heard the words, 'It's entelechy is complete.' I understood, although the word was not in my vocabulary and I had to check:

Entelechy, from the Greek *télos* meaning goal, and *échein*, 'to have.' Something abstruse from Aristotle: A distinction between the generally understood version of entelechy meaning one's potential, and Aristotle's version shading over into potential fulfilled. (Paul West, A Fifth of November, 2001. 1) a realisation or actuality 2) (in vitalist philosophy) a vital agent or force directing growth and life. www.dictionary.com)

Feeling the creative synthesis (or at least its heuristic process) validated, a 'synonym' search for entelechy found:

Being, birth, body, childbirth, confinement, delivery, development, entity, evolution and a definition: (Aristotle) the state of something that is fully realised, actuality as opposed to potentiality. *A hope that progressed from possibility to actuality* [my emphasis] (www.thesaurus.net).

Hadn't I felt my role akin to that of a 'midwife'? The feeling of inner completion, whilst deeply affirming, marked the start of the most challenging reach of this pilgrimage: A tension was building between my internal certainty and a perceived outer need for further validity. A reminder by Braud and Anderson (1998, p. 214) was timely: that, with such issues of (self) trustworthiness in heuristic inquiry, there is a broader discussion taking place that includes 'facets of body, emotion, spirit, community, and creative expression,' in addition to intellect. 'Each of these facets supplies clues and suggestions about validity' (p. 214). I recognised that the tension that had arisen was caused by my avoidance of what Sela-Smith (2002) identifies as integral to authentic HI, that is: 'free-fall surrender to the process' and 'report[ing] personal, subjective experience' (p. 70).⁵⁴ Apart from the Rudie characterisation, I knew that I had become content to hide behind the coherence of co-researcher narratives in the way Sela-Smith identifies as 'creat[ing] a distraction from the [researcher's] internal process' (p. 70). So acknowledging that the 'golden container' and other significant 'signposts' were integral to the researcher narrative encouraged me to include them.

⁵⁴ Her review of 28 research documents claiming to follow Moustakas' heuristic method, found only 3/28 were totally authentic (2002).

However, something more was asking to be extracted and learnt from this post-synthesis process. Seeking to hold the HI process lightly, I cycled sensitively back through its phases, helped by the mindfulness of seminaria and all the ‘free-fall surrender’ I could muster, to discover a pattern of such binary tensions at seminal crossroads throughout my life. One example: even knowing from the age of nine I would become a teacher, when it came to enrolling at the college of education, I stalled, questioning whether it was enough to trust inner certainty, and thus spent an anxious time looking for rational explanation. Pacing the banks of the River Avon in search of ‘rationality,’ armed with pages of argument as insufficient evidence, I eventually noticed how a stick carried in the current would touch the left bank and then the right, a metaphor for the inclusive validity of both. (In this case, action proved stronger than words. A month-late interview with principals Jack Mann and Jean Herbison concluded with invitational graciousness that remains with me to this day.)

Now I grew inspired by other heuristic researchers, notably Conlan (2004), Hiles (2001a), and Sela-Smith (2013), whose heuristic processes add a validity phase to the traditional six, with recourse to Moustakas (1990, p. 32) himself, who states, ‘The question of validity is one of meaning.’ Co-researchers who took up my invitation to review the explicated findings affirmed their meaningfulness, thereby strengthening the enquiry’s internal frame of reference. As Worth (2012, p. 46) posits, ‘In order to understand another person’s experience, engagement and empathy are important as only the owner of the experience can validly provide a portrayal.’ Harnessing a new transpersonal appreciation of what it means to work harmoniously with the dichotomous (intuitive and rational) signposts in relation to the research question, I now seek their harmonious synthesis in Chapter Seven.⁵⁵

The explicit content of a theory fails to account for the guidance it affords to future discoveries . . . (Polanyi, 1966, p. 1)

⁵⁵ I was cognisant of Mikaela’s discovery, ‘[tying] the two parts together beautifully,’ and Gordon’s words: ‘So in letting go, the possibility of transcendence arises’ (in 4.6 and 4.4, respectively).

Chapter seven Discussion, implications, future directions, conclusion

Building a bridge to the theory while walking across one step at a time

7.1 Overview

In this final chapter, I discuss the findings that informed the creative synthesis of the last chapter and their implications and significance for teachers and educational leaders. I propose some future directions for the mindfulness of seminaria. Possible limitations of this study and its methodology are addressed. Finally, I provide a summary of the study and its conclusion.

Two points should be noted here. First, some co-researcher narrative extracts have been necessarily revisited, but, like overlapping diamond facets, light reflects differently from their surfaces. Second (for flexibility), the words 'participant' and 'co-researcher' are used interchangeably.

7.2 Discussion of the findings

The main findings are now discussed in turn, in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter two. Discovering that not all of the literature I reviewed in Chapter Two was actually needed once the findings were extracted (and due to the elements of creativity, flow and wellbeing, for example), I turned to some new areas of literature (Edwards, 1999; MacDonald, 2016; Robinson, 2011; as well as applied research from the International Society for the Quality of Life [ISQOLS]), to help me explicate and discuss these findings, namely that:

(A) TMoS revealed a novel form of mindfulness

What made it novel, exactly, was not only its form and process (Linde, 1989, 2013), or the participants' experiential outcomes, but that it matched what Seamon (1987) identifies is present in the best phenomenological work: it 'breaks people free from their usual recognitions and moves them along new paths of understanding' (p. 19). Indeed, they valued the surprising way that this phenomenon could help them find quick accessibility to another way of seeing and being, supporting dos Santos and Gauthier's (2013) finding that the very nature of the sociopoetic in a research context is considered to be organically self-generating.

Not all participants experienced *immediate* accessibility of seminaria as a novel form of mindfulness, however. In his own words, one explained how,

Initially [I] tried to write seminaria like a haiku which didn't suit the overall balance of the poem . . . once I began to resolve that . . . I experienced other tensions . . . technical questions . . . my vocabulary . . . finding the words . . . the outer experience.

Working through these initial challenges, however, took him to the next level of challenge and new appreciation:

Then, as I moved in . . . how I experience any spiritual practice I engage in, it took me to my limit, to my boundary . . . As a new practice, I found I was often experiencing that boundary as a tension between heart and head, staying with the stillness of the inquiry, so opening up to something from beyond and the need to interpret that and put it into words.

Another, too, explained how even though

The syllable nature of it . . . was easy and the mirroring . . . the . . . difficult aspect was the sequential start-to-finish progression . . . to give each line a quality in itself. I got into the headspace of struggling with the logistics of it.

His solution (as the written guidelines recommended), was to:

[Just] start writing (2, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 2), and they just poured out, and then looking back, the accidental nature, the beauty, the coincidental nature!

It would seem important, therefore, when beginning seminaria practice, to focus, as the participants had been encouraged (Appendix E), on fun, creativity and wordplay, with little recourse to theory, until the initial form is mastered.

One co-researcher postulated:

I think it . . . opens up new possibilities 'cause you do rearrange the sequence but you rearrange the sequence in a form . . . in a logical form again.

When I questioned whether she felt 'logical form' was reasoned left-brain activity, and that she seemed to be implying that it preceded another happening, she responded, *[R]ight brain. Yeah! I'm thinking it probably ties the two parts together beautifully.* This was of vital importance for her because:

I've spent . . . years now attempting to be logical and that's quite hard for me. I'm actually wanting a space to allow spontaneity.

Her spontaneous discovery of profoundness that TMoS can get her 'close to the Great Mystery', she declared, as 'lovely.' Other participants too, reported a distinct sense of left- and right-brain activity

related to seminaria. Although subsidiary to the point they were elaborating at the time, it suggests a relationship to four of the five skills identified in left-/right-brain activity identified by artist researcher, Betty Edwards (1999)—perception of: edges, spaces, relationships, and the whole or gestalt (p. xviii). Drawing on the neuroscience discoveries of Roger Sperry (1913–1994), Edwards had found a way to gain access to changing brain function, generally found to be ‘left-mode’ because of the dominance of language.

At first impression, TMoS appeared left-mode language-based, while Edwards’ focus, was the right-mode art of drawing, but it was a curious connection to be explored. The clue was in the shifts from left to right evidenced by co-researcher descriptions and intuitive responses. As Edwards (1999) observes, ‘Intuitively, . . . see[ing] the link to other activities and the possibility of seeing things differently by learning to access R-mode at conscious level’ (p. xx). This made me question whether the nature and being of seminaria has an inherent capacity to foster this cognitive change, given that 100 per cent of the co-researchers had had discoveries of the ‘light bulb’ kind while practising it. Was the process of TMoS, despite its preoccupation with the medium of words, perhaps more akin to a novel form of ‘diamond drawing’? As Edwards (1999) states, ‘In short, in the process of learning to draw, one also learns to control (at least to some degree) the mode by which one’s own brain handles information . . . [which] explain[s] [the appeal of her work] to individuals from . . . diverse fields’ (p. xx). This sparked my interest in whether seminaria could be such a catalyst to access right-mode creativity?

While mastering the pattern of syllabification, participants did value the playful approach I had emphasised when teaching them the process. It was to avoid complexity that might mar spontaneity or limit them to a logical brain ‘getting it right,’ as creativity researcher, Cropley (2015), cognitive researcher, Arrowsmith-Young (2012) and neuroplasticity researcher, Doige (2011), all affirm. Having discovered the value of this in the immersion phase and designed the study accordingly, it was reinforced by this finding. That, in the teaching of TMoS—to work with the intuitive mind that Einstein (in McGilchrist, 2009) claimed, is our sacred gift that the rational mind, as its faithful servant, supports.

It was likely that the playful aspect allowed the novel quality of TMoS to flourish, as also found by what Langer (2009) attributes to the cognitive elements of engagement, production and novelty

seeking. This, she says, is what mindfulness is about—an open mind, new ways of doing things, noticing, paying attention, having fun.

‘Mindful learning,’ as she prefers to call the sociocognitive type of mindfulness, focuses strictly on the cognitive processes involved and the commensurate creativity that may, as a result, arise. This helps explain why, when the participants engaged with TMoS in noncontemplative situations (to ameliorate their stress in traffic or when travelling through airports between demanding commitments, as two, respectively, reported), they still experienced very positive results such as Langer (2009) attributes to sensorial awareness in the present moment.

This study therefore supports the findings of Langer (2000, 2009) on the importance of novel forms of mindfulness for eliciting creativity—in the form one co-researcher deemed: *([A] companionable . . . way of dialoguing with the self which is rich and nourishing (see 4.7)*, and highlighting what three of them declared as ease of access to its creativity (relative to collage or painting). Capacity to access their own creativity is important for teachers and leaders. It supports the view of teacher educator, Gibbs (2006, p. ii), ‘that effective teachers seek to create,’ and of Robinson (2011), who deems it vital in developing different approaches to leadership, teaching and professional development. Arguably, this is more critical today in what human-rights specialist and researcher MacDonald (2016) describes as a climate of ‘league table, test-and-teach approach to education which is increasingly the norm’ (p. 8).

Finding (A) supports cognitive (and sociocognitive) mindfulness (Langer, 1989, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2009) and contemplative mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2005; Kühlewind, 2008; Zajonc, 2009) as central to this exploration. Strengthened in this finding by frequent searches of the literature that found no examples of a contemporary mindfulness practice attaching such importance to a self-generated poetic form, its function and effects, my first main finding of TMoS as a novel form of mindfulness was reinforced.

(B) TMoS supported teachers and leaders as reflective practitioners

The mindfulness of this study, both cognitive (Langer, 2009) and contemplative (Zajonc, 2009), illuminates the meaning of the reflective practitioner. Defined in Chapter two (2.4) it involves teachers’ ability to perceive what is subtle, complex and important, of which numerous instances were discovered by the co-researchers practising TMoS. Thereby, fresh empirical understanding was

brought to the notion of teachers' participatory action research that Gibbs (2006, p. 239) reflects as 'a practical way for practitioners to bridge between theory and practice, and to advance their understandings and practice in teaching.' Co-researchers Gordon and Olivia's collaborations on understanding student needs, their semina explorations as the basis of (nonstatistical) student report writing, and co-researchers Murray and Gordon's semina on student behavioural issues were found to be clear examples. As co-researcher Gordon explained, by leading to deeper understanding of the children, semina is changing the way he teaches and is able to respond to their needs.

This finding coheres strongly with the spontaneous, intuitive performance (Schon, 1983, p. 49) of 'knowing-in-action' and—noting the mindfulness nexus—'reflection-in-practice' (p. 68) as desirable, value-laden teacher attributes that Gibbs (2006) elaborates in a 21st Century context of what it means to be a teacher.

Teachers who used TMoS reflectively found it insightful for their cycles of planning (in this study primarily, for student need), and supporting of the generative quality of teaching emphasised by action researcher, Jean McNiff (2013). While classroom action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007; McNiff, 2013) typically involves the use of qualitative, interpretive modes of inquiry and 'best evidence' to help teachers improve their own practices to further facilitate student learning—away from the classroom, in contemplation of the day passed and the next to come—the nature of the action research cycle for increasing numbers of teachers tends to include another component: contemplation, as Denford-Wood (2004a), and Leitch and Day (2006) have found.

The contemplative, in this context, matches the view of transpersonal psychologist Hart (2014) that the 'contemplative simply includes the natural human capacity for knowing through silence, looking inward, pondering deeply, beholding, witnessing the contents of our consciousness, and so forth. These approaches cultivate an inner technology of knowing and thereby a technology of learning and pedagogy' (pp. 29–30). Used synonymously by many for the practice of mindfulness and meditation (Albrecht, 2016), what the contemplative offers education, claims Hart (2014), 'is not a different set of knowledge so much as an expanded approach to knowing' (p. 16). This study of TMoS supported teachers and leaders as reflective practitioners by revealing another (and novel) means to this expanded approach to knowing.

Further, this finding supports the work of Korthagen (2004) who asserts, ‘teacher education must begin by exploring the teaching self’ (p. 80). The many instances of self-discovery co-researchers revealed in this exploration of TMoS support the findings of Korthagen and Vasalos (2005), whose study of core reflection is highlighted as a means to enhance professional development. Therefore, the reflective value of practising the mindfulness of seminaria supports the earlier work of those cited, including Langer’s (2009) ‘mindful learning,’ in strengthening teachers’ capacity for reflective practice.

Finding (B) provides a prospective addition to professional learning in general, and to the ‘teacher as reflective practitioner’ in particular—a means to access deeper levels of student need, how to provide for it, and, as well, a personal–professional path to ‘know yourself’ that Zajonc (2009, p. 46) terms ‘a schooling for experiencing life from the inside.’

(C) TMoS embodied three mindfulness axioms and three domains as ways of knowing

That TMoS was found in this study to contain three key axioms of mindfulness (intention, attention and attitude) supports the findings of Shapiro et al. (2006) and McCown and Micozzi (2012) who explain these as integral. As Shapiro and Carlson (2009, p. 8) state, ‘they are interwoven aspects of a single cyclic process and occur simultaneously, the three elements informing and feeding back into each other.’ First, intention is understood as a measure of volitional will to begin and continue a process. It is the integral first step, linked with purpose. Of the three axioms, it holds the least level of consciousness in human awareness, ranging in strength from a fleeting wish to rigorous resolve (Bacchus, Denford-Wood, & Hancox, 2002), and reflects the challenge inherent in establishing and maintaining any practice. As systems researcher Meadows (2008, p. 16) states, ‘the least obvious part of the system, its function or purpose, is often the most crucial determinant of the system’s behaviour.’

Attention, the second axiom, means that while paying attention, the co-researchers were present in the moment to internal and external experience, suspending judgment and observing the changing field of thoughts, feelings and sensations as they occur. Shapiro and Carlson (2009) articulate it as sustained, concentrated, and discerning in order to develop a balanced way of being that illuminates experience in its fullness as it occurs.

Attitude, the third axiom, involves the feeling qualities the participants brought to their attention. This study's finding supports the view of Shapiro et al. (2006), who found that the tacit state of 'bare awareness' associated with mindfulness includes the possibility of observing with cool distance, even antipathy, or rather from a position of 'innate stability where compassion, openheartedness and peace for others and self, reside,' as Albrecht (2016, p. 46) describes it. Essentially, an attitude of kindness and compassion to oneself and others is the goal even in circumstances contrary to deeply held wishes or expectations.

The second half of this finding, that TMoS incorporates the three domains central to human functioning—cognitive, affective, and volitional activity—supports the view of educationist Meyer (cited in Jürgens, 2016) on the value of being open to experience the connectedness of thinking, feeling, and doing. It also mirrors Sherwood's (2008) view of their healthy balance in the body, with 'the heart infusing and softening the thinking processes and the thinking process lighting up the heart in a dance of mutual support within the body' (p. 4). As the participants variously described, the practice of seminaria embodied all three. It required the focusing of an idea to be expressed in words; then, an emotional response to its content connected cognitive and affective processing; and third, the active will was in the written documenting, especially the decision and action of the fourth line (explained by Linde: see above, 2.5.1). The coherence of the three axioms and the three domains (as three ways of knowing—through head, heart and hand), in the words of one participant:

- Seminaria, it's a physical experience;
- it's words as a form, so you're using your intellect. And;
- the whole feeling aspect so . . .
- it's a whole-being experience . . . because you're using different parts of yourself.

This finding gives TMoS credence as an authentic mindfulness approach with the possibility for positive, holistic (three ways of knowing) benefits. It supports the findings of traditional mindfulness researchers, Brown and Ryan (2003), Kabat-Zinn (2009b), and Shapiro and Carlson (2009): To *practise* mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and surrounding environment, nonjudgmentally, that is, with the attitude of an impartial witness.

(D) TMoS ‘worked’ without special beliefs, breathing techniques, body positions or mantras

Finding (D) highlights the simplicity of TMoS, suggesting its practicality, applicability, and inclusivity for a cross-section of educators (and others), no matter whether their orientation is faith based, spiritual, secular or otherwise.

Historically, pathways to experience wholeness, wisdom and enlightenment were taught by the major religious and spiritual traditions who had developed the principles and techniques to achieve these states (Plante, 2010). The origins of mindfulness in contemplative practices go back thousands of years and include Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Stoicism, some of which are religious traditions; others, not. In the context of current mindfulness research and practice, as Beach (2014) points out, whether secular or religious or spiritual or philosophical—or of irrelevance to define—no one tradition has a monopoly on the human condition.

Further, as the relationship between science and contemplative practices establishes a growing evidence base (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2014; Singer, 2014), a synthesis of mindfulness approaches is universally and readily available through a plethora of practices in health, health therapy, organisational and private practice (American Mindfulness Research Association (AMRA), 2018; Black, 2014; Oxford Mindfulness Centre, 2018).

Despite new knowledge and understanding of mindfulness breaking down religious barriers, as articulated by leading mindfulness researcher, Kabat-Zinn (2014), there are people for whom particular beliefs are important and others for whom the perception of belief-holding means that certain streams of mindfulness meditation are not of interest to them. Polanski (2015, pp. 21–22), however, evidences a ‘meeting of the minds’ between the neuroscience of psychology and a cultural context that is ‘trending away’ from organised religion to a ‘modern spirituality’—in accord with the context of this present study in which participants made mention of their practice of TMoS in nonaffiliated spiritual terms. In each case, I took the view that any practice exploring the ontological ‘nature and being’ of a mindfulness process may be deemed spiritual in the sense of (co-)researcher need, as Anderson (1998, p. 90) puts it, to set the stage for the phenomenon ‘to show up.’

What else, then, in evidence of this Finding (D), does this study tell us about the nature and being of seminaria? Engaging mindfully with this simple, inclusive practice involves movement, then inner

stillness, allowing the space for something new to arise. Importantly, although it does not require special beliefs, breathing techniques, sitting and other body positions or the use of mantras, it opens up awareness of a new space. This space between movement and stillness, between calm contemplation and the creativity caused through writing engagement and meaning-making, it would appear, supports a capacity for heightened sensitivity and the ability to observe and name the contents of consciousness (Kühlewind, 2008; Zajonc, 2009). This experience of TMoS fits Albrecht's (2016, p. 162) definition of creativity as 'aesthetic, artistic or spiritual [which] may also be material.'

In short, this finding illuminates the unique nature and gift of seminaria for people who are comfortable working with language and who may not relate to other traditional forms of mindfulness. While there already exists a multitude of mindfulness awareness practices that have been used with teachers, such as the well-known mindfulness of the breath (Kabat-Zinn, 2014), these are predominantly sitting practices that take time, effort, practice and preparation, described in some contexts by Dunne (2004) as 'systematic,' 'technical' and 'manualised' with their set practices, timelines and developmental trajectories. They can lack appeal for teachers as yet another thing to be squeezed into an overfull schedule, whereas the simple accessibility of TMoS's word form may appeal as more directly relevant to the content and context of a teaching day. Further, as Kabat-Zinn (2003, p. 149) maintains, the 'radical, transformative essence' in mindfulness is at risk of being lost when there is too much focus on clinical change measurement.

Even in this qualitative study, some people could perceive the instruction for seminaria as technical and linear with its prescriptive, numerical (2, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 2) formula which is simply the precision of syllables and lines required for its true form. *Engagement* with the instruction by the co-researchers revealed its simple accessibility to an integration of movement, emotions, intuitions and cognition (4.8).

An assumption here is that by being a teacher or leader, one is comfortable and capable working with written language. There may be exceptions. Some teachers may shun the use of words in preference for other mindfulness content. Additionally, someone with a learning disability, a writing problem, or even a fear of writing may not find seminaria an attractive proposition. Or, even if attractive, it may prove too difficult. Considering the participants in this study used English (their predilection for its expression was a criterion for participating), the question must be asked: Could

TMoS be used in any language or code? It includes acknowledgement of co-researcher Maree's unexpected seminaria code (5.4).

Further, seminaria may provide a vehicle for those persons for whom traditional mindfulness approaches are unsuitable due to preexisting medical conditions or those whose mindfulness experience has triggered previous trauma (Britton, 2014; Burrows, 2018; Lindahl et al., 2017; Shapiro, 1992b). As pointed out (in the Prelude), Britton (2014, p. 13) warns that 'without adequate knowledge of the range of possible meditation-related experiences, there is a risk that in the secular applications—where meditation training is divorced from its traditional . . . social, and cultural contexts—these experiences could be misunderstood, pathologized, or improperly managed.'

In fact, Burrows (2018, p. 5) cites Farias and Wikholm (2015) who take the view that:

Meditation was designed not to make us happier but to radically change our sense of self and perception of the world. Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that some will experience negative effects such as disassociation, anxiety and depression.

There are some vulnerable people for whom certain mindfulness techniques are contraindicated as Burrows (2018, p. 5) explains. Citing a meditation teacher Burrows points out how 'unusual breathing techniques can upset the delicate balance of the systems in the body' (pp. 71–72), and panic attacks can arise from 'a combination of preexisting vulnerabilities and the trigger of focusing on the breath' (p. 52), a reason that mindfulness meditator and teacher Huxter (2014) recommends screening for their preexistence. Similarly, Burrows (2018) advises that people 'with asthma or other breathing difficulty or problem . . . may not feel safe using their breath as an 'anchor' into the present moment as [used] in many traditional mindfulness activities' (p. 72), whereas in the poetic practice of seminaria, breathing is not an element of focus.

These people, therefore, are indicative of those who would benefit from a different mindfulness approach such as TMoS. Focusing first on the act of writing mindfully, it provides a focused, purposeful outlet, and in the case of stress relief, useful for marshalling agitated energy constructively into a word form that can act (as the participants found) as a vehicle for change. Two described their stress release using TMoS on their devices while travelling—describing their results respectively as 'so calming' and '[getting there] in remarkably good shape.'

How the change typically occurred for them when TMoS was applied more contemplatively was explained explicitly and metaphorically by four participants respectively:

When I do . . . seminaria practice . . . from there, on the collar bones, it opens out and if my head is overworked, then it releases all that tension physically from the back of my head. . . I feel the backspace, and before I write, in the third-eye area, often I'll get a buzzing or a sensation . . . like a spiralling . . . on my [palms] too . . . incredible heat and warmth, like the healing energy comes through.

[S]truggling with my intellect . . . I go into a meditative place with seminaria . . . then the vision comes, whether . . . words or picture.

The value of being returned to the body.

Seminaria has been the tiny Velux window I open to let some light in and close again, once or twice each day . . . some sunshine let in from out of the cloud.

Considering the clinically cool, aloof streams of mindfulness that Oman (2015) and Coholic (2011) deem a technical spirituality with its scientific need to be secular, the soteriological (faith-based) context, inclusive of cultural and spiritual diversity, has become marginalised. Coholic (2011) calls for a return of mindfulness to its holistic roots.

With respect to mantras—a word or phrase used in meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Kuhlewind, 2008)—seminaria is conceivably suitable for such use, or as a centring prayer, despite no participant suggesting these. Although TMoS is free from traditional mindfulness techniques (as outlined), as an inclusive practice, it would seem equally suitable for secular and soteriological use because of the embodied, conscious connectedness it fosters, about which more is elaborated and discussed in findings (E) and (J).

(E) TMoS functioned as a diamond-shaped receptacle with midline transition point and mirroring device

Not only did participants value the diamond shape that the poem made on their page or screen, it became a metaphor for a receptacle (vessel or container) in which to 'hold' thoughts and feelings for 'sorting' (see 1.1.3). Somewhat akin to a Jungian schema of a container as the self-image of wholeness,⁵⁶ and in seminaria, a new interpretation into which they placed their words, their consciousness, their embodiment of mindfulness, including elements of (D) above; and which was conducive to its function.

Whilst a poem provided with the participants' instructions was diamond shaped [Appendix E], it was by no means emphasised as needing to be arranged that way, nor was it an expectation. In fact, the

⁵⁶ See Chalquist (2007) for explanations of Jungian terms.

easiest way to write seminaria is flat against the vertical left margin (page or screen), and both formats were noted in their journals. Therefore, mindful of the 'diamond vehicle' (vajrayana) described by Rosch (2007) as a final historical form of Buddhist wisdom, it was with a sense of coincidence and curiosity that I noted the participants' preference for the diamond shape.

This finding supports the notion of a 'container' considered in the Jungian context (Sabini, 2005) of a well-contained and safely held (alchemical) process (as explained in 1.1.3), and which, as discussed in finding (C) above, embraces the three domains of human functioning (Jürgens, 2016; Sherwood, 2008).

Further, the centre of the diamond poem was found to be a transitional place or crossing point where sometimes an energetic shift occurred in the participant's feeling or emotional focus as a result of working the poetic process. The resolution felt in the 'still point' of the diamond form was akin to Rosch's (2007) explanation of the Buddhist 'realization that natural awareness can be described as open, clear, fresh, a presence' (p. 260). Sometimes the transition in co-researchers' awareness occurred after the reflecting process; as one participant expressed, "when I rework them . . . to that real nugget in the centre."

This middle point in the poetic form I refer to in my own work as a crossing point of consciousness, congruent with what co-researchers identify as an awareness changing something in their understanding, supporting the findings of Brown and Ryan (2003) in terms of insight-producing effects. It highlights the importance of the middle space (line). What *was* the central heart of the poem, is now the last line. That is, it becomes the finishing point of reflection. When 'brought to the surface' in this way, it not only changes the shape of the poem from a diamond to a pyramid when written, but the co-researchers reported that it often evoked an 'Aha' moment (Frick, 1990) of self-realisation, that Randall and McKim (2008) deem part of the self-knowing continuum.

Whilst poetry in general (including sutras, koans, haiku, *Lectio Divina*, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, mantras, and Sufi texts, for example) has a long tradition and broad use in contemplative practice (Inayat-Khan, 2014; Janesick, 2016; Centre for Mindfulness, UC San Diego Center for Integrative Medicine, 2018), I found no examples of anything like seminaria in the contemporary literature within the field of mindfulness in teacher education. That is, of creating one's own poetic process in a physical format, and with effects on practitioners that one co-researcher deemed metaphysical (the science of things transcending what is physical or natural). In this study, the lived experiences were variously

identified as ‘illuminating,’ ‘transformative’ and ‘healing,’ as finding (G) below will elaborate (in this category of findings that pertain to the poetic form itself).

(F) TMoS incorporated a lemniscate movement as a symbol of revitalisation

Except with scant reference to Zajonc’s (2009) work (see 2.2), and the discovery from participant Gordon about Perlas’s use of it (4.5), there was no precedent, in the literature reviewed for this study, of the significance of the lemniscate, within the fields of mindfulness and teachers’ reflective practice, or of poetic form. Although I had discovered an energetic lemniscate movement in my own exploration of seminaria, and the topic was sometimes raised in conversation (Chapter four), it was the participants’ own living expressions of this phenomenon, tacit and explicit, that galvanised this finding (as symbolised in the creative synthesis, 6.7). Therefore, it is important to contextualise the lemniscate in light of this finding and the different ways it worked on the participants.

In 1655, it was English clergyman and mathematician John Wallis (1616–1703), credited (partially) with developing infinitesimal calculus, who devised the infinity sign later named by the mathematician Bernoulli ‘lēmnicus’ (Latin for ribbon), for its figure-eight-shaped curves. Though Wallis is credited with introducing the lemniscate symbol for infinity, its philosophical symbolism predates its mathematical origin, notably, for example, in early Tibetan rock carvings (Symbol Dictionary, 2018). Renaissance painter Raphael’s (1507) *The Deposition* shows the lemniscate structurally, as central to its Christian message. Symbolising the endless, infinite nature of energy is also the ouroboros, or infinity snake, depicted in early literature.

How the lemniscate form of movement revitalises has been variously studied and applied in different fields (Roth, Lindsay, & Zdorovetska, 2017). Water treatment in dairy farming and other water waste management, rhythmical massage in health therapy, the arts of movement, such as Tai Chi and Eurythmy—all are examples of where the rejuvenating movement of the lemniscate is integral to the effectiveness of the activity. ‘Tai Chi is often described as “meditation in motion,” but it might well be called “meditation in motion”’ (Harvard Women’s Health Watch, 2015). Burrows (2018), too, describes mindful movement with her students in a rhythmical, repeating, lemniscating exercise that calms, centres, grounds, and helps to balance and harmonise the right and left, and upper and lower parts of the body. However, I use the example of water here, as a natural element whose movements may more readily be observed than others.

Drawing on the discoveries of Schauberger (1885–1958) and Schwenk (1910–1986), and after experimenting with paths of vortices, ecologist John Wilkes developed the Virbela Flowforms for regenerating water in 1970. The rejuvenating activity of lemniscating water is based on discoveries of the repeating patterns found in nature and the endeavour to technically and effectively replicate the metamorphosis of its healthy structure to optimum levels for health (Roth et al., 2017). ‘In constant negotiation of equilibrium, water renders perceptible the hidden reality that is all around us through the repeating forms of its waves and ripples, in its innumerable reflections and cycles. It gives us life, and shows us chaos’ (Roth et al., 2017). Whilst these are demonstrably visible and measurable examples of the lemniscate, the following is not.

In his *Meditation as contemplative inquiry*, Zajonc (2009) conceptualises the lemniscate’s movement as one side for focused attention that after a period flows to the other side for open awareness. This ‘use’ of the lemniscate comes closest to what the co-researchers describe in their various depictions of it, which may define a change in conscious awareness as well as noticed presence of revitalisation.

[S]eminaria have been . . . expressing what’s inside of me but also reflecting to my inner being what I have expressed, like a lemniscate, the relationship between inner and outer.

If . . . I feel into that [lemniscate] gesture . . . what does it mean? . . . a weaving together . . . a bridging . . . a bringing up . . . into consciousness, isn’t it . . . the unconscious to conscious; the conscious into the unconscious . . . where it gets focused again. This is certainly quite exciting . . . because I haven’t thought of it like that.

I reviewed (in 2.2) how Zajonc’s (2009) approach to contemplative inquiry includes an inner path of slow lemniscating between focused attention and open attention, that he calls ‘cognitive breathing’ (p. 39), referring not to air but to inner light of the mind, (Lusseyran, 1998), that Moustakas explicates as the experience of touch (1990, pp. 60–61). Properly understood, Zajonc avers (2009, p. 40), contemplation is a selfless act of service in which one enters through a portal of humility and exits through one of gratitude; matching my finding in another study (Denford-Wood, 2014a), that teachers considered their mindfulness practice to be an act of service.

In terms of the subtlety that this notion of lemniscating can represent, it appears to reinforce Moustakas’ (1990, p. 15) point that ‘with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance.’ Thus finding (F) is a personal revitalisation with potential for flow into social revitalisation, as Fave and Bassi (2017) highlight.

(G) TMoS transformed challenging feelings via stress reduction

Practising the mindfulness of seminaria was found to ameliorate stressful feelings, which in this study includes references the participants made to feeling overwhelmed ‘when things were full-on and intense’, and to agitation, anxiety and worry. In this (even brief) state of awareness absolved from stress, experiencing deep peace is a ‘taste’ of possibility. Mindfulness teacher and researcher Ditrich (2017, p. 10) explains how, in the *diminishment* of human hindrances, restlessness and worry (explained as agitation, unrest, distraction, remorse and anxiety) is an indication that mindfulness and concentration have become fairly well established, and that these in turn, as the effects of one’s personal practice, are a precondition for wisdom and insight to occur.

Because all the co-researchers already practised various forms of mindfulness (see Appendix F) and their individual ways of practising seminaria varied greatly, stress relief attributable to seminaria is difficult to gauge. However, it appeared that whether it was used for quick problem-solving purposes, as earnest in-depth teaching reflections, and/or more meditatively, they were reported as valuable and positive. As Langer (2000) suggests, consciously noticing something new is enlivening, and may be as much of a health benefit as the contemplative practice of meditation. This may account for seminaria working well whether quick and relatively casual or in earnest contemplative practice.

Given that all co-researchers described how seminaria successfully transformed their feelings, and five of the six expressed intention to continue their practice, at least in situations where they found it immediately reduced stress or facilitated clarity, this finding suggests it as a helpful addition to the field of mindfulness approaches for teachers’ and educational leaders’ reflective practice and wellbeing.

Importantly, for a number of attributes of teacher wellbeing, such as self-care, resilience, stress reduction, calmness, clarity, concentration and focus, neuroscience has been able to establish a positive link with sustained mindfulness practices. Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011), Kabat-Zinn (2014) and Singer (2014) are among many reporting that research on neuroplasticity is beginning to explain relationships among length and quality of practice and developmental stages of meditators. Singer (2014) points out the need to consider how subtleties in mindfulness practices have been shown to affect attitudinal differences such as the development of compassion. This matters when

considering its potential for the wellbeing of the caring professions, as Shapiro et al. (2006) highlight, and is an important consideration for teachers and school leaders.

In light of this qualitative study in which the co-researchers have provided me with deeper and more nuanced understandings about the role of seminaria in transforming feelings, finding (G) appears to align with what is known about the attitudinal, emotional intelligence (Durie, 1998; Matthews, Roberts, & Zeidner, 2004; Rix, 2017) required for the caring professions. With reference to teachers and leaders, as New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) researcher Wylie (2014) indicates with her findings on a range of measures such as managing workload stress and slipping morale, primary and intermediate teachers and principals are stretched too thin on the job.

Considering, too, that poetry, as Burford (2018, p. 240) asserts, ‘can serve as a form of self-care and ritual’ that can keep one ‘grounded in a time [when] feelings of impotence, burnout and despair are all too common,’ it would seem that seminaria has a role to play in this aspect of self-care. (It must be noted here that whilst transformation of feelings is a finding for stress reduction, an overarching context for seminaria’s transformative nature that includes transcendence appears in the last finding, (K), below.)

(H) TMoS illuminated key differences between haiku and seminaria

Given the wide cultural appreciation of haiku (Arima, 2012), I concluded that, without knowledge of the nature and being of seminaria, there could be a tendency to conclude that they are more or less the same. Therefore, when three participants with experience of haiku went deeply into the process of seminaria, and were sufficiently aware to notice distinct and subtle differences—experientially rather than intellectually—their impressions were important for this finding. Illuminating the nature and being of each, they enhanced and reinforced my own understanding.

Within the broad suite of mindfulness approaches found in teacher education (Albrecht, 2016; Bernay, 2012; Burrows, 2011, 2013; Cefai & Cavioni, 2014), it is their similarity that is first recognised. Both haiku and seminaria are refined, syllabically defined poetic forms. Both include the notion of a threshold and transcendence (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Cobb, 2001; Janesick, 2016; Merrell-Wolff, 1994; Schnell & Pali (2013), that Childs (1998, p. 5) deems ‘jumping-off’ points. Haiku is a globally well-known tradition of seventeen syllables (but not exclusively, as Janesick [2016] and Raine [2016] point out). Seminaria, still obscure, always has twenty-seven syllables (Linde, 2013).

Yet even this last imperative must be questioned, given one co-researcher's example of profound discovery even when unwittingly transposing word and syllable numbers (4.9). It supports Eisner's (2004) view that there is no one legitimate way to make sense of things. How we perceive and represent (in this case, seminaria) affects our meaning-making. As he points out (p. 33), 'a novel as well as a statistical mean can enlarge human understanding.'

In essence, haiku reflects an already transcendent state of realised connection, whereas seminaria is a process that may take the writer to that place already 'reached' by haiku. Hence, differentiating them also illuminates their similarity. The following discussion renders the matter clear.

From teaching poetry I knew how haiku (which 'sings' of nature) is differentiated from 'senryu' (of human affairs), though at times the boundary between them can be unclear since human affairs are part of nature (Childs, 1998, p.6). Now, the three participants with experience added to what I had learned from the work of Cobb (2001), founder of the British Haiku Society, and New Zealand haiku specialist, Raine (2016). By expressing the differences they experienced between the nature and being of both haiku and seminaria from a mindfulness, as well as a teacher's, perspective, they proffer:

A haiku starts with a feeling and ultimately it stays with that. Seminaria is starting with a question and expanding out . . . and trying to put it onto a piece of paper.

A haiku starts in the inner and moves to the outer. A seminaria starts on the other side, but ultimately they're both aiming for . . . unity (nonduality). True haiku, the experience and . . . putting it to paper, are not separate. I can definitely see . . . seminaria, although it starts on a different side, is still aiming to break down the boundary or barrier between . . . subject and . . . object. I'd say the end point is the same but they start on different sides of the lemniscate.

Therefore, Haiku is by nature open-ended, almost unfinished, conveying nonduality, whereas seminaria as a construct was found by all co-researchers to be suitable for questing and questioning:

[If] there's a question in the first part, then an answer almost [always] comes in the second.

The words that came in response were used to 'mirror back' on the questing first half of the poem (see finding E); a meaning-making function antithetical to the spirit of haiku. Apart from their syllable count, an essential difference is that seminaria conclude with a meaningful gesture of closure, accentuated by the use of a full stop. Haiku in its essence is left open.

Reflecting on the degree to which participants' experiences, or the form of seminaria itself (compared with haiku), influences this finding, it is difficult to know, except that the participant with

the Zen background and the deepest detailed description of their differences was the one who predominantly used seminaria as a vehicle for questions and for questing. Another who differentiated them in binary terms of open and closed, incompleteness and completeness, revealed a plethora of seminaria applications.

To receive such distinctions that served to differentiate and further determine the nature and being of seminaria was a bonus—the purpose of this study being to help the researcher understand the phenomenon under exploration. Further, the finding supports Janesick (2016, p. 112), who argues that poetry is ‘a solid approach to contemplative inquiry.’

(I) TMoS was both physically grounding and led to a heightening of awareness

Whilst the participants’ descriptions in this situation supported my own general experience of practising TMoS, they revealed new and further (or differently) developed aspects (in respect of this finding) than I had hitherto known. Although I had found heightened awareness by practising seminaria, I did not experience it as being particularly physically grounding, unlike most of the participants who expressed appreciation of seminaria for that very characteristic:

[It] . . . connected me to a place of mindfulness.

I felt more centred and more grounded by the time I’d written the series of these.

Illuminatingly, I understood my self-consciousness for the first time.

That’s an opening of the self.

Co-researchers described the feelings they experienced in the body, explaining how the practice increased their inner awareness, including sensorial bodily awareness. Somatic experiences, such as those that Damasio (1991) might deem ‘markers,’ means simply that these inner and bodily experiences were associated with their emotional processing, and as a result of their discoveries it influences subsequent behaviour in relation to further practice. Again, this indicates in TMoS the embodiment of three ways of knowing, cognitive, affective and through active will (Jürgens, 2016; Sherwood, 2008). So practising seminaria had the effect of grounding, centring or calming, and with, as one participant described, *an enormous amount of awareness of the state of the body* and an opening up of the self. It seems significant that this form of poetry can elicit such bodily grounding and state of awareness.

This state of the human body, as reviewed in the literature on sociopoetics (2.6), is a source of knowledge as it explores the cognitive strength of one's senses, emotions, and gestures, as well as imagination, intuition and reasoning. As dos Santos and Gauthier (2013) further assert, the strength of sociopoetics is in its artistic creativity in learning, knowing, researching and providing human care. Janesick (2016) also affirms, '[New] ways of understanding experience can come from the use of poetry' (p. 112). She points to Bochner (2000), who deems the approach *poetic social science*; in essence, 'socio-poetic.'

How much the physical grounding and heightening of awareness reported as positive attributes of practising the mindfulness of seminaria is attributable to the sociopoetic nature of seminaria or to its construct is not clear. The design of this present study does not enable me to evaluate attribution. Sociologist Laurel Richardson (1997, 2000, 2007) writes extensively on the relationship between academic research and artistic inquiry, that poetry, 'built as it is on speech as an embodied activity touches both the cognitive and the sensory' (Richardson, 1997, p. 143). Because of the integrated nature of these factors, it may be impossible to determine, but it does seem that seminaria's form is phenomenologically significant for reasons discussed.

It was significant that seminaria appeared to foster embodiment, supporting the notions of Burrows (2018) and Buddhist academic and teacher Reginald Ray (2008, 2017), who also affirms 'embodiment is vital. Our body is our bridge to the present' (Ray, 2017, n. p.). The co-researchers' reportings of embodiment appeared synonymous with keeping intact a strong sense of selfhood in order to both achieve heightened awareness and to make meaningful and clear the connections. This finding also supports the view of mental health proponent and leader in mindfulness training Grant Rix (2017), who encourages 'establishing awareness in the body since the body is always present in the moment' (p. 124).

(J) TMoS was meaningful, fostered new meaning-making, connectedness and experiences of self-realisation

Meaning-making was a key finding, supporting Kühlewind's (2008) view that, when working mindfully, meditatively, with words and texts, and focusing attention on the feeling content of the whole text (in this case, poem), it is possible that out of this space a new meaning may shine forth or an image or words appear as a deeper or higher meaning. Co-researchers Hope and Gordon give such examples (in 4.4 and 4.5, respectively).

Shifts in awareness were associated with a renewed realisation or experience of connectedness with self, other/s, nature, or some greater source supporting the findings of Fisher et al. (2002) and Vaccarino et al. (2011). The coherence of this finding is that the meaning, the connectedness and the self-realisation together kindled vitality, expressed as a sense of feeling alive, akin to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) notion of 'flow,' and synonymous with subjective (eudaimonic) wellbeing, as described in OECD (2013).

Meaningfulness and new meaning-making was commonly found by all participants as soon as they adopted the process (as Chapter four depicts). At another level of meaningfulness, a participant described how the practice of seminaria evoked new self-realisation, that is, key self-knowledge in the form of new understanding.

Connectedness is exemplified by numerous explanations that include moments of self-awareness and sometimes self-realisation. The frequency and commonality of shifts in awareness were somewhat surprising, given the short (three-week) research time frame and the induction into a new practice. The shifts of awareness referred to here are those associated with renewed realisation or experience of connectedness with self, other/s, nature, or some source perceived to be greater than human consciousness, such as Fisher et al. (2002) and Vaccarino et al. (2011) define.

When the three elements that constitute finding (J) were searched in relation to their subjective wellbeing, it was important to understand exactly *how*. As one participant reported:

I get energy from it . . . the whole body . . . goes, 'Oh, good! . . . That feels exciting!' . . . I probably get a wriggle . . . that's a sense of energy and . . . I can sort of snuggle into it . . . in a chair or in bed and at times for me . . . [it] nourish[es] the inner self.

Many reports are given of bodily-felt energising, experienced as feeling a sense of vitality (inspired enthusiasm, discovery, joy, elation, and fulfilment contributing to a feeling of wholeness). These were common occurrences for the co-researchers, along with, or as a consequence of, experiencing self-realisation and meaningfulness. Therefore, an important aspect of seminaria's 'being-ness' was found to be wellbeing. That is, wellbeing as defined by the subjective wellbeing indicators in OECD (2013), explicated as eudaimonic, and commonly referred to as human flourishing (Huppert & So, 2011; Rix, Bernay, & Devcich, 2014).

As a central concept in Aristotelian ethics and political philosophy, eudaimonia was a term used for the highest human good. Ryan and Deci (2011) bring the term right up to date in its context of a

sense of self-realization and meaning in life, holistically, as that which Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2011) describe as natural, constructive and energising. This sense of wellbeing was reported in different ways by all of the co-researchers as a result of their work with TMoS. It supports Huppert and So's (2011) findings on human flourishing as feeling good and functioning effectively.

(K) TMoS was transformative with potential for 'Aha'/flow experience/existential profoundness

Although I had had some profound experiences with the practice myself, it was when all the participants reported differently, yet coherently, that seminaria's nature and being was transformative for them in some way, that it opened up and hugely increased my own understanding of the phenomenon. Their reflections suggest that seminaria's transformational capacity was not confined to specific parameters of practice. More than a head knowing, it was phenomenologically an 'Aha' (or 'epiphanous') moment when co-researchers had moments of existential profoundness which, from time to time, through practising TMoS, each of them did.

That perceptions and emotions go hand in hand and influence one another in applications of flow to work, observes Moneta (2017), conjointly influences one's inner life. Motivation leads to 'an enjoyable state of effortless attention, complete absorption, and focussed energy' (p. 129), similar to Shapiro and Carlson's (2009) three axioms of mindfulness. Finding (K), in its capacity to engender positivity, may add support to Fullagar and Fave's (2017) finding that 'the pivotal role of flow . . . determines the individual's performance on that work day' (p. i). As co-researchers expressed the power of seminaria's capacity for transformation and its flow-on effect:

[T]he mindfulness of seminaria, has been transformational. I have the tool to continue transforming . . .

Again, proof of the metaphysical . . .

I think it's also that my subconscious is on my side and . . . there are gifts in them that I couldn't create for myself.

[My] talisman that I'm taking with me . . .

One participant also spoke about the usefulness of this transformation that 'embraces' the reality of his earlier depression. His return to the topic through TMoS caused him to reflect that using seminaria 'embodies an appreciation that's bigger than . . . had you not gone into that depression . . . the shadow-side, not pushed away but embraced which is very useful.'

Another three, describing their experience of seminaria's potential for transcendence, put it in overarching contexts: 'transmutation, its purpose'; 'flow of the energy that is healing in itself'; 'in letting go, the possibility of transcendence arises.'

Not one of the co-researchers reported that seminaria worked 'only,' or 'better,' in certain circumstances, which was interesting given that sometimes it was used spontaneously in transitional circumstances (inspired by noticing something of beauty in nature while passing through it) or as a creative and pleasant way to fill in time or to ameliorate stress (waiting for traffic to clear; a train to arrive; a flight to be boarded, or someone to turn up by car). It indicates that TMoS is not context dependent. While similar to traditional mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011), as it mostly works as an inner process (Kühlewind, 2008; Zajonc, 2009), it is also dissimilar when involving the senses (Albrecht, 2016).

Contrasting with its spontaneous use, TMoS was also practised meditatively, alone and uninterrupted at certain times and in designated places and prepared spaces (after twenty minutes meditation; an earnest reflection of the teaching day; a release of the feeling in the body at the end of a full and fairly stressful day; before sleep as a way of 'bookending' the day). Clearly, this type of 'sitting' practice tended to elicit more detailed and more consciously considered descriptions than the transitory forms of TMoS. However, it differed from traditional 'sitting' mindfulness which uses the in-and-out movement of the breath as a primary object (Eddy, 2017, p. 313). As one co-researcher stated,

You can always do, 'Feet on the ground,' you can always go, 'Remember to breathe' but I'm not actually the least bit interested in lessons on breathing, you know, but when I do this seminaria, it's like the form itself is so . . . restful!

In between were a host of relational purposes for which TMoS was used (at the hospital as reassuring self-dialogue; working through a challenge when a grandson came to stay; maintaining a long-distance partnership; connecting lovingly in thought with one's late mother). The fact that participants highlighted many personal uses of TMoS gave the personal-professional context of the study greater depth and meaning, supporting Palmer's (1998, pp. 1–7) view, 'We teach who we are.' A strong feature of seminaria's effectiveness was its potential for transformational, 'in the flow' experience no matter what the circumstances, or even where or when, or how, or even who was doing it. Experiences of flow that were reported range from the functional and nevertheless surprising (Estes & Sirgy, 2018; Fullagar & Fave, 2017; Moneta, 2017) to the existential (Braud &

Anderson, 1998; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; James (1902/1985); Zajonc, 2009); and to the profoundly energetic (Bohm, 1995; Wordsworth, 1996).

[S]omething dramatic shifts in that process which I can only describe as some huge energetic shift.

Of the two participants who reported using TMoS digitally, one pronounced the handwritten mode more effective in helping her access her feelings. She found that when she was ‘blocked and unsure’ and trying to ‘help something come’; ‘the difference . . . between rhythmical and digital writing is that the longhand can facilitate it.’

On the other hand, as one of the co-researchers said, paraphrasing Elizabeth Gilbert (2009) on the subject of writers’ ‘creative genius,’ describing it as ‘some sort of spirit that would help you with your creative work’ (an idea echoed by another participant: ‘at the moment, they’re pouring out of the ether and the muse’), rather than how today, ‘people are taking credit for their own creative work’:

[If] there’s a really insisting seminaria that wants to be written, then it doesn’t make any difference whether it’s pencil or iPhone . . . when it’s urgent . . . like, just get it down! It’s already there [and it] doesn’t make any difference what writing modality you use.

This ‘unseen support’ of inspiration, variously described by all of the participants, adds to this finding of existential profoundness.

A flow of existential profoundness experienced as subjective wellbeing

From a synthesis of these main findings is the key finding of a notion of wellbeing, as defined by the OECD Guidelines for subjective wellbeing (2013). That is, a definition of subjective well-being beyond the notion of happiness which incorporates three elements:

- Life evaluation—reflective assessment on a person’s life or some specific aspect of it [cf: teachers’ and their leaders’ personal–professional life];
- Affect—a person’s feelings or emotional states, typically measured with reference to shorter time periods [cf: how the various experiences of TMoS affected teachers];
- Eudaimonia—a sense of meaning and purpose in life, or good psychological functioning [cf: the findings from practising TMoS].

As the OECD reports (2013), ‘Subjective well-being data can provide an important complement to other indicators already used for monitoring and benchmarking . . . performance, for guiding people’s choices, and for designing and delivering policies.’ However, noteworthy (OECD, 2013),

‘[subjective] well-being data must be examined alongside information on more objective aspects of life.’ This underscores their complementary nature.

With this in mind, I now turn to the focus of *teacher* wellbeing, and ask, Could the findings of this present study, in the ways discussed above, contribute with originality to the growing body of evidence suggesting that mindfulness is an essential life skill with potential to enhance both teacher and student well-being as Ager et al. (2015), Albrecht (2016), Albrecht et al. (2012), Black et al. (2009), and Mazza-Davies (2015) have found? Seminal to this question, I first discuss the origin of wellbeing and its transformative potential, before addressing a leading question of mindfulness researcher Arthur Zajonc (2013b) on the nature of love and knowing, given that the findings have highlighted these characteristics in the mindfulness of seminaria.

Origin of wellbeing, its transformative potential

Revisiting Antonovsky’s (1979, 1987) origin of wellbeing (salutogenesis) in relation to the findings of this study (as researcher Rudie discusses with co-researcher Murray in his portrait [5.6]), I found, interestingly, that whilst there is resonance with all three of the well-researched roots of salutogenesis (namely: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness), a caveat may exist with respect to the first of the three. Comprehensibility is the belief that things occur in an orderly way and a sense that you can understand events and reasonably predict what is likely to happen. However, in this study co-researchers at times variously described their experience of seminaria as ‘a mystery,’ ‘potent,’ ‘energising,’ ‘transformative’ and ‘healing,’ that I contend does not fit the orderly, predictability of ‘comprehensibility’ as Antonovsky (1987) defines it.

However, manageability, the belief that you have the capacity or access to the resources necessary to take care of these things that are within your control, was clearly pertinent to this study’s findings on the practice of seminaria. The final element, meaningfulness, is a belief that things in life are interesting, a source of satisfaction, worthwhile, and that there is good reason or purpose to care about what happens.

According to Antonovsky (1987), meaningfulness is the most important, in that ‘salutogenesis’ depends on experiencing a strong sense of coherence, a predictor for positive health outcomes. The findings of this study on the practice of seminaria were commensurate with definitions of coherence. What is clear from the data, too, is that these traits of eudaimonic wellbeing—self-

realisation and meaning in life that in so many instances evoked vitality—also included the attributes of growth, authenticity and excellence (Gibbs, 2006; Giles, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Highly valued in teachers and leaders, they, in turn, affect student wellbeing—an important measure of school climate.

Potential for love to become ‘a way of knowing’

Just as co-researcher Gordon compared the form of the Japanese tea ceremony, chado, with the potential in seminaria for learning its form and gradually imbuing it with love so that, in the end, the form, the love and the person are as one, inseparable, I wondered whether a longer study might reveal this characteristic? It was in the first immersion stage of this inquiry, the ‘coming to know something profoundly so that love becomes the way of knowing it,’ as Zajonc had aptly described (2.2.2), that I experienced my relationship with TMoS as ‘an epistemology of love’: ‘the most profound form of knowing by identification’ (Zajonc, 2013b, p. 92). Poignantly, in my shared narrative with him, it was this recognition of how my contemplative inquiry had become grounded in the present TMoS practice-based research that he articulated as ‘opening a door’ (personal communication, October 31, 2014). For each of the co-researchers, too, the mindfulness of seminaria, it appears, has ‘opened’ just such a ‘door’ to an accessible practice that they expressed loving to do.

Love as ‘a way of knowing’ in the way that Zajonc (personal communication, October 31, 2014) states and co-researcher Gordon intimates as a state of nonseparation, can be interpreted as implicit in the other co-researchers’ narratives. Co-researcher Hope, the only one not to explicitly mention the word love in connection with her practice of TMoS, nevertheless, expresses the seat of love in her poem, *A gift from the heart*. Hope wrote this in her research journal, and emailed it to me to show how the practice was supporting her:

A gift
From the heart
It cuts through the crap
But only if you let it
So choose how you work
Begin now.
Let go.

Such elements, intrinsic to seminaria's existential profoundness, point to the need for reexamining the theoretical construct of Linde's poetic form. For example, Scharmer's seminal theory-U work, that Linde incorporated into it in the 1980s, raises the question of how inherently available for writers of seminaria are those cocreative, cosensing, copresencing qualities? Are they available for any poet who engages mindfully with it? Such questions suggest the need for further exploration into the essential nature and being of seminaria. Similarly, one might question to what extent the theoretical qualities of the other two philosophers incorporated by Linde into his seminar form have contributed to the discoveries made by the co-researchers in this study? That is, Aquinas (through his argumentum) and Steiner (through his seven life processes), as outlined in 2.5. Thus, these qualities and others tacit in its construct have implications to explore.

7.3 Implications and future directions

What might these findings as discussed above mean for educators and others? Focusing attention into this diamond 'mandala' of a poetic form, found to be anchoring and centring, and processing a problem, dilemma, reflection, question or appreciation through its seven-line process (possibly with the added 'mirroring' review), can be cathartic. Whether in the course of one poem or a series, this study has shown that it can take the practitioner to a point of resolution and/or new understanding. The findings, therefore, were surprisingly coherent, given that the participants chose how they applied the mindfulness of seminaria, which in this exploration was need specific and situationally diverse.

Therefore, there appear to be many practice implications for teachers, leaders, researchers, and other professionals using this scarcely-known poetic form, now researched as the mindfulness of seminaria. In this section I set out five implications of the general findings (A-E), and suggest future directions, including the need for further studies.

Implications:

1. The simplicity, accessibility, and ease of TMoS (such as Glasser identifies [William Glasser Research Institute, 2018]) indicates potential for teachers and leaders who would opt for a more spacious inner life but are 'put off' by the predominantly sitting mindfulness meditation practices that take time and consistent commitment in an already overfull day, and also those who are averse to breathing practices (for reasons previously explained).
2. In consideration that the number of co-researchers was small, Caucasian, and all living in

New Zealand or the UK, it would be worth exploring the mindfulness of seminaria in teachers' reflective practice with a wider diversity of co-researchers in order to see whether the findings would resonate.

3. There are wider implications than for the education sector alone, indicating TMoS is worthy of further investigation. However, the purpose of this thesis is confined to teacher education and its leadership.
4. From my own personal experience of seminaria and that of the co-researchers employed in diverse educational settings, this study suggests that despite the small participant sample, TMoS is suitable for teachers and education leaders in Early Years to Higher Education.
5. An important implication for the successful practice of TMoS relates to the disposition of practitioners. Notable in the study was that all these co-researchers characterised openness to learn from the practice, humility, loving heartedness and goodwill—aspects of self-development or disposition that require a strong sense of identity but without egotism. Bearing in mind what the person who introduced it to me (Mariel R.) had observed, 'Egotism . . . the one thing that defiles it' (Appendix G), is a reason seminaria would likely not suit everyone.

Implications are that TMoS may support the following aspects in education: stress management (including time management in the ways explicit and implicit in the data); creative, cognitive flexibility (poiesis, sociopoetic enrichment); phenomenological observation in student support and assessment; forward-focused planning, and possibly later, at a pedagogical level, as a mindfulness strategy for student learning and wellbeing. The main implication of this study's findings is in its contribution to the growing body of knowledge about the value of mindfulness for teachers and leaders at an individual level.

Future directions:

The founder of seminar form, Linde's somewhat 'prophetic' seminaria to me at the beginning of this pilgrimage (see the Prelude), is a timely reminder of this study's purpose. Although this is the end of the formal investigation, the inquiry raises further questions for consideration. It is not so much an end of the road as a sense of preparing to start out again in order to unfold the next layer of questions, much as the poet Rilke urged (see 1.2).

As the mindfulness of seminaria shows evidence of becoming a useful process for others, further studies to develop understandings—to explore questions raised by this study that were not answered here in this exploration—might usefully include:

- Exploration of the other mindfulness practices participants employ with seminaria;
- A broader age range of teachers with little or no mindfulness experience;
- Exploration with people who can't do mindfulness techniques using the breath;
- A longitudinal study with those who practise the mindfulness of seminaria;
- A study of how the three foundational philosophies inform seminaria's construct;
- A comparison of the different applications of TMoS that educators choose to use;
- A study of applicability to different cultural and socioeconomic groups;
- A feasibility study for teaching TMoS in schools and its age appropriateness;
- Exploration of TMoS with participant samples outside of education.

Off campus, on campus

A distinguishing feature of this study of TMoS is that it is not set in the context of school mindfulness programmes. This means it does not have to compete for time as a group practice in an already overcrowded professional learning agenda, nor is it a curriculum consideration. It is a practice that individual teachers and leaders, once shown, in the context of self-care, at a staff 'refresher' day for example, could adopt as a personal–professional resource outside of and separate from their teaching. Mindful that a Flinders professor, summing up my research quest—'So, it's about how we as teachers sustain ourselves through relationships of renewal?' (D. Giles, personal communication, June 24, 2014)—left me resolving to explore my research question to the end of the road. Since that formative conversation, *just* such a relationship of renewal has been discovered in the mindfulness of seminaria. As co-researcher Gordon (4.5) insisted, 'If I want to *transcend*, if I want to change my life, the lives of the people around me, the life of the world, then I need to stretch into the *unknown* and the unknown, by definition, can't be approached through the known.' New forms are needed. TMoS has indicated being an example of a new form for teachers' relationships of renewal—whether in solitude or collaboratively, as this study has exemplified.

A potential wellbeing focus for schools

In New Zealand, as increasingly elsewhere, schools have goals with set wellbeing targets for all students (Education Review Office, 2016). In Aotearoa New Zealand, that means four elements of wellbeing are regarded equally: *taha tinana* (physical), *taha hinengaro* (mental and emotional), *taha whanau* (social), and *taha wairua* (spiritual) (Denford-Wood, 2005; Durie, 1998; Metge, 1995; Rix, 2017). These aspects of *hauora*/wellbeing are important for school staff to embody not only for

their own wellbeing but as positive role models for students. The findings of this present study show TMoS is identified in these four areas of wellbeing (by all participants), making it conceivable that, subject to further studies, it could contribute to education curriculum and policy. Further, by making J.-P. Linde's seminal work more available, accessible and applicable in the fields of mindfulness, and education (as this study has situated it), it may have far-reaching implications for its application in teacher education.

7.4 Research limitations

As with any research, there are potential limitations within this study. Somewhat interrelated, they address: methodology; the reporting of mindfulness experiences; the place of researcher subjectivity and influence; relational aspects; the measures of meaning, trustworthiness (Seamon, 1987), and validity (Fischer, 2006); and other elements of the research design.

At the outset, I sought a methodology congruent with my research question, aims and objectives. Indeed, heuristic inquiry proved the right fit, providing, as it did, potential for transpersonal depth and scope. Second, researching mindfulness experience relies on the assumption that it can be qualitatively and narratively assessed via declarative knowledge. Therefore, I also took care to select a strong participant/co-researcher sample who provided finely nuanced data in a trustworthy manner, within a qualitative framework designed to fit a phenomenological 'standard' of research for action sensitive pedagogy in the human sciences (Braud & Anderson 1998).

Ultimately, for any phenomenological study, the most significant test, according to Seamon (1987), is of its trustworthiness and its capacity to draw the reader into the researcher's discoveries, thereby allowing a reader to see their own world or the worlds of others in a new, meaningful way. As stated in relation to finding (A), 'The best phenomenological work breaks people free from their usual recognitions . . . and moves them along new paths of understanding' (Seamon, 1987, p. 19). My path into the nature and being of the mindfulness of seminaria has achieved new understanding for the co-researchers and the researcher, through the qualitative richness afforded by this study.

A third point is that phenomenologists all accept that researcher subjectivity is inevitably implicated in research—indeed, some would say it is precisely the realisation of the intersubjective, interconnectedness between researcher and researched that characterises phenomenology. The questions at stake are to what extent, and how (Finlay 2009, pp. 11–12). On the other hand, they

point to Giorgi's (1994) contention (p. 12), 'nothing can be accomplished without subjectivity, so its elimination is *not* the solution. Rather *how* [my emphasis] the subject is present is what matters, recognising that objectivity itself is an achievement of subjectivity.' This underscores their complementary nature, an important point of awareness.

Phenomenologists maintain that researchers need a 'phenomenological attitude' in order to be open to the 'other' and to attempts to see the world freshly, in a different way (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Finlay, 2009; Fischer, 2006). One contested issue (given that HI requires the researcher's experience to be brought to the foreground), is how much attention researchers should pay to this, and to exploring their own embodied subjectivity. It is rightly asked, I believe, to what extent the researcher's attention needs be on the noetic (mode of being aware) dimension and the noematic (object of awareness). Clearly, this study of the mindfulness of seminaria demanded both of these modes in varying balanced proportions. In conversation with my supervisors, I have attempted to strike the right balance. By designating a chapter to each heuristic phase, I sought to use these stages themselves to provide the necessary awareness and framework. Researcher subjectivity therefore should be placed in the foreground so as to make transparent the process of separating out what belongs to the researcher rather than the researched. On this point, I considered HI to demand a high degree of researcher self-reflection (Fischer, 2006) which I incorporated mindfully. As Finlay (2009) points out, it is taken as a basic premise in phenomenological research in the human sciences that such self-knowledge is involved.

Notwithstanding this premise as a 'given,' other influences, too, according to Braud and Anderson (1998), must be addressed, such as the perceptions, interpretations and epistemological strengths and weaknesses of *everyone* involved in the research—co-researchers, primary researcher and future readers. Having consciously addressed those pertaining to the co-researchers and primary researcher, the responsibility to future readers calls for clarity, accuracy, and care with language so as not to skew the meaning or cause inaccuracies that could become ambiguously reported.

Additionally, the importance of the researcher's relational skills, as Finlay and Evans (2009) emphasise, means being able to create space in the interviews for authentic, thorough, nuanced experience (Moustakas, 1990), and 'being clearly conscious of letting the participant have a voice' (Finlay & Evans, 2009, p. 67). In this regard, I aimed for the thoroughness of Clarke and Hogget's (2009), 'researching beneath the surface and beyond the purely discursive [to give] credence to

unconscious communications, [and] dynamics . . .' (p. 2), so that researcher and co-researcher are 'co-producers of meaning.' Attaining mutual trust with each participant (to be safely authentic, vulnerable, open and honest) during phase one facilitated our communications which, in turn, strengthened the trustworthiness and ethical basis of this research.

In terms of my research design, three obvious limitations are: first, due to the selection criteria (3.8), there is little indication of how TMoS might be effective when used by those without mindfulness experience or interest in the language arts; second, there is no indication of how younger teachers in their 20's and 30's would find it; and third, sustainability of the approach is unknown, given that (apart from informal appreciation of TMoS from participants up to eighteen months later), each co-researcher agreed to an investigation of just three weeks.

Whilst Braud and Anderson (1998) point out the strengths of Moustakas's heuristic inquiry, they also point to its weaknesses as 'difficult, lengthy, and consuming' (p. 266), and a process which does not emphasise conceptualisation or theorising about the experience studied. Despite these perceived weaknesses, I believe it served its prime purpose well in addressing the research question. Being my first formal heuristic inquiry meant progress was slow at times while I mastered the steps with due diligence. However, I was able to bring to the process previous experience in educational research, dating back to the 1980s; tertiary experience in phenomenological processes; social sensitivity from my teaching and therapy practices; some understanding of teachers' and leaders' issues; and a background of contemplative inquiry. It is possible, therefore, that these elements may have positively contributed to the outcomes of this study.

Fulfilling the heuristic inquiry process

Reflecting now on the totality of 'living into this process 24/7' (a critical process Sela-Smith [2013] also undertook), my purpose here is to examine *how* the six key functions of this methodology assisted me to answer the research question/s.

First, as the primary researcher, I experienced what is identified as being researched (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 13, 27, 40). Indeed, as mentioned, it was the effects TMoS brought to my own practice that led to conducting this study.

Second, as the researcher, I referenced my intense interest in the phenomenon, and a passionate concern caused me, as the investigator, to reach inward for tacit awareness and knowledge (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27) of semina's essential being.

Third, my research indicates that surrender to the question took place (living, waking, sleeping and dreaming the question) (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28), of which only an indication of its intensity, depth and breadth is, and can be, encapsulated in this thesis.

Fourth, self-dialogue, rather than merely one-way reporting of thoughts and feelings, is evidenced. To report a feeling is not the same as dialoguing with the feeling (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 11, 16–20). This aspect was experienced painfully as self-consciousness when starting out to write this thesis. It took hours of experimenting with the amount of 'personal voice' that felt comfortable to publicly disclose, and was one of the hardest parts of this (pilgrimage) process. In this respect, I honour the work of Ronald Pelias (2004), whose poignant *A methodology of the heart: Evoking academic and daily life* gave me wings, before further engagement with Clark Moustakas's (1990, 1994) works as *practice* enabled them to fly.

Fifth, the search is a self-search (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 11, 13, 15, 17, 25), a component comfortably in keeping with the theme of the thesis (not in a solipsistic sense but as the wise masters through ages have directed, 'in seeking to know yourself—engage deeply with the world; in seeking to know the world—enter the sanctum of your own soul'), a challenge of balance.

Finally, there is evidence that transformation has taken place. Some narratives explicitly (others implicitly) contain transformation and may, in turn, transform those who read them (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 13, 14, 19, 99, 124). As something that started as deeply personal, I felt moved to examine whether it might be transformed into something of social value. How this would be, I knew not; only how to hold the vision and, pilgrimage-like, trust the 'signposts' until the research questions were answered, acknowledging that deeper layers of meaning and connectedness are always potential for further unfolding. As primary researcher, my responsibility was akin to that of a midwife. There is something transpersonal (Braud & Anderson, 1998) about what emerges that takes on a life of its own.

A possible addition to the heuristic inquiry methodology

Although I appreciated Moustakas's rationale, I did not find the need for singling out exemplars as he did in his large-sample studies where some depictions were found to be less relevant to the research question (1990, p. 50). In this present study all six participant depictions stand worthy. Collectively they form 'a whole' that I contend was integral in assisting me to answer the research question. Further, because individually they cohere to shape a robust 'whole,' I felt it would have gone against the grain of Moustakas's own heuristic principle, in my case, to have made such a selection. Therefore, I chose to celebrate the unique presentation of 'exemplary portraits' by embedding them imaginatively in Chapter five. Thus, their similarities and differences are revealed with respect to the research question: What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice? In choosing to explicate the data in this way, I hope I may in some small way have added to the HI tradition by suitably modifying the process.

I found Moustakas's (1990, 1994) guidelines for data organisation and analysis (as synthesis) innovative in their flexibility, unlike Worth (2012, p. 61), who proclaimed them 'vague'; possibly due to the different nature of phenomena being investigated. Instead of what Worth called cursory, in the context of my study, it seemed rather as though Moustakas deliberately leaves the process flexible, open heuristically to new discoveries, suiting the variabilities in research subject and question, and perhaps allowing for such modifications to add to the scholarship of his method. However it is viewed—this built-in flexibility in regard to data organisation and synthesis—I regarded it as valuable for my own interpretation, all the more because I had been fully immersed in the creative depth of each of the preceding heuristic phases. Though these phases are not strictly linear and sequential but, as I discovered, involve an organic 'recycling' approach—nevertheless, HI's undergirding structure is in the order I have set it out as chapter containers for this thesis.

Although it may first appear that the phases of immersion and incubation are diametrically opposed, as the former requires deep engagement and the latter a less conscious, more detached position of 'letting go', in fact I experienced the transition from one to the other as lemniscate-like—a newly informed energetic sense of knowing (that which before had been beyond my horizon or behind the hill). In the same way, for example, that co-researcher Mikaela characterised the practice of seminaria as lemniscating between the conscious and the unconscious, ipso facto, they inform one another.

Heuristic investigation focused my attention inward on the experience of TMOs, as well as outwardly on the evolving co-researching experience and what the study as a whole was trying to extract through me—rather than on the conventional research relationships of sequenced steps (Sela-Smith, 2002). I valued the suitability of HI for researching TMOs. Not only was it validating of ‘the still small voice within,’ it enabled me to read the physical ‘way maps’ and ‘signposts without.’ In the end, that is what most has influenced and transformed my worldview, validating the ‘marriage’ between inner and outer signs—knowing how to trust this intuitive research path. Heuristic research, after all, is transpersonal (from the Latin *trans* meaning beyond or through, and *persona* meaning mask or façade) and I bring it freshly to attention here to reference a field of research and scholarship that lies beyond or through the personally identified aspects of self that Braud and Anderson (1998, p. xxi) define as seeking to honour ‘human experience in its fullest and most transformative expressions.’

Validity

Finally, having climbed above the path to survey the whole landscape of this exploration, including its study limitations, I took a final check using the questions of qualitative researcher Fischer (2006), who claims:

For qualitative research, validity is . . . the soundness of a study . . . achieved through appropriate selection of participants and inquiries, and scrupulous faithfulness to the data in the analysis and in the representation of the findings (Fischer, 2006, p. xvii).

Five interrelated kinds of validity (Fischer, 2006, p. 9) assisted me to review the degree to which I have addressed the study limitations. Listed below, the first, and the last two, however, are dependent on future readership. My responsibility to future readers, as stated with reference to Braud and Anderson (1998), calls for clarity, accuracy, and care. In Fischer’s (2006, p. xvii) words:

- **Witness validity** —Do readers of data and findings, following the researcher’s method, . . . come to basically . . . similar impressions?
- **Touchpoint validity** —Do the findings connect with theory and with other studies in a productive way? Are previous understandings affirmed, reconciled, ‘nuanced’, corrected, and/or expanded?;
- **Efficacy validity** —Are the findings useful? Do they make a difference for theory and/or practices? [‘Efficacy validity refers to the capacity of a study and its report as a whole to give more value to one’s life’; Fischer, 2006, p. 325];

- **Resonance validity** (Anderson, 2004)—Do the data and findings resonate with readers’ lives, both as familiar and as holding personal implication? [‘Resonance validity refers to the capacity of a study and its findings to produce sympathetic resonance in its readers’; Fischer, 2006, p. 324. As Burrows wrote (email communication, June 21, 2018), “I think the resonance validity has been ‘tested’ with your supervisors and I think you should acknowledge that you have had readers already, and no doubt not just us, who have deeply resonated with the presentation of your findings”];
- **Revisionary validity** —Do the findings aid readers to revise, to re-vision prior understandings either academic and/or personal? This revision may be a sense of greater affirmation or, more usually, a change in conception or depth of understanding.

This study’s findings, I suggest, have coherent *touchpoint validity* with theory and previous studies in the fields of mindfulness, teachers’ reflective practice, sociopoetics and subjective wellbeing in what appears to be potentially productive ways, in that previous understandings are ‘affirmed, reconciled, ‘nuanced’, corrected, and/or expanded,’ as Fischer (2006) articulates.

Whilst the findings of this study and its future directions inform its *efficacy validity*, further studies are needed in order to meet the two criteria (above) beyond the reported experiences of the co-researchers and the researcher (all of whom affirm the study and its reports to date as ‘giving more value to one’s life,’ as Fischer (2006) states.

This section of possible research limitations then, has reviewed my involvement in the heuristic process, first as the researcher and second, tacitly, as the pilgrim, ‘bridge building’ a way to make emerging theory accessible, reminded by Zajonc (2009, p. 148) of the Greek root of the word ‘theory’ meaning ‘to behold.’ Having chosen a heuristic path of inquiry, I have now reflected on how well it has served this dual carriageway because, as Figures 2 and 3 posit, it is in the knowing ‘how and why’ that engages us and enables agency for social change. I saw my dual task, as pilgrim and as researcher, as to put aside preconceived notions, to be open anew to the phenomenon at the centre of my gaze, and like Langer (2009) I was not disappointed.

7.5 Summary

I now draw this thesis towards its conclusion by summarising the whole study, adding brief seminal comment and tying together its pilgrimage threads. At its heart, this research sought to cast light on the essence of the mindfulness of seminaria (TMOs) through the participation of others. This inquiry’s findings have provided a window into the personal–professional world of six teachers and

educational leaders who mindfully adopted the poetry practice introduced as an approach to mindfulness by the primary researcher who took up her 'map' of heuristic inquiry and set out with an enquiring mind.

I aimed to address a gap in knowledge in the under-researched area of teachers' first-person experiences of mindfulness practices (Ditrich et al. 2017) by investigating a poetic form that proved to usefully inform the way teachers and leaders approach their work as reflective practitioners (2.4). The value of exploring and contributing in this field is borne out, on the one hand, by the statistics of teacher stress and attrition (1.1.4), and on the other, by increasing numbers of educators who are independently seeking to sustain themselves through relationships of renewal (1.1.4; 2.8).

Consistent with the requirements of heuristic research, the wellspring of my central research question—What is the nature and being of seminaria as a mindfully aware practice for teachers?—is my own experience as a teacher, teacher educator, and mindfulness meditation practitioner dating from the 1970s. The recent walking–sounding–thinking integration (1.1) undergirding the pilgrim's quest to know the nature of this poetic word form helped forge the second research question—Would this practice show indication of value for others?—the impulse for this study.

Data as finely nuanced, narrative descriptions were gathered from six co-researchers in three phases of the inquiry, using: semistructured interviews (phase one, Appendix D); transcribed, in depth conversational interviews (phases two and three); voice recordings and journal reflections from all six participants; and my own fieldnotes and journal reflections. The shared experiences of the co-researchers were analysed using a cluster of processes known as the heuristic method of inquiry and resulted in the following elements of data: six individual depictions which, as a cohesive whole, embodies a composite depiction of the phenomenon (TMOs); seven exemplary portraits (including that of the author); a creative synthesis of thirteen themes and patterns; and a crystallisation of the main findings, synthesised into an overarching one of wellbeing.

This thesis then, tells the story of my research path to comprehend the mindfulness of seminaria. At the same time, it explores a metaphoric path of simplicity in the face of increasing complexity that is the personal–professional life of teachers and their leaders.

That educators are in need of a path ‘more simply swept’ is well evidenced. My summation of how TMoS was found to be effective in the context of teachers’ and leaders’ personal–professional lives can be no more aptly reflected than by these words of mindfulness researcher Eleanor Rosch:

Far from a simple technique that we might call mindfulness, we are dealing with an entire mode of knowing and of being in the world composed of many interdependent synergistic facets which include a relaxation and expansion of awareness, access to wisdom, and an open-hearted inclusive warmth toward all of experience, oneself, other people and the world. The teacher, teachings and community of other practitioners are all part of this tapestry (Rosch, 2007, p. 26).

This study involved the collaborative work of two co-researcher colleagues (by chance rather than by design, as explained in 3.11, and their initiative for a staff-wide professional learning exercise using seminaria [5.7], that they deemed valuable for their purpose), suggests community potential in the vein of Rosch’s ‘tapestry’ (2007).

Discussion of original contribution

A significant gap in the literature is addressed by this research. I found no studies of teachers’ and educational leaders’ first-person experiences of mindfulness practices that usefully inform the way they approach their professional responsibilities as reflective practitioners or as mindfulness practitioners through the use of such a poetic practice. That this study has found TMoS of such positive benefit suggests that poetic practices deserve a place in the suite of mindfulness options for educators. Through this practice-based inquiry, co-researchers have enriched their inner knowing. From time to time, TMoS resulted in transformative effects in their personal and professional lives.

Significance for educators

These teachers and educational leaders (co-researchers) attributed to their practice of seminaria a capacity to connect more consciously with aspects of themselves and thereby others, thus restoring a sense of vitality through experiences of self-realisation and meaningfulness. It suggests a call for a more inclusive, less narrow approach to mindfulness.

A simple tuning-in device

The mindfulness of seminaria, identified in this study as simple, quick and accessible—as a ‘talisman’ and as a ‘tool’ that is ‘companionable’—deems it suitable as a ‘pocket application’ or app. for

connecting with the immediacy of what one participant termed ‘access to a reassuring voice . . . a wisdom really’; ‘lightly and quickly at any time of the day.’

The study’s findings, in terms of their significance for educators, was stronger than I initially imagined. What was this metaphoric pilgrimage but an exploration through the poetry and poesis of language, formed in the hearts and minds of co-researchers. At the end of a day’s travel through a mountain of scripts, I felt blessed by their biographical richness. The narratives speak for themselves, six points of view expressed as thirteen themes, crystallised to eleven composite findings that synthesise into one of wellbeing—I highlight two jewel-like discoveries that shine out of the many:

Weaving the unconscious and the conscious minds together within that lemniscate, allowing for the miraculosity of my unconscious mind to give me gifts . . . to nourish the inner self . . . a real gift. (Mikaela)

The form itself is so restful. . . . It’s not just a spiritual mindfulness discipline or practice, but . . . a creative outlet . . . suit[ing] my need for simplicity and form . . . precise, essential and distilled. (Murray)

Sensing time’s telling

Linde’s seminaria to me at the beginning of this pilgrimage (see the Prelude), ‘sensing time’s telling,’ takes me back to the central purpose of this inquiry. What is the nature and being of seminaria mindfulness? Have I answered the research question? Clearly, the outcome of the study has been to highlight the success of the fieldwork with the independent co-researchers. The findings have provided an overriding sense of positivity and creative potential. However, although this is the end of the formal path of investigation, the inquiry has raised further questions (about the nature of ‘the word’; the mystery of the seminaria construct, the coherence of surprise, embodiment, discovery and wellbeing, as several examples). After a thirteen month absence of communication, I contacted the founder to seek his permission for the publication of his quotation in a journal article and noted with delight his perception in the comment below of seminaria’s own ‘beingness’:

I find it fascinating, how you have delved into this matter from a literary perspective and at the same time [are] finding the poetic form [is] drawing its own circles with acquaintances and chance encounters! (J.-P. Linde, personal communication, July 13, 2017)

Overwhelmingly, the participant response was positive. No one expressed disappointment in their overall results. The only disappointment expressed was in their occasional lapses due to feeling exhausted in the fullness of the working week. Surprise was unanimous that a practice of its kind could yield such noteworthy and satisfying results (even, occasionally, after having fallen asleep).

As heuristic research begins with personal reflections, I began with biographical threads that shaped my early experience of learning to trust what I perceived as inner guidance, a rich source of and for learning and teaching over several decades. I sensed that the gathered up, lived, net experience of all of this enabled enough inner stillness to perceive the presence of seminaria as an invitation. With my firm resolve, its path of inner and outer guidance led me to explore and interpret the evidence that the mindfulness of seminaria might make in the cultural life of teachers and leaders.

Simultaneously, it became a definitive self-search. Moustakas's (1990, 1994) guidance through the six phases of this 'self-search' confirmed that these phases are not linear. As a heuristic researcher, I learned to surrender to the organic nature of movement between the phases, leaping forward to others, then returning to incubation when another level of illumination was suggested by the previous indications. I began with the premise that my question, What is the nature and being of seminaria? required the participants to have an established mindfulness or contemplative practice, in order that their relationship to the phenomenon might be more mindfully comprehended. Whilst the findings suggest that this was indeed a useful criterion, I see cause to conduct another investigation of seminaria without that prerequisite, due to having learned from the participants to appreciate the preexisting depth of seminaria's own theoretical construct (2.5).

7.6 Conclusion

Before conducting this study, I experienced the introduction to and practising of seminaria to be consciousness raising and life changing. It led me to want to find out what a cross-section of other educators—independently—would make of its lived experience as a regular personal–professional reflective practice, mindfully applied. Would others discover anything useful from adopting the mindfulness of seminaria as described? This thesis has addressed the question and showed that, indeed, it has been an illuminatingly worthwhile study that adds creatively to knowledge.

Building a bridge to the theory while walking across it

In a phenomenological sense, seminaria has shown itself to have currency for the social sciences beyond the context of 'teacher as reflective practitioner'; beyond self-care for the stressed, overworked educator. Seminaria with its medium of the 'living word' has a delicate yet robust intimacy suggesting success in simplicity, as 'less is more.' Clearly, there is wider potential for this type of poetic mindfulness, as the findings from this study indicate. Ongoing inquiry into its nature

and being is akin to bridge building ontologically and epistemologically to other discourses whilst walking across, one step at a time. As a result of this study, I posit that:

The power of the word seems underestimated. Said since time immemorial that ‘the logos’ is the sacred substance of our culture—I’m wondering what that might mean here for practical access to knowing and self-realisation? Seminaria seems to be bringing something new to secular mindfulness without undermining individual freedom to soteriologically explore the dimensions of language. Struck by how TMoS has been so revealing for each person who engaged with it, I’m pondering its potential for renewal. In bygone times sacred texts were experientially, passively absorbed, but with seminaria there’s an alive, conscious, participatory quality in the nature of its being, both sociocognitive and contemplative. [research journal, June 17, 2017]

Through the depth and breadth of this study I have sought to know and understand the ‘how and why’ of TMoS in the context of mindfulness and teacher education. Whilst there appears to be no limit to the layers of discovery to be made with any ‘living’ phenomenon, I am confident that this study has illuminated its ‘how and why’ sufficiently to engage others, thereby enabling agency for social change.

Without exception, insightful connectedness to ‘self’ or some universal principle greater than the human dimension (Fisher et al., 2002; Vaccarino et al., 2011) has strengthened meaningfulness through practising seminaria, evoking experiences of self-realisation and self-knowledge. The effect was variously energising and illuminating. As a phenomenon, the mindfulness of seminaria was found to be companionable, simple and accessible. These benefits place the practice of seminaria in terms of Maslow’s (1971) hierarchy of needs as ‘self-actualising,’ a state of being that is arguably more difficult to attain and maintain in today’s teaching climate, as evidenced by Codd (2005), Neyland (2010), and Wylie (2014).

Thus, the mindfulness of seminaria is one means by which teachers and leaders may access self-knowledge for their wellbeing. Wellbeing, both central to learning and an outcome of learning, is multidimensional and characterised by feeling well and functioning well. In the process of enhancing student wellbeing, it is important that teachers’ and leaders’ own wellbeing is also enhanced. Seminaria mindfulness, with social agency and capacity for renewal, is poised to meet and support this purpose.

In the light of my pilgrimage, what started out as a few simple (yet strong) inner responses to outer circumstances, pursued heuristically with an open mind, has led, like a double-spanned bridge, to the discovery of a mindful poetry practice indicative of social science benefit to others. By returning to my starting point:

Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15)

Herein, a new realisation:

To Know Yourself

By writing at the start, that 'at the heart of educational wellbeing . . . what it means to really "know yourself" may be one of the greatest challenges facing teachers today'—and that those words '*could be said to sound [an] archetypal voice through the heart of this heuristic inquiry into the mindfulness of seminaria*' (see the Prelude), what struck me at the end of this heuristic pilgrimage is this:

That just as 'mirroring the words in the seminaria diamond' can bring heightened awareness, like a lemniscate of reversed sounding, it works the other way around as well. That is, the mindfulness of seminaria sounds the wisdom of its archetypal voice through this inquiry into the heart of each practitioner. In this practical and liminal lemniscate I realised that not only had I found my songline, but, subconsciously, I had been singing it all along. This study has embodied its wisdom more fully as a mindfulness experience. The key was connectedness, just as the co-researchers in the depth of their different ways have shown.

Coda

Implicit in everything we do is a longing for synergy. (Bateson, 1989, p. 238)

An imaginary setting: a grassy intersection in the rolling hills of South Australia. After a stimulating poetry symposium attended by the co-researchers, the researcher and others, there is a guided walk into the city for celebration. Pulling on our boots for the descent through an aromatic gum-tree'd landscape, one of the co-researchers calls out, 'It's one thing to be honoured at the symposium for our research contribution, but we'd like to hear *your* story of the study since we saw you two years ago.' 'Sure', I reply as we leave the crossroads, 'The walking pole can be our speaking stick. Let's all tell our stories then, pilgrim style, as we go.'

In synergistic flow, three notable threads tie this inquiry to a close. First, while lamenting the infeasibility of my first idea for the creative synthesis—creating a pocket-sized TMoS kit, taking it back to the Camino and offering it to people as appropriate along the way, a 'coming full circle'—out of the blue, a litigation lawyer from Paris I'd met on the path four years earlier got in touch. In the fullness of the 9.3 km we'd walked together from Frómista to Villarmentero, I had mentioned *Te Araroa*.⁵⁷ The seed had germinated; she was coming to walk the length of the Land of the Long White Cloud.⁵⁸ No sooner did she arrive at my door on foot from Cape Reinga (I live at the centre point of the 3,000 km trail), than she proceeded with deep interest to absorb every word I'd ever written about seminaria and to begin working with it herself. Traversing the South Island, she used it creatively to record her day's journey. Encountering teachers en route, she would show them how to do TMoS and suggest how they might use it in their reflective practice or to achieve what she herself gained from it—a feeling of calm.

On my return visit to her in Paris, I met the founder, J.-P. Linde who was fascinated by the study's findings. His health had been compromised and he was glad the work was finding a new feminine, southern hemisphere orientation. After our day exploring seminaria through the lens of Monet's garden at Giverny, I kept reimagining the exquisite quality of light reflected from his water lily ponds—suddenly seeing its symbolism in seminaria's own 'mirroring magic.' Later, Linde wrote that

⁵⁷ A walking trail from Cape Reinga, the northern tip of Aotearoa NZ to Bluff in the south of the South Island. See <https://www.teararoa.org.nz/>

⁵⁸ English translation of Aotearoa, the Māori/bicultural name for New Zealand.

he found ‘the two sides of a “seminar” worked like the posing of questions . . . a new *impressionist* seeing of the “real world”—and on the other hand, a new *expressionist* realisation of the inner dimension . . .’ (2017, p. iii). This, he said, helped him to see the creator of a ‘seminar’ become like the space between a right and left folded hand—a contemplative space which, in a world of digitisation, remembers the profound need for humanisation. Interesting, don’t you think, how this fits with our findings.

Thirdly, during the 2017 SAANZ conference at Otago University,⁵⁹ with the wonderfully provocative theme: ‘Respect our existence or expect our resistance!’, a scholar from their National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies with a background in Jungian dream therapy and an interest in Rudie’s ‘leopard and poetry pole dream’ (5.8) raised the question of whether immersion in the River Jordan had taken place. I told her yes, after the Camino voice, and the Great Pyramid sounding, there had indeed been a visit to The Holy Lands with just the event she had detected. But *how* did she know? What patterns of connectedness are there to be recognised?

While seminaria had given me its phenomenological ‘nod,’ clearly, it is in the nature of a lifetime’s work in progress. As Moustakas (1990, p. 55) notes, ‘Heuristic research processes include moments of meaning, understanding, and discovery that the researcher will hold and savor.’ ‘Lifting out the essential meanings of an experience . . . actively awakening and transforming . . . self-understanding and self-growth occur simultaneously in heuristic discovery’ (p. 13). How *well* you co-researchers reflected that! Though *you* weren’t required to take on heuristic inquiry, seminaria, it seems, was congruently heuristic in its own right.

At last the distant shimmer of Adelaide . . . The former participants, in a jolly mood, start conversing in seminaria. Poised on a hill of poetry we gaze across a crepuscular landscape as the city lights twinkle into being. ‘Now it’s your turn,’ one says.

⁵⁹ Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand.



Appendix A Invitation to participate

Letter of introduction

Invitation to participate in a research project

Project title: **The Mindfulness of Seminaria:**

A heuristic, arts-based inquiry with teachers and educational leaders

Dear

I invite you to participate in a research project on arts-based mindfulness for teachers and educational leaders that Gaylene Denford-Wood, one of my PhD candidates in the School of Education at Flinders University, South Australia, is conducting.

The study will explore a new approach to mindfulness known as Seminaria that involves experimenting with a simple poetry form. Gaylene is particularly interested in what teachers and educational leaders from the different sectors (early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and beyond) discover that is relevant to their personal and professional life. Therefore, I would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this exciting project.

Gaylene will provide participants with a journal and she anticipates that participants will spend 15-20 minutes per day journaling for three weeks, a total of 7 hours. She will ask you to participate in three interviews of approximately 1½ hours each, and possibly a focus group conversation of the same length, with a follow-up meeting at the end of her data gathering. She estimates the total time of involvement would be 15 hours.

Please be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence. None of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You would be entirely free to withdraw your participation at any time and to decline to answer particular questions. Participation in the study is voluntary.

If you are interested in participating in the study please contact my student, the principal researcher, Gaylene Denford-Wood at dent0076@flinders.edu.au for an Information Sheet and Consent Forms.

If you have any further questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact Gaylene

by email or me, Dr Leigh Burrows, phone +61 8 8201 3022, leigh.burrows@flinders.edu.au

Yours sincerely

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 6871). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Appendix B Participant information sheet

Title: The Mindfulness of *Seminaria*: A heuristic, arts-based inquiry with teachers and educational leaders

Researchers:

Gaylene Denford-Wood MEd (Hons) – Principal Researcher

Dr Leigh Burrows – Primary Supervisor

Assoc. Professor Kathy Arthurson – Associate Supervisor

Description of the study:

This study is part of a new arts-based mindfulness project, *The Mindfulness of Seminaria*, designed to investigate the effects of a little-known sociopoetic form used contemplatively and experimentally, as a way of managing teachers' reflective practice. Teachers' and educational leaders' workloads are apt to expand rather than reduce. This unique "less is more" *Seminaria* mindfulness will be investigated for its holistic potential as a new workload coping strategy. This project is supported by Flinders University School of Education.

Purpose of the study:

The project aims to find out how a group of teachers and educational leaders experience the effects of *Seminaria* mindfulness by implementing it into their existing daily reflective and meditative practice by journaling their examples of the poetic form and any effects it has on them personally and professionally.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to attend a face-to-face interview with the researcher who will ask you a few questions about your motivation for your mindfulness meditative practices which will take about 15 minutes. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. Once recorded, the interview will be transcribed and stored as a computer file. This is voluntary.

The next part will take 30 – 40 minutes. You will be given a clear outline of the steps for implementing *Seminaria* mindfulness as a daily (15-20 minute) experimental arts-based practice for your own use. You will also receive a Journal to record your own examples of the poetic form and your impressions of the mindfulness process as it becomes established for you. A printed guidesheet is included in the Journal (and contacts and suggestions for back-up support from the researcher whenever needed).

Participants are not identified by name and you will remain anonymous.

There will be two more non-structured, conversational-type interviews about your experience of this mindfulness practice at approximately three-week intervals. These will be held at a time and a place suitable for you. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed and returned to you for verification and any required corrections you wish to make to your intended meaning.

You may be invited to join a focus group between interviews 2 and 3. (Total time estimate is 15 hours.) All transcribed interviews will be stored digitally and later destroyed in accordance with the ethics committee's guidelines.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?

The sharing of your experiences will improve the knowledge base that supports the planning and teaching of future arts-based mindfulness programs. We are keen to explore potential ways of supporting and enhancing the personal/professional lives of teachers and educational leaders.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

We do not need your name and you will be anonymous. Once the interview has been typed-up and saved as a file, the voice file will be stored securely for the period required by the ethics committee, then destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed and the typed-up file stored on a password protected computer that only the principal investigator (Gaylene Denford-Wood) and her primary supervisor at Flinders University will have access to. Your comments will not be linked directly to you.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

It is unlikely other group members would be able to identify your contributions. Those who may later form a focus group, however, will be requested to give their assurance not to disclose the identity of others or the contents of the discussion. The researcher anticipates few risks from your involvement in this study. If you have any concerns however, regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please don't hesitate to raise them with the investigator (Gaylene Denford-Wood) or her principal supervisor whose contact details are listed below.

How do I agree to participate?

Participation is voluntary. You may answer 'no comment' or refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without effect or consequences. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate please read and sign the form and send it back to me at gdw1@clear.net.nz

How will I receive feedback?

At any time during the study please feel free to contact Gaylene to have your queries answered or to receive feedback. Outcomes from the project will be summarised and given to you by the investigator if you would like to see them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

Yours sincerely

Dr Leigh Burrows
Senior Lecturer, School of Education

Convenor, Mindfulness Research SIG
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Appendix C Consent forms

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

(by interview and other illustrative material)

The Mindfulness of Seminaria: A heuristic, inquiry with teachers and educational leaders

I.....

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Letter of Introduction/Invitation to Participate in the research project on **The Mindfulness of Seminaria: A heuristic inquiry with teachers and educational leaders.**

Interviews

I agree to participate in up to four interviews:

- one on the motivation for my own mindfulness meditative practices as a teacher
- two or three on *Seminaria* arts-based mindfulness practice I am exploring as part of this study

Please tick to indicate your willingness to participate in each option.

I would like to be interviewed via:

- Face-to-face
- Skype
- Phone
- Email
- A combination of these options

Illustrative Materials

- I would like to provide some illustrative examples of my *Seminaria* mindfulness practice.
- I would like to keep a daily journal entry record of my *Seminaria* mindfulness explorations and impressions.
- I have read the information provided.
- Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
- I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
- I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for reference.

I understand that:

- I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
- I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.

- While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
- Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, is of no consequence.
- I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
- I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this research with a family member or friend.
- I may change my consent options at any time during the study and will notify the researcher and sign a new consent form.

Participant's signature..... Date.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name.....

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

CONSENT FORM FOR (potential) PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

FOCUS GROUP

**Title of Project: The Mindfulness of Seminaria: A heuristic, arts-based inquiry with teachers
and educational leaders**

1. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this project.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that my participation in the study involves participating in a focus group of approximately 90 minutes duration. I understand that the focus group will be audio recorded for transcription at a later date.
4. I understand that there are no specific risks anticipated as a result of my participation in this study. However, I understand that for whatever reason I may withdraw from the study at any time.
5. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the Flinders University premises for five years and will then be destroyed.
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant.
8. I understand that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purposes of the research.
9. I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect and, if I so wish, I may request that any data I have supplied to date, be withdrawn from the research.
10. In order to protect anonymity I give my assurance that I will not disclose the identity of focus group participants or the discussion contents.

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Statement by Investigator

I have explained the project and the implications of participating in it to this volunteer/participant and

I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation. The participant has received the Information Sheet with my details provided, and has the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this focus group.

Name of researcher

Signature of researcher

Date:

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee **Project number 6871**. For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on +61 8201 3116, or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au*

Appendix D Semi-structured interview one schedule

The Mindfulness of Seminaria: A heuristic, arts-based inquiry with teachers and educational leaders

Interview questions, or list of topics for the first interview (strictly confidential)

1) How long have you been a teacher (in any capacity)? **(Number of Years)**

2) In which sector/s do you teach or lead?

ECE, primary, intermediate, secondary, tertiary, higher education, adult education, across ages

(Circle all that apply.)

3) Predominant subject area/s in which you teach and learn or lead (e.g. mathematics, P.E., health and wellbeing, natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, across-curricula, pedagogy, the arts, music, trades, languages, ESOL, Technology)

4) What age were you when you first became interested in mindfulness/meditation? **age in years.**

What year was that?....

5) What sparked your interest?

6) Why did you start meditating? (Influences that led to your entering a mindfulness/meditation practice/inner contemplative path?)

7) What types of mindfulness/meditation inform your personal practice? (Thenand now.....?)

Would you mind describing your own personal experience with mindfulness/meditation etc?

8) What do you like/ what suits you about your current practice?

9) What factors in your life tend to interrupt the pattern or consistency of your practice?

10) How easy is it for you to reinstate your practice after a break?

11) What would you say are the most noticeable effects in your life when you stop mindfulness/meditation?

12) What are the most noticeable effects in your life once you resume practice?

13) Do you also practice in a group? If so, how often?.....Why?.....What do you value about it?

14) In a typical month, would you say you meditate: **(Circle one /or more with comment.)**

Daily (**Morning &/or Night**) Once a day... 3-5 times per week ...

15) Length of meditations typically 5-10 mins.... 10 – 20 mins ... 30 mins.... 40min – 1hr ... more than 1 hr ...

(Tick all that apply within a typical week.)

16) What are the *current* reasons you meditate?

17) What results/ benefits do you generally experience from meditating?

18) Do you notice any differences when you meditate for longer periods? **(Please explain as fully as you can. Include any sensorial and bodily changes.)**

19) Do you believe the experience of meditation has changed you over time? **(Please explain.)**

20) Do you ever use movement or artistic activity in conjunction with your meditation? **(Please describe.)**

21) Do you meditate on work/school related matters? If so:

Students? YesNo As a group? Individually? **(Circle all that apply, and below...)**

Teaching and Learning SituationsManagement aspects of your workSchool governance

Other....

22) Have you noticed any changes resulting from these meditative practices? **(general comments)**

23) Do the effects of being a meditator change the way you feel about yourself?/Your work? **(Pls explain)**

24) Anything else you would like to express about this topic?

A few **statistical questions** to conclude: **(circle responses) [NB confidentiality is assured.]**

No identities will be revealed by me or my supervisors.]

Are you male or female?

Your chosen co-researcher name (pseudonym) :.....

Age group: 20-28..... 29-36..... 37-44..... 45-52..... 53-60..... 60+.....

Where do you teach and/or lead?

Your highest qualification/s.....

Many thanks for your time and care!

Appendix E Sample and guide to seminaria practice

Background information (printed in the back of participant journals)

The Seminar Form of poetic writing was designed contemplatively by Jens-Peter Linde in the late 1980s in response to his search for a form more comprehensive than haiku; shorter than a sonnet, that would give him, among other things, the basis for public address. (At the time he was a senior student frequently called upon by his faculty, to offer words of thanks to visiting lecturers and the like.)

“I was looking for a form which would adequately reflect our time and which was amenable to my own poetic consciousness, developed in the spirit of this time” (Linde, n.d., p.2).

Linde structured Seminar Verse on the following three scholarly origins/models:

- the seven steps of philosophy argued by Thomas Aquinas (1225 –1274) **Argumentum/Videtur** (It is seen.) / **Praeterea** (add images or examples; enliven the proposition) / **Sed Contra** (a certain antithesis giving tension to the argument; something to wrestle with) / **Conclusio** (mindful of these, advance your verdict!) / **Respondeo** (going once more through the three previous points. How do they look under the illumination of the preliminary conclusion? (including the final step).
- seven life processes, an integral model of learning proposed by Steiner (1861-1925) sometimes used by teachers in an era of digital download to safeguard students’ knowledge acquisition from the superficiality of ‘undigested’ information overload (van Houten, 2000). This seven-step process advances an integrative model of thinking, cognitive and affective processing and meaningful activity.
- Theory-U (Scharmer, 2009) bringing the future into the present, that he refers to as ‘presencing,’ a seven-step process, starting with intention that is 100 per cent committed to a particular project; immersion with a challenge or opportunity; followed by an inner journey or retreat; synthesis of key insights, followed by deep personal reflection and presencing work; identifying key prototyping initiatives, recognising the work begins to operate from a different place, a different level of energy and inspiration; then rapid prototyping, presenting a version for feedback; then iterate, iterate, iterate, until you come up with a tested prototype.

The name *Seminaria* was my attempt to free the name from its masculine ecclesiastical (Aquinas) connotations without losing its essential identity that I feel privileged to honour. I retain the etymological basis of the word seminar – ‘seed-to-be-germinated’ – in what I believe to be a more

emancipating and suitable sounding name for the mindfulness associated work for which, in this study, it holds a central and creative focus.

It is important to distinguish Seminaria writing from the [traditionally] 17-syllable Haiku which differ significantly in form and intent. Their difference is not simply a matter of ten syllables. For example, Haiku form is left open-ended almost unfinished (Cobb, 2001), whereas Seminaria conclude with a meaningful gesture of closure, marked always by a fullstop. Each new line of Seminaria starts with a capital letter. The middle line provides 'a fulcrum' between a mirroring of the first three and the last three lines.

The construction pattern is 2, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 2 syllables per line e.g.

Listen	(2)
with your heart	(3)
Feel its resonance	(5)
Learn to hear your middle space	(7)
Warmth pulsed radiance	(5)
Truth herald	(3)
Trust it!	(2)

Linde describes how he uses the thought processes of the scholarly origins (above) when **constructing Seminar Verse**:

A premise or statement (**first step**) is given depth, colour, and life through an example, or picture as a **second step**.

Next, this is thrown into question by wondering about (pondering/contemplating) consequences or implications.

The **third step** involves our feelings; a tension is felt.

The **fourth** movement resolves the tension with a decision, my own action, (perhaps a spiritual deed).

It provides a turning point:

Now the prior steps are mirrored and deepened: the psyche finds peace in the tension of the **fifth step** reflecting the third;

the sixth becomes a kind of renaissance as it re-enlivens the second, and the **seventh step** is a culmination, a synthesis, showing the first statement – after it has been worked through – in a new light.

(The second half of the verse mirrors the first, revealing a final concept which includes the original thought, as well as a tentative first result, on a concluding higher level.)

But please, don't let yourself be put off by technicalities! –

Briefly: Your Seminaria—aiming for a summary—reaches out to phenomena, their sense and beauty and concludes with a meaningful gesture. It provides an origin, genesis or history in the first lines, leads to a discovery and to a focus, an aim, meaning and destination in the two concluding lines.

NB, I've included these descriptors for general reference only. Seminaria workshops to date have **focused on fun, creativity and word-play** with little recourse to theory. Everyone has their favourite themes and unique discoveries once they're au fait with Seminaria's simple syllabic form. (You may want to pre-mark the syllable pattern on your page till you get used to it. I also count on my fingers a lot!) **Enjoy!**

Anonymity & confidentiality

You will not be identified in any way in any reporting of this research. You will be asked to select a pseudonym and to de-identify your journal reflections by using this instead of your name.

As a participant you have volunteered to incorporate seminaria into your daily mindfulness practice for at least three weeks:–

I trust you will enjoy your path of inquiry as we journey together on this project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need support with the seminaria writing or journaling process at any stage. You are welcome to contact me [details withheld for this appendix] and I will ring you back. I am available for support anytime between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Some suggestions for your Seminaria writing

- Observational/ Phenomenological (skylines, birdlife, a sleeping child, a pile of dishes, being stuck)
- Recording events
- Contemplative inquiry
- Reflective practice
- Processing your feelings
- Solving dilemmas
- Child study
- Conversational
- 'Bookending' your day
- Planning ahead

1) Please write seminarias daily; journal sequentially and date each entry.

2) At least once a week, please write your reflections of the process. (Date these entries too.)

Feel free to add sketches, symbols, doodles, colour, different pens, any ideas that occur to you about this as a mindfulness activity (intention, attention, attitude – willing, thinking and feeling)

Explore, Experiment, Have fun with the process. Make it your own!

Enjoy!

Appendix F Participant profile (Demographic data relevant to selection criteria)

Participant/ Co-researcher pseudonym	Number of Years teaching:	Sectors have taught in/ Current bolded	Traditions/types of regular contemplative practice/s	Age first became interested in medit- ation/ current age bracket	Examples of literary activities that show enjoyment of the language arts such as Writing/poetry/journaling/word-play
Hope	10 UK + NZ	Primary Int. Secondary Fine-Arts NZ, ECE, PT (independe nt)	Buddhist meditation + yoga, Metta Bhavava, 'just sitting', walking meditation, Insight Dialogue Meditation & NVC (non-violent communication); has recently started anthroposophical meditation.	20 Early 40s	Writer of stories, fine artist, keeps a poetry file and visual/personal journals for creative processes (drawing, painting, writing); Has written haiku with former classes.
Gordon	8 NZ system	Primary NZ, FT Primary Y3	Mindful breathing Metta Bhavana Zazen(sitting medtn) Six element practice Walking meditation Mindful pastel drawing. Teaches an adult wkly meditn. class.	23 Early 40s	Teaches language arts in the primary school curriculum Experienced haikuist
Maree	17 NZ system; 3 International school, PNG; 3 mo. Uganda	Primary/int . Secondary Phys. Ed. Adult Edn NZ, FT Primary Y 5/6	Mindfulness meditation daily a.m. +/or p.m. 5-30 min. Yoga meditation + S'times in conjunction with dance	20s Late 50s	Enjoys the language arts and dance and also within the sociology of indigenous peoples

Mikaela	25 Adult + Higher Education	Human Devet. NZ, Higher Ed.	Prayer for insight, guidance, 'stilling my being'; periods of Siddha Yoga, chanting, walking + swimming meditation	20 Late 60s	A published author and co-author Former fabric artist / uses collage, the visuals of words + images in the mindfulness of her work.
Murray	28 NZ + UK	Technology + Art/ Social Sci. Gym UK Sec. Principal FT (independe nt)	20 min. Meditation daily a.m. + mindful movement + mindful singing daily	30 Began daily practice 6 yrs ago Mid-50s	A love of the language arts, drama, poetry, choral singing
Olivia	9.5 NZ system	ECE, Primary, Int. Tertiary, Adult Ed. NZ, FT Primary Y5	Breath awareness Yoga practices Reflective journaling + Movement/dance	18 Early 50s	Reflective journaling with colour exercises, Poetry writing, Voice work learned in a meditative context at drama school; Language arts taught in the NZ Curriculum
Participants 4 F 2 M Total: N=6	Tchg service Range: 8-28 yr median:13.5 average: 16 years	ECE = 1 Prim. = 3 Sec. prin.=1 Higher Ed=1	Variety of different contemplative/ mindfulness/medit- ation practices	Median: 20 Average age= 48-50 yrs	Variety and range of language arts

Appendix G An exploratory interview with M.R., November 20, 2014

Hello Mariel, how did you come by this poetic form?

I was in Aberdeen over a period of time and met Jens-Peter Linde who introduced me to his seminar form of verse.

Did he go into any discoveries he'd had about it?

No, he kept it matter of fact. 'This is what it is.' Well, you can see what it is. You can feel what it is. But then he did give me little booklets he'd written describing how he works with it. You got the scholasticism which is very much part of his character . . . very scholarly and . . . enthusiastically interested in research into history and language and so on. He'd found that the seminar verse is suited to contemporary expression. He found it helpful.

So you returned to NZ and continued to write it yourself?

Yes.

So what does it mean to you?

It means that any event to do with a person, the seminar verse lends itself to working that through because in my soul and in my mind, I'm involved with the subject and the person and it's a satisfying way of giving a little message you want to express to someone, especially someone you feel a connection with. You can freely express.

What have you learnt from using this form?

It's really important to be conscious of development.

How do you mean?

It means you can't just rest on your laurels of being satisfied with some you may have written in the past. You're always starting from the beginning. Every time, it's 'new born.'

How has your life changed since discovering seminar verse? (What do you do differently as a result?)

I work on the part of my psyche which is my temperament. I work on diplomacy, kindness to others. [laughs, then explains] My [Scottish] sense of humour is very dry for a lot of New Zealanders. They take me at my word without realising I'm actually joking; there's double-entendre involved. When you joke there's actually a joker in among that and the joker is a very, very interesting part of anything. You never get to the bottom of the joker. Think of Shakespeare's jesters. There's a certain

wisdom and knowledge within the jest. It seems that the seminar verse demands truthfulness. When I can't find the words to explain something, I write it in seminar verse—and I've done that in the Social Science section—they understand where I'm coming from but I couldn't have said it in any other form because there's an objectivity attached to the whole process of it.

Is it this objectivity then that enables the conveyance of meaning to others?

Absolutely. They wouldn't understand it unless the subjective is objectified. Then there's a wish to share it.

What experiences do you notice during your writing of them and after writing them?

I'm totally absorbed. I notice only what my mind and my heart is set upon. It's the very best I can call up at the time without being stressed about it. There's no stress. Sometimes there might be something that's not quite right and I have to go back and fix it. Occasionally, there's a tussle with lines and ideas and words. The meaning has not come through the way I want it and then I'll do more work on it. Other times, it just reels off and it's there!

I've sometimes said to people I've given one to, if you read this backwards, it's probably even more telling. (It doesn't always work like that so it's not prescriptive.) When it does work in reverse, it means the same but is presented differently. I call those 'gem' ones because they sparkle the same way forwards and backwards.

Sometimes there's quite a few so it becomes a bit of a story, and at the end there's *always* a resolution. *Always* a resolution. It's amazing. It must be somewhere in my psyche at the beginning that I need to find that . . . that that's what I want to do. I want to work through it and I guess it's really: *What is the meaning of the experience?* I want to know more of the meaning and how I can best deal with it.

So are you saying that this small, 27-syllable form is a vehicle through which you can assess and reflect with absolute truthfulness (you might have a series of them), and it helps you get right to the heart of a matter, to an understanding and in the end, to a resolution?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Definitely, little miracles.

Is there anything else you'd like to add about how this poetic form is meaningful for you?

I was attracted to it initially in the aftermath of journaling that I found copious and clumsy. That's when I started writing haiku and then I was so pleased to find the seminar form which allowed me to expand from the haiku and to complete or *resolve* the process.

For example, I'm beginning to look back at the year. What have been the obstacles? I haven't yet done the other half—looking to see the gifts and the graces I've received because I know that's gone along with it, and there were three main areas of difficulty that I had last year and through working with them in seminar form, I feel I'm better able to understand their value biographically—what I needed to learn from them. The SF demands truthfulness as I've said, and I don't know if this is so for everyone, but at the time of writing it, you can't actually say anything that isn't truthful. (It might get a bit turgid at times!)

It's interesting how very integrated into your life, this SV is.

Oh, absolutely!

And I wonder—this is just in parenthesis now—but I wonder to what extent your deep integrity with it, was what 'jumped onto my shoulder' that morning at Tora . . .

That was amazing!

. . . a turning point for me. I don't know whether, if we'd met in town for coffee, that would have happened, but the fact that we were away out there on the coast in this early morning . . . silence or something . . . and you showed me your journal, and it was like, something sort of 'jumped across.'
[both laugh]

Well, words have got beings, and there's a 'beingness' definitely, about the seminar verse.

Can you expand on that a bit?

Not really. It's not anything you can control. You can only try to express what you're expressing and I have to be open to what comes, and anything that comes is by grace. By *grace*.

You seem to be implying not the Descartes, 'I think, therefore I am' but rather the Goethe, Steiner, Emerson, ideology, 'I am thought through, therefore I am' . . . as in the 'beingness' of what you call 'grace' from another source, for example, 'In the beginning was the Word' . . . ?

There's an eternity within it. I think so. It highlights, I mean all of life is this lemniscate as you so profoundly express and there's just more of that . . . more of that, and wonderful shapes.

Since you've raised that, I come back to how important in the SF is the crossing point of consciousness. Otherwise, you can go round and round and round and round but it doesn't take you any further.

No, that's correct. For me I have to get not just into the light of a subject but into its darkness too.

Because darkness is the shadow part of the light?

It's more interesting. [laughs] It's what's got to be worked out.

And brought into the light?

Exactly.

I get you. So is it the moving, lemniscating, health-giving characteristic of SF (representing eternity, as you said), an expression of the principle: 'as above, so below'?

Going horizontally too, like the eternal Celtic knots – every direction actually, and always the crossing points. There are beginnings and endings but they're not part of the expression; it's the *continuity* that is.

So the continuity within which no two moments are the same. [pause]

I'm interested in your purposes of use. (I have about six different ways I use them.)

Well the main one for me is the problem-solving. There's always mystery. One wants clarity on the mystery and for me it has to be situational. To have something that is *lasting* or could be more *universal*—that's what takes *mastery*. [Though] I don't even think of going to that place. I don't *have* to master . . . I use it as it comes . . . how I'm able to, without competing with myself.

What I hear you saying, I think, is that as a tool it allows you to make progress in consciousness in your own time without stress . . . creating an opening . . .

It's my limited honesty. You know, it's honestly what I can do. With limitations—I don't want to bring in egotism because I think that's the one thing that *defiles* it.

With what you identified before as the 'truthfulness' of SF, I get the impression any egotism would cause what you identified as its 'beingness' to withdraw—do you think?

Yes, yes, I do. I do.

Like the music I play . . . if I'm doing solo work, I'm *totally within* what's happening knowing I'm going to be expressing something. I'm interested always in **brevity . . . profoundness . . . and beauty.**

SF has each of those qualities, doesn't it?

It's like the sunset I described to you. It's about seeing the depth in the natural colours that we recognise in the world. [Laughs] That's enough! Or do you want more . . . [laughs]

Is there any last thing you would like to add?

Just that I have always written since I was quite little . . . expressed popular ideas that were going . . . I remember writing a poem about a flying saucer [chuckles]. I would have been about eleven but I always wrote little bits and pieces for people, particularly my grandmother. When I look at them

now, they're very sweet. There's definitely a fondness for the profound. It's in that direction, in a childlike way. So I'm at the other end of my life now, and childlike rather than childish, I hope! that I'm now able to imbue ideas with the quality of my experience of life which is just *there* . . . like a *gift* . . . a 'weightless sack of treasure.'

Ah, the joys of childhood . . . 'mirrored' in later life, the hindsight of all your experiences and the consciousness you've developed, it sounds refreshing, this 'weightless sack of treasure' . . . keeping you young, vital and exploratory . . . not closed . . . you know?

Absolutely. Well you just really pinged on a memory and an idea. I have had some quite amazing early childhood experiences from the age of three I would say, and each one of those, I think it would be lovely to actually write a seminar verse in honour of those . . . because I can still see the pictures attached to them . . . which is pretty amazing to think that we have an imagination as soon as we can think consciously, we have imagination!

I can't imagine how dull it would be without imagination! I wonder if the mode of early childhood is sometimes called 'participatory consciousness' because you're learning through participating in life while images of the world-all imprint themselves through you.

That's right. It's pictures of the world as we know it . . . like an angel . . . experience goes into what can't be put into words.

And that which can't be put into words . . . somehow the SF allows a little closer proximity to it?

I think so. It must do. It must do. I love that the seminar verse has got mathematics and so much logical thought within it. I like that immensely, without dwelling on it . . . and the patterns. The patterns are infinite. [pause, sigh]

Thank you Marie!! (and J-PL).

That's all right! It's not often that I'm asked about such matters.

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