

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Her Breath in our Holy Bones

An intuitive inquiry into the lived experience of kundalini awakenings in Aotearoa,
New Zealand from a critical health psychology perspective

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Master of Science

in

Health Psychology

At Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand

By Sarah Willson

2021

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experience of kundalini awakening in Aotearoa, New Zealand, from a critical health psychology perspective using intuitive inquiry, a five-cycle hermeneutical approach to research grounded in feminist theory, which straddles constructivist and transformative worldviews. Using a tripartite transition model that showed change over time, Te Whare Tapa Whā (a Māori holistic model of health) and yogic theory, this research found kundalini awakenings to be a normal manifestation of embodied psycho-spiritual growth.

Eight individuals from New Zealand who self-identified as having experienced a kundalini awakening were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Key themes of this research indicated that (a) early spiritual experiences, (b) seeking or questioning natures, (c) possible genetic predispositions and (d) smaller kundalini experiences foreshadowed later kundalini awakenings. The effable catalysts to kundalini awakening included (a) energetic or spiritual healing modalities, (b) meditation practices, (c) engaging with spiritual literature, and (d) kundalini yoga. The initial or ‘during’ stages of kundalini awakening were on a spectrum from gradual to explosive that manifested in a range of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual phenomena synonymous with the kundalini literature. After the initial kundalini awakening, individuals described (a) ongoing kundalini phenomena and (b) changes in self-orientation and self-substantiation. These changes had far-reaching implications in all life domains but ultimately led to (a) feeling called to service, (b) increased feelings of compassion towards the self and others, (c) profound changes in worldview, and (d) an increased desire for connection and authenticity.

With no personal conceptual frameworks from which to understand their embodied psycho-spiritual transformations and situated within a culture that tends not to understand kundalini awakenings, kundalini experiencers (a) had difficulty finding spiritually competent support, (b) were frequently pathologized or dismissed, and consequently, (c) were reluctant to disclose their experiences in traditional health care settings. Expanding our scientific paradigms to include a broader range of knowledge systems and improved spiritual competency education within the biomedical setting could lead to better support for those experiencing kundalini awakening and perhaps further elucidate the healing potential inherent in Shakti-Kundalini.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my eight co-researchers who shared their stories of kundalini awakening; without your participation, this research would not have taken place. To my supervisor, Dr Heather Kempton, thank you for your guidance and insightful advice throughout this research journey. I also acknowledge my family and friends' continued support throughout this, quite frankly, transformational research-as-spiritual-work journey. Finally, to my husband Phil, thank you for everything!

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Δ Māori terms.

∞ Sanskrit terms.

☼ Terms not related to Māori or Sanskrit.

∞ **Advaita Vedanta:** A school of non-dual Indian philosophies that believes Brahman is the highest principal of ultimate reality, the phenomenal transient world is illusory, and the true self (atman) is undifferentiated from Brahma(n).

Δ **Ahi tawhito:** Ancient fire.

Δ **Ahi tipua:** Supernatural fire.

∞ **Anadamaya kosha:** The fifth of the five layers, or sheaths of the body (and perfusing the other sheaths). The anadamaya kosha is the most subtle or innermost layer of the human body. It is associated with the capacity for joy and bliss consciousness, which is instrumental in unity consciousness.

Δ **Aotearoa:** the Māori name for New Zealand most commonly translated to the land of the “long white cloud”.

∞ **Asana:** Sanskrit term for posture or pose. The number of asana variations is boundless; however, Hatha Yoga details eighty-four posture arrangements. Asanas are designed to facilitate the flow of energy within the body, improve posture, and prepare the body for meditation.

Δ **Ata:** Astral or shadow body.

∞ **Atman:** Over soul, Spirit, Brahman and Self, a manifestation of Brahman on the material plane. Atman is God within every man; our human soul, our true and unselfish selves and separate from ego. In knowing ones’ true self, liberation from reincarnation is achieved.

∞ **Bhagavad Gita:** Written in 14th century CE, The Bhagavad-Gita, one part of the Mahabharata epic, details conversations between Krishna and his disciple Arjuna. It is the most sacred text in Hinduism and describes the nuances of ethics, conscious and duty in daily life.

- ∞ **Bhakti yoga:** One of the three foundational yogas of the Bhagavad Gita, along with jnana and karma yoga. Bhakti is the yoga of loving devotion and teaches singular concentration upon ones' personal conceptualization of God.
- ∞ **Brahma(m):** The highest universal principle of the Hindu holy trinity. The luminous, eternal truth. Unchanging, yet the catalyst of change. Similar to notions of The Supreme Being (Ishwara), The Tao, Christ consciousness, the Great Spirit, unity consciousness, or Iōnui in Māori.
- ∞ **Chakras:** The chakras are subtle energy points or vortices in the human subtle body anatomy. One perspective sees the chakras as a symbolic map of consciousness in the human body. Other viewpoints suggest the chakras are interconnected with the physical body and associated with organs, the endocrine system and nerves plexuses.
- ∞ **Chit-Kundalini:** 'Pure Awareness', Chit-Kundalini is the aspect of kundalini that underpins various states of consciousness.
- ∞ **Chitta vritti:** Mental chatter, restlessness and confusion. Similar to the notion of 'the monkey mind'.
- ☀ **Consciousness:** The perfusive and relational state of being aware, which includes, but is not restricted to, rational consciousness in humans.
- ☀ **Divine: Of God:** Infused with the intensity of truth, love and beauty.
- ☀ **Dualism:** Opposing or contrasting aspects. The idea that everything belongs to the category of either A or B, this or that, or black and white with minimal overlap.
- ☀ **Entity:** A non-corporeal as opposed to a material presence, which could be one of many forms. Entities may be divine or not; related to a human or not; malevolent or benign.
- ☀ **Evolutionary consciousness:** Transcending and evolving consciousness aligns with the idea of species evolution towards divine consciousness.
- ☀ **Flowing wakefulness:** A feeling of being 'in the flow' or living life in a transcendent state. The state of being is also characterized as being immersed within the material world yet not emotionally or materially attached to it.

☀ **God:** Used in the broadest sense of the word, including Abrahamic and Non-dual conceptualizations of God and interchangeable with ‘the Divine’.

∞ **Granthi:** a Sanskrit term that denotes psychic knots or energetic blockages related to the body, mind and egoic attachments that impede prana flow through the subtle body anatomy.

∞ **Guru:** A teacher or a spiritually knowledgeable individual who has gained inner knowledge, self-realization and liberation from rebirth.

Δ **Hāmano:** Pure soul.

Δ **Hapu:** Kinship group, clan, tribe, or subtribe sharing descent from a common ancestor.

∞ **Hatha yoga:** The physical postures (asanas) of yoga philosophy and the most common type of yoga taught in the West. Hatha yoga focuses on strengthening the body and cleansing subtle energy channels in the body (nadis).

Δ **Hauora:** Health, vigour, wellbeing.

☀ **Health:** The word health comes from the old Norse word helge and the Germanic word heil, meaning salvation, holy or sacred (Brüssow , 2013). Health also stems from the old English words hælþ and hale, meaning ‘wholeness, a being whole’, and hælan, the ability ‘to heal’. In this thesis, the word health denotes a state of being that is relational, involves the whole person, acknowledges the human potential to heal, and explicitly connects being healthy with the holy and sacred.

Δ **Hineahuone:** The first woman in Te Ao Māori tradition, who was formed from clay by Tāne, a son of Papatūānuku. Her name means earth-formed woman.

Δ **Ionui:** The omnipresent and formless Supreme Being in most but not all Māori cosmology traditions.

Δ **Iwi:** An extended kinship group or tribe of people with common ancestral ties and associated with a distinct geographical territory.

∞ **Jivanmukta:** A person who has gained, and assimilated infinite and divine knowledge borne of self while still living.

∞ **Jivanmukti:** A state of being anchored in the knowledge of true self (atman) and universal self.

∞ **Jnana yoga:** One of the three foundational yogas of the Bhagavad Gita, along with karma and bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga is the yoga of self-knowledge. And the path to wisdom or knowledge.

∞ **Kālottara Tantra:** One of the earliest sources describing the Subtle Body of Hatha Yoga, written during the 6th-7th centuries.

Δ **Karakia:** Prayer, grace, blessing, ritual or chant.

∞ **Karma yoga:** One of the three foundational yogas of the Bhagavad Gita along with jnana and bhakti yoga, karma yoga espouses keeping the mind focuses on ones' personal conception of God during all activities, works and movements.

Δ **Kiko:** Innards or guts, flesh, the physical dimension of the body.

∞ **Kriya yoga:** The yoga of action and embodied spiritual development. Kriya yoga focuses on breath mastery, action and self-study, using the body as a vehicle for unifying the impersonal and personal aspects of God.

∞ **Laya yoga:** The yoga of dissolution and collapse of self; the letting go of what is no longer needed to merge with supreme consciousness.

Δ **Manawa:** The heart-mind of a person.

∞ **Manomaya kosha:** The third of the five layers, or sheaths of the body relating to the mind, emotions, and thoughts.

∞ **Mantra:** A sacred word or sound that, when recited, alters consciousness through meaning, rhythm, physical vibration, or tone.

Δ **Mauri:** Life principle, life force, the vital essence of a being or entity and a similar notion to that of prana.

∞ **Māyā-Shakti:** The illusory phenomenal world.

Δ **Moko:** a traditional Maori tattoo, typically one on the face

∞ **Mudras:** Sacred hand gestures that alter the flow of energy in the body.

∞ **Nadi(s):** Network of subtle nerve channels in the human body. There are 72,000 nadis in the body channel energy through the body-mind. Meridians in Chinese medicine and acupuncture are a similar concept to that of nadis. The three major nadi channels in the body are (a) the sushumna channel, where kundalini ascends to the crown chakra, (b) the pingala nadi, which carries hot, active solar energy and (c) the ida nadi, which carries cool, sedentary lunar energy. The nadi energy channels do not correspond with Western anatomy's understanding of the nervous system.

∞ **Om:** The causative sound of universal creation.

Δ **Papatūānuku:** The Earth, Earth Mother, wife of Ranginui from whose union all living things originate.

∞ **Para-Kundalini:** Supreme kundalini, unmanifest cosmic energy, the essential nature of the Absolute.

☼ **Post-dualism:** The acceptance of contradictions and paradoxes. Both/neither states are accepted as equally valid rather than either/or possibilities.

☼ **Prabhasvara:** Brightly shining mind, luminosity, uncreated light.

∞ **Prakasha:** The luminosity that emanates from immanent consciousness.

∞ **Prana:** Vital life force that sustains and animates all life, also the outgoing breath. Yoga describes five types of prana in the body; Prana controls breath (prana), waste elimination (apana), the distribution of nourishment (samana), the power of movement (vyana), and powers ascending forces in the sushumna nadi (udana) - which when activated is the force underlying self-realisation.

∞ **Prana-Kundalini:** The vital energy underpinning the created universe which animates all things, including mind-body function in humans.

∞ **Pranamaya kosha:** The second of the five layers, or sheaths of the body. The pranamaya kosha pervades and unites the body and mind and is comprised of prana or life energy.

∞ **Pranayama:** Yogic breath control exercises designed to increase the purity and strength of vital life energy in the body and push prana up the central channel (sushumna), which brings about physiological, psychological and spiritual changes.

∞ **Raja yoga:** The yoga of consciousness, raja yoga, includes meditation, breathing using the body to gain control over the mind and transcend individual nature. The goal of raja yoga is merging with the supreme, experiencing the birth of the spiritual mind and regeneration of the body.

Δ **Ranginui:** Atua (God) of the sky and husband of Papatūānuku, from whose union all living things originate.

∞ **Samadhi:** Enlightenment, a state of bliss and complete absorption. When the witnessed (thought or thing) and the witnesser (thinker or knower) unite and become one, whatever they see, taste, hear, or experience is God, as they are themselves.

∞ **Sanskrit** संस्कृतम्: Predating Latin and Greek, Sanskrit is the Indo-European language in the world, and the foundation of various modern languages. Sanskrit was used predominantly in Hindu philosophical texts, as well as works from Jainism and Buddhism.

☼ **Self:** The innermost essence of being human and beyond the mind and individual ego.

☼ **Self-realization:** The understanding that we are one with the omnipresence of God, letting go of what we are not to realize our true self, which is eternal and unchanging.

∞ **Shakti-Kundalini:** The active feminine aspect of primordial cosmic consciousness and counterpart to Shiva.

∞ **Shaktipat:** (1) The transmission of spiritual energy from one person to another, (2) the descent of grace (Shakti).

∞ **Shaktism:** A major Hindu Goddess worshipping denomination that worships Shakti and her various manifestations as the supreme godhead and a pantheon of goddesses.

∞ **Shiva:** The static and formless masculine aspect of primordial cosmic consciousness and counterpart to Shakti.

∞ **Siddha Yoga:** A spiritual yoga tradition founded by Muktananda that emphasizes shaktipat-diksha, the transmission of spiritual energy from guru to disciple in order to attain self-knowledge, and ultimately self-realization.

☼ **Soul:** One's higher self; divine spark; the divine aspect of a human; the human element that lives on after death (in whatever form); one's true, inner, non-local, self which is also an integral part of the Oneness of life.

∞ **Spanda:** The pulsating vibration that emanates from the Absolute, or Supreme Consciousness.

∞ **Sushumna nadi:** The subtle mechanism of enlightenment, a non-material channel that runs parallel to the spine through which kundalini ascends.

Δ **Taha hinengaro:** Mental and emotional wellbeing, your mind, heart, conscience, thoughts and feelings.

Δ **Taha tinana:** Physical wellbeing, how your body grows, feels and moves.

Δ **Taha wairua:** Spiritual wellbeing, who and what you are, where you have come from and where you are going. From some perspectives, all animate and inanimate things have a whakapapa and a wairua.

Δ **Taha whānau:** Extended relationships, immediate relatives, friends, colleagues, community and the people you care about.

∞ **Tantra:** A philosophy and set of spiritual practices that emerged in India around the 6th Century, focused on harnessing personal and universal energy as a means of liberation in this lifetime. Tantra also refers to texts outlining rituals and practices designed to invoke spiritual energies.

∞ **Tantric Shaivism:** Tantric Shaivism is a non-dual Tantric tradition where recognising God in oneself is the goal. In Kashmir Shaivism, supreme consciousness is termed 'Shiva', and the phenomenal world of people and things is termed 'Shakti'. Shiva-Shakti are given equal status and are undifferentiated – where one exists, so does the other.

∞ **Tantrika:** Someone who adheres to the spiritual practices outlined in the Tantras.

☼ **Tao te Ching:** The cardinal Taoist text, attributed to Lao-tzu, the founder of Taoism.

Δ **Taonga:** A socially and culturally valuable resource, phenomenon, object, idea, or technique.

Δ **Te Ao Māori:** Māori world view which acknowledges the interconnectedness of the land and all living and non-living things.

Δ **Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** The Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand's founding document first signed on 6 February 1840 by representatives of the British Crown and Māori chiefs.

Δ **Te whare tapa whā:** A Māori holistic model of health developed by Sir Mason Durie in 1984 that states individual and communal health emerges from the interconnected dimensions of the body, mind, spirit, family and broader society which are embedded in unbroken relationships to the land and ones' ancestors.

☼ **The Kabbalah:** Originally an orally disseminated set of esoteric Jewish doctrines and practices that are believed to be an integral part of the Oral Torah, given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Δ **Tihei Mauri Ora!:** The sneeze of life.

∞ **Tohuna:** A Māori priest/ess or learned person.

☼ **Tummo:** A Tibetan word for inner fire or spiritual heat in the body and a set of practices designed to gain control over body processes.

∞ **Upanishads:** Written after the Vedas, the Upanishads contain summaries of the Vedas and are also referred to as Vedanta. These short summaries of the Upanishads contain ancient and secret doctrines and refer to subtle energy vortexes known as chakras.

∞ **Vedas:** A large corpus of religious texts originating in ancient India, containing the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature. Initially orally disseminated, the Vedas' knowledge is considered 'revealed knowledge', whose words contain the primordial vibrations of creation.

∞ **Vijnanamaya kosha:** The fourth of the five layers, or sheaths, of the body. The vijnanamaya kosha relates to the dimension of discernment, knowledge and intellect and is responsible for inner growth and personal development.

Δ **Whakapapa:** The genealogical descent of all living things from the gods to the present time.

Δ **Whenua:** Translates into English as ‘land’ and ‘placenta’, alluding to the macrocosmic nourishment Papatūānuku (Mother Earth) provides humans and the microcosmic nutrition and protection gestating women offer their children.

☼ **Wu-wei:** Sometimes translated as 'actionless action', 'wu-wei emphasises living in alignment with the rhythms of nature. Similar in meaning to 'flowing wakefulness'.

∞ **Yoga:** Stems from the Sanskrit root work ‘yug’, which means to yoke or unite. As a philosophy, yoga is a spiritual and ascetic discipline designed to attain complete self-realization, i.e., union with the divine and recognition of your true self.

∞ **Yogi:** A male practitioner of yoga.

∞ **Yogini:** A female practitioner of yoga.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Glossary of Terms	iii
Table of Contents	xii
List of Tables.....	xix
List of Figures.....	xx
List of Abbreviations.....	xxii
Locating the Research	1
Introduction to the Topic	1
A Brief Overview of Western Kundalini Understandings	2
Purpose of the Research and Research Objectives.....	3
Contributions to the Field.....	4
Overview of the Study Design Intuitive Inquiry	5
Intuition as a Research Method	7
Renaming the Research Cycles The Rider Waite Tarot Archetypes.....	7
Overview of the Thesis.....	8
Cycle 1 The Fool	8
Cycle 2 The Hierophant.....	8
Cycle 3 The Chariot.....	8
Cycle 4 The Hanged Man	9
Cycle 5 The World	9
Cycle 1 The Fool	11
Introduction	12
Clarifying the Research Topic.....	12
Preliminary Steps in Clarifying and Refining the Topic	13

Written and Experiential Texts.....	14
Seeing Light.....	15
Hearing Voices	16
Research Title and Disciplinary Lens.....	17
Critical Health Psychology	18
Cycle 2 The Hierophant.....	19
Introduction	20
Part One: Becoming Familiar with the Texts Surrounding the Topic.....	21
Judeo-Christianity Science and Psychology	21
Psychology	24
Digesting the Information.....	26
Suppression of the Goddess.....	27
The Divine Feminine in Christianity From Goddess to Saint	29
Finding my Voice	30
Summary.....	32
Preliminary Interpretive Lenses The Disciplines I am Situated Within	32
Preliminary Interpretative Lenses Emerging Researcher Positionality	33
Part Two Narrowing my Focus	34
Foundational Research	34
Kundalini and Panic Attacks	36
Kundalini and Mental Illness.....	36
Kundalini and Near-Death Experiences	37
Kundalini and Physical Illness	39
Kundalini and Psychedelic Drugs	39
Overlap between Kundalini, Mystical, Religious and Spiritual Experiences	40
Psychometric Measures of Kundalini.....	41
The Therapeutic Potential of Kundalini	42

Disclosing Spiritual Experiences.....	44
Kundalini and the DSM-IV	45
Summary.....	45
Preliminary Interpretive Lenses The Academic Literature	46
Part Three The Cultural Underpinnings of Kundalini	47
Introduction	47
The Cultural Underpinnings of Kundalini.....	48
Merging with the Ground of Being.....	49
What Does Shiva-Shakti Represent?.....	49
Shakti on the Move.....	51
Prana	51
Shakti-Kundalini.....	52
Kundalini-Shaktipat or Top-Down Awakening	53
Kundalini Moving in the Body.....	53
Kundalini and Subtle Body Anatomy.....	55
The Nadis.....	56
The Chakras.....	57
The Abode of Kundalini	58
The Biomedical Body.....	60
Catalysts to Kundalini Awakening and Types of Awakening.....	60
Preliminary Interpretive lenses Kundalini Contextualized.....	62
Part Four Autobiographical Accounts of Kundalini Awakening	65
Dr Willem Fontein Spontaneous Awakening After a Vipassanā Retreat.....	65
Christina Grof Kundalini Awakening During Childbirth.....	66
Usui Reiki Universal Healing Energy	67
Richard Bucke Cosmic Consciousness.....	68
Preliminary Interpretive Lenses Autobiographical Accounts.....	69

Grounding the New understandings of the Hierophant Cycle.....	69
Cycle 3 The Chariot.....	71
Introduction	72
Cultural Context	72
Part One Research Procedures.....	74
Ethics	74
Inclusion and Exclusion criteria	74
Recruitment Intuitive, Purposeful, Snowballing, and Synchronistic.....	75
Co-Researchers.....	76
Co-Researcher Vignettes	76
Interviews	77
Transcription.....	79
Methodolatry	79
Researcher Positionality Substantiated.....	80
Part Two Data Analysis: A Hybrid Approach to Thematic Content Analysis	80
Introduction	80
Inductive Analysis ‘Before’ Kundalini Awakening	81
Step One Inductive Coding.....	82
Steps Two and Three Phenomenological Meaning Units.....	82
Step Four Somatic Validation.....	82
Deductive and Inductive Coding ‘During’ and ‘After’ Kundalini	83
Phase One Four Initial Deductive Themes	83
Phase Two Considering the Yogic Themes with Te Whare Tapa Whā	85
Summary.....	88
Part Three Summary report of the findings	88
‘Before’ Kundalini Awakening Inductive Themes.....	89
Fused Theme Family Background.....	89

Fused Theme ‘Being’ Before Kundalini.....	89
Essence Theme Foreshadowing.....	89
Essence Theme Previous Knowledge of Kundalini Awakening.	96
Essence Theme Triggers and/or Catalysts.....	97
‘During’ Kundalini Awakening Narrative Accounts.....	104
Kundalini Awakening Composite Definition.....	104
Gradual Kundalini Awakening Sirona’s Account.....	105
Explosive Kundalini Awakening Vitus’ Account.....	105
‘After’ Kundalini Ongoing Phenomena, Implications, Support, Disclosure.....	106
Ongoing Kundalini Phenomena	106
Changes in Self-Orientation, Self-Substantiation, and Self-Realization.....	106
Bhakti Yoga / Wairua Change in World View	108
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Transcendence of Egoic Patterns	108
Bhakti Yoga / Wairua Compassion, Equanimity, Moral Intuition	108
Bhakti Yoga / Wairua Integration and Surrender	109
Jnana yoga / Hinengaro Trusting Your Own Wisdom.....	109
Jnana yoga / Hinengaro Reframing Emotional Kriya.....	109
The Interpersonal Implications of Kundalini Awakening.....	110
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Isolation.....	110
Bhakti yoga / Whānau Disruption to the Professional Sphere.....	110
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Friends and Family.....	111
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Interpersonal Energetic Experiences.....	111
Bhakti Yoga / Hauora Authenticity and Connection	111
Karma Yoga / Whānau Call to Serve.....	111
Support	112
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Spiritual and Psychological Support	112
Kriya Yoga / Tinana Stabilizing Kundalini	113
Jnana Yoga / Hinegaro Finding Information about Kundalini Awakening ..	114
Disclosure.....	115
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Validating Kundalini Awakening.....	115
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Ignorance of Kundalini.....	115

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Disclosure Reluctance	115
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau Pathologizing Kundalini Phenomena	116
Summary of Findings	117
Cycle 4 The Hanged Man	119
Introduction	120
Transforming and Refining the Lenses.	120
Part one Reflecting on the Interpretative Lenses.....	120
Expanded Interpretative Lens Patterns in the ‘During’ Data.....	122
Expanded Interpretative Lens Patterns in the ‘After’ Data.....	122
Towards Substantiation and Essence Nature.....	125
New Interpretative Lenses Kundalini Understanding.....	125
New Lens Kundalini Understanding.....	125
Summary.....	128
Part Two Truth-telling	128
Mistakes Made.....	128
Procedures and Plans that Did Not Work.....	129
The Researcher’s Apprehensions and Puzzlements about the Study	129
The Style of Intuitive Interpretation Used.....	130
What Remains Unresolved or Problematic about the Topic or the Method.....	131
Summary.....	131
Cycle 5 The World	133
Introduction	134
Part One Integrating the Findings with the Literature	134
Before Kundalini	134
During Kundalini.....	135
After Kundalini.....	136
Support and Disclosure Advice from my Co-Researchers	137
Part Two Future Directions, Strengths, and Weaknesses	137

Trajectories Future Research	137
Explicit Theoretical Positions.....	139
Epistemological Coherence	139
Longitudinal Research.....	139
The Interpersonal Consequences of Kundalini Awakening	140
Strengths	140
Challenges and Limitations	140
Validating Findings	141
Concluding Remarks	143
References	145
Appendices	162
Appendix A Intuition as a Research Method.....	162
Appendix B Imaginal Dialoguing.....	164
Appendix C The Ascent of Kundalini Through the Subtle Body Anatomy	165
Appendix D Information sheet and Consent Form.....	171
Appendix E Semi-Structured Interview Schedule	174
Appendix F Inductive Coding Auditable Decision trail	176
Appendix G Deductive Coding Auditable Decision Trail.....	182
Appendix H Final Doubled Lensed Codebook.....	190
Appendix I Co-Researcher Narratives of Fused Themes	192
Appendix J Kundalini Circumstantial Triggers.....	198
Appendix K Accounts of Gradual and Sudden Kundalini Awakening Experience	199
Appendix L Ongoing Phenomena, Changes in Self-Orientation, and Interpersonal Implications	208
Appendix M Support and Disclosure	220
Appendix N My kundalini Bottom-Up and Top-Down Awakening	224
Appendix O The Abandoned Scoping Review.....	230

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of Kundalini Catalysts and/or Triggers.....	63
Table 2: Preliminary Interpretive Lenses: Autobiographical Accounts of Awakening..	69
Table 3: Creating and Refining Deductive Themes and Codes.....	84
Table 4: Ongoing Kundalini Phenomena.....	107
Table 5: Summary of Preliminary Interpretive Lenses.....	121
Table 6: Suggestions for Supporting Kundalini Awakening.....	138
Appendices	
Table F1: 'Before' Kundalini: Inductive Codes.....	176
Table F2: The Four Steps of Inductive Coding.....	177
Table G1: Phase One (1A/B): Developing the Code Template.....	182
Table G2: Phase One (2A): Synthesize Categories and KPMU into Codes.....	184
Table G3. A snapshot of the two most prevalent KPMU underpinning deductive yogic codes.....	185
Table H1. Final Codebook.....	190
Table O1: Database Search Strategies.....	234
Table O2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	235
Table O3: Breakdown of Countries Publishing Kundalini Research	237
Table O4: Overview of Journals Publishing Kundalini Research.....	238
Table O5: Framing Kundalini in the Scoped Literature.....	239

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Five Cycles of Intuitive Inquiry Interpretation and their Tarot Archetypes.....	10
Figure 2. The Fool Archetype	11
Figure 3. The Unbroken	15
Figure 4. The Hierophant Archetype.....	19
Figure 5. Shiva-Shakti Kundalini	54
Figure 6. The Chariot Archetype	71
Figure 7. Double Lenses: Te Whare Tapa Whā and Five Yogic Themes	87
Figure 8. Fused Theme: Family Background.....	90
Figure 9. Fused Theme: ‘Being’ Before Kundalini	91
Figure 10. Essence Theme: Gaidir, Foreshadowing	92
Figure 11. Essence Theme: Artemis, Foreshadowing	92
Figure 12. Essence Theme: Laetitia, Foreshadowing.....	93
Figure 13. Essence Theme: Apollo, Foreshadowing	93
Figure 14. Essence Theme: Vitus, Foreshadowing	94
Figure 15. Essence Theme: Sirona, Foreshadowing.....	94
Figure 16. Essence Theme: Peregrine, Foreshadowing	95
Figure 17. Essence Theme: Selene, Foreshadowing	95
Figure 18. Essence Theme: Previous Knowledge of Kundalini Awakening	96
Figure 19. Essence Theme: Vitus, Triggers and/or Catalysts	97
Figure 20. Essence Theme: Peregrine, Triggers and/or Catalysts	98

Figure 21. Essence Theme: Selene, Triggers and/or Catalysts	99
Figure 22. Essence Theme: Apollo, Triggers and/or Catalysts	100
Figure 23. Essence Theme: Sirona, Triggers and/or Catalysts	101
Figure 24. Essence Theme: Laetitia, Triggers and/or Catalysts	102
Figure 25. Essence Theme: Gaidir, Triggers and/or Catalysts	103
Figure 26. Essence Theme: Artemis, Triggers and/or Catalysts	103
Figure 26. The Interconnected, Human, and Cosmic Nature of Kundalini Awakening.....	118
Figure 27. The Hanged Man Archetype	119
Figure 28. ‘During’ Kundalini Experiences at an Individual and Collective Level.....	123
Figure 29. ‘After’ Kundalini Experiences at an Individual and Collective Level.....	124
Figure 30. Individual and Collective Changes Across the Domains of Kundalini Experience	126
Figure 31. The World Archetype	133
Appendices	
Figure O1. What is Known About Kundalini Awakenings?.....	231
Figure O2. A Visual Overview of the Kundalini Literature.....	232
Figure O3. Prisma	235

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC: Accident Compensation Corporation

CAM: Complementary and alternative medicine

CGS: Christian Goddess spirituality

CT: Controlled trial

DSM-IV: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - Fourth Edition

EHE: Exceptional human experiences

GAD: Generalized Anxiety Disorder

IPA: Interpretative phenomenological analysis

KAP: Kundalini activation process

KAS: Kundalini awakening scale

KY: Kundalini yoga

MET: Memory enhancement training

NDE: Near death experience

OCD: Obsessive compulsive disorder

PDD: Persistent depressive disorder

PIL: Preliminary interpretative lenses

PTSD: Post traumatic stress disorder

QOL: Quality of life

RCT: Randomized controlled trial

SAP: Science and psychology

LOCATING THE RESEARCH

Introduction to the Topic

According to tantric traditions, kundalini is the cosmic and embodied aspect of the divine feminine. In the cosmic sense, *Shakti-Kundalini* is the active feminine aspect of primordial cosmic consciousness and counterpart to *Shiva*, the static masculine principal. Together Shiva-Shakti permeates every aspect of the universe and human consciousness in the ensouled body (Kufayev, 2020; Muktananda, 1979). As such, Kundalini-Shakti is both the mechanism and the energy behind individual enlightenment and species evolution towards higher consciousness (Greyson, 2000; Krishna, 1970). Throughout our history, numerous cultures have described and harnessed corollary healing and spiritual energies. To name only three, to the Greeks, kundalini was known as the *Speirema*, as *n/um* or ‘boiling energy’, to the Kalahari, and as *Waken* or *Wakonda* to the Sioux (Dixon, 2008; Garstin, 1932; Greyson, 2000). Once thought of as one of the rarest human experiences, kundalini awakenings traditionally occurred within yogic and tantric traditions in suitably prepared candidates supervised by a knowledgeable *guru*.

In traditional yogic and tantric practices, kundalini was aroused through *asana* (yogic postures), meditation, *pranayama* (breath control), and diet. Yogic and tantric practices, which acknowledge a subtle body anatomy, were designed to raise kundalini energy from the *muladhara* (root chakra) at the base of the spine, draw it up the *sushumna* channel (a central axis in the subtle body that runs along the spine) and into the *sahasrara*, or crown chakra at the top of the head. At this point, the individual soul merges with God¹ and enlightenment occurs. Using the body and sophisticated models of spiritual development that include subtle centres of consciousness, the ultimate goal of *yoga* is the union of Kundalini-Shakti, the personal feminine aspect, with Shiva, the cosmic masculine element (Friedman, Krippner, Riebel, & Johnson, 2010; Louchakova

¹ In the non-dual sense ‘God’ refers to a causal cosmic consciousness which pervades all creation, for example Shiva-Shakti, Brahman, or Ionui. From this perspective human beings are both human and divine.

& Warner, 2003). Shakti-Kundalini's union with Shiva is variously thought to bring about cosmic consciousness, union with God, transcendence, liberation, or oneness. Succinctly Edwards (2014, p. 59) describes kundalini awakening as a “release of the bound power and light of the Divine present within the human form”. However, in traditional contexts, this enlightenment could take a decade or more of intensive spiritual practice. Furthermore, even following sanctioned methods could still result in kundalini awakenings that were dangerous and frightening (Collie, 2000b).

In recent decades, kundalini awakenings are occurring with more frequency worldwide in unprepared westerners (Harris, 1994; Woollacott, Kason, & Park, 2020).

Furthermore, these individuals are often situated in cultures that do not understand kundalini awakening. While kundalini awakening is an extraordinary gift that facilitates healing and psycho-spiritual growth, the journey is often fraught with difficulty as rising kundalini restructures the body-mind through various stages of physiological and psychological purification. Especially in the early stages of kundalini awakening (which can last for months or years), the purification process and the influx of high vibrational energy can be highly disruptive to the human organism and exceedingly difficult to contain (Dixon, 2008; Greenwell, 2002). For some, this process results in psychic chaos, physical collapse, painful egoic death and the loss of one's belief systems. Also, kundalini awakening can produce an array of physical symptoms, including auditory and visual experiences, sensations of heat and light, feelings of energy or electricity moving in and around the body, and altered states of consciousness. For those with no frame of reference, these experiences can be painful and frightening, especially without support or validation.

A Brief Overview of Western Kundalini Understandings

Early western understandings of kundalini began with Sir John Woodroffe's book *The Serpent Power*, first published in 1919. This text introduced *Shaktism*, Hindu *Tantra*, kundalini and the *chakras* to a western audience for the first time (Avalon, 1974).

Western interest in kundalini was further strengthened in 1932 when Carl Jung presented a ground-breaking lecture series on kundalini yoga and the symbolic meaning of the chakras interpreted through the lens of Jungian psychology. References to kundalini yoga peppered Jung's writing. Consequently, it is widely suggested that Jung's theory of individuation, the first western psychological model to include higher

consciousness in a model of psychological functioning, was informed by kundalini yoga and the chakra system (Coward, 1985). While Jung's integration of Eastern spiritual concepts and western psychological thought was considered ground-breaking at the time, today, we would consider interpreting the culture of others through our own cultural lens as ethnocentric.

Using his physio-kundalini model, foundational research by Bentov (1977) mapped the progressive nature of kundalini symptoms by body location, body sensations and psychological symptoms. This model was later expanded on by Sannella (1987), who expanded on the physio kundalini model by adding the category 'non-physiological phenomena' and medicalized some of the experiences. Variations on Bentov (1977) and Sannella's (1987) model are prevalent in the kundalini literature and have informed later research, including Sanches and Daniels' (2008) pilot psychometric instrument, the kundalini awakening scale, which was designed to quantify aspects of the kundalini awakening experience. Researchers have also explored the relationship between kundalini and near-death experiences (Greyson, 1993a; Kason, 2008; Ring & Rosing, 1990); panic attacks (Thalbourne & Fox, 1999); psychosis (Benning, Harris, & Rominger, 2018; Greyson, 1993b); and psychedelic drug experiences (De Gracia, 1997). Researchers have also explored the therapeutic potential of harnessing spiritual energy using kundalini yoga from a complementary health care perspective. This research investigated the efficacy of kundalini yoga as an intervention for obsessive-compulsive disorder (Shannahoff-Khalsa et al., 2019), post-traumatic stress disorder (Jindani, 2015b) and mild cognitive impairment (Eyre et al., 2017). Finally, from the perspective of palliative care and psycho-oncology, some researchers have suggested kundalini could help reduce death anxiety, empower patients, and reduce the side effects of radiation treatment (Kumar, 2002; Shannahoff-Khalsa, 2005).

Purpose of the Research and Research Objectives

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experience of kundalini awakenings in Aotearoa, New Zealand, from a critical health psychology perspective. I am a female researcher from New Zealand, and my values align with qualitative research principles. Reflecting this, the purpose of this thesis was grounded in four additional personal and academic values.

1. I wanted the research to be value-laden, so I honoured my co-researchers experiences at face value, and I positioned kundalini awakening as a normal human experience of embodied psycho-spiritual transformation.
2. I wanted to validate and fully explicate my research topic, so I challenged the largely unarticulated philosophies and values that underpin conventional western cultural and scientific assumptions about the nature of reality that privilege materialism and empiricism.
3. I wanted to explicitly incorporate the *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (the Treaty of Waitangi) principles of partnership, participation, and protection and make my research relatable to New Zealand readers. So, I included *Te Ao Māori* (Māori world view) and holistic Māori models of health to acknowledge that spirituality underpins whole health and contextualise kundalini in a New Zealand setting.
4. I wanted to use my own voice and include my own ways of knowing because I am implicated in the research. I was never a detached outside observer, so why pretend to be one through detached language and conventional epistemologies?

Contributions to the Field

Despite the increased frequency of kundalini awakening globally, there is scant research into the phenomena. Furthermore, although kundalini experiencers can benefit from support and validation, and spirituality has been shown to increase wellbeing (Scott, Garver, Richards, & Hathaway, 2003), health care providers have few spiritual training resources to rely on (Benning, Harris, & Rominger, 2018). Thus, within the biomedical setting, kundalini awakenings tend to be ignored at best and are often marginalised or pathologized (O'Connor & Vandenberg, 2005; Sannella, 1987). This reflects a general climate of materialism within western societies and leads to disclosure reluctance among those undergoing embodied psycho-spiritual transformation.

This study was intended to address these concerns and increase the understanding of kundalini awakening by contributing to the existing body of research. This research also intends to fill a gap in the literature because it is the first to (a) explore kundalini awakening in Aotearoa, New Zealand; (b) locate kundalini awakenings within a critical

health psychology perspective; (c) use empirical and intuitive modes of knowing; and (d) employ holistic Māori models of health to understand kundalini awakening. My goal in writing this thesis was to inform healthcare providers about kundalini awakening and explicitly link spirituality to health. I hope that a better understanding of kundalini awakening and reflecting on how we frame kundalini awakenings will lead to improved support for kundalini experiencers and improved spiritual competency within the biomedical setting.

Overview of the Study Design | Intuitive Inquiry

Intuitive inquiry began in the field of transpersonal psychology in the mid-1990s. Over time it has spread to diverse areas such as education, economics, environmental studies, psychology, public health, medicine and nursing science (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2011). Intuitive inquiry shares commonalities with qualitative research as a means and orientation for investigation (Anderson, 2011). Like hermeneutic approaches, intuitive inquiry does not have fixed inquiry methods; instead, it presents itself as a “scholarly grist” that can inform researcher orientation and methods (Anderson, 2011). Intuitive inquiry is a five-cycle hermeneutical approach to research grounded in feminist theory, which straddles constructivist and transformative worldviews (Creswell, 2014).

Anderson (2004) describes intuitive inquiry as “an epistemology of the heart that joins intuition to intellectual precision in a hermeneutical process of interpretation” (p. 308). Inspired by feminist and heuristic approaches to research, intuitive inquiry also incorporates principals from Friedrich Schleiermacher’s biblical hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s embodied phenomenology, Eugene Gendlin’s “thinking beyond patterns”, and the intuitive and embodied practices found in aboriginal traditions (Anderson, 2011).

Epistemologically, intuitive inquiry looks for new understandings grounded in the researcher’s compassion for self, others, and the world; in doing so, the traditional subject-object division of traditional epistemologies is dissolved. The intuitive inquirer is always “chasing a moving target” (Anderson, 2011, p. 18) because insight changes what can be known, and then, what is known expands into what can be intuited in ongoing cycles of ebb and flow (Anderson, 2011). Consequently, using broader and more holistic ways of knowing can result in intuitive inquirers receiving insights that break with established theories and research methods.

Intuitive inquiry is a critical methodology because it facilitates transformation, encourages creative engagement within the research process and has a broader epistemological scope than traditional research paradigms. Methodologically, intuitive inquiry does not seek to replace the linear left brain's characteristics with those of the creative and imaginative right brain. Instead, it aims to unify feminine and masculine perspectives by balancing “structure and flexibility, exterior and interior, the reason and emotion, thinking and feeling, discernment and holism” (Netzer, cited in Anderson, 2011, p. 16).

Intuitive inquiry explicitly brings the subjective researcher into the study by incorporating interpretative lenses at two points within the five research phases. The first interpretative lenses are presented in cycle 2 after the literature review and in cycle 4. Cycle 2 interpretative lenses provide a space for the researcher to articulate their early understandings of the topic and themselves in relation to the research topic. Later, in cycle 4, the researcher revisits the preliminary interpretive lenses and reflects on how their understandings have evolved.

The four distinctive features of intuitive inquiry that set it apart from other hermeneutical and phenomenological approaches are: (1) its transformational potential for the researcher, the co-researchers and the readers; (2) surrendering to “auspicious bewilderment”, periods when the researcher feels stuck or blocked as new understandings emerge from unawareness to awareness; (3) writing in your own voice; and (4) theory building (Anderson, 2001, 2002, 2011). Finally, intuitive inquirers often explore side-lined or marginalised topics that are fully deserving of attention in academia and society (Anderson, 2011). Thus, the issues chosen by intuitive inquirers can be a cultural or academic call for change (Anderson, 2011).

For me, as a female researcher, intuitive inquiry offered the space and structure to do justice to the topic of kundalini awakenings, honour my co-researchers' experiences, and understand my own. The values of intuitive inquiry aligned with my personal and academic values and led me to ask questions about the disciplinary lenses I was situated within. Within the intuitive inquiry framework, I became increasingly confident in using my own voice and embracing my own ways of knowing. Consequently, I became a methodologically innovative researcher because I privileged my research topic, kundalini awakenings, over method. In closing, intuitive inquiry transformed my

research from a purely academic thesis into research-as-spiritual-work (Romanyshyn & Anderson, 2007) because it (a) asked me to bring all parts of myself into the project and then (b) articulate to the reader how the research changed me.

Intuition as a Research Method

The five cycles of intuitive analysis and interpretation hinge on researcher intuition as a research method. Davis-Floyd and Arvidson (2016) define intuition as “the direct perception of things as they are” and propose that when “we experience the world directly, beyond the filter of conception, we live in that world” (Davis-Floyd & Arvidson, 2016, ix). This notion of intuition suggests an embodied experience of knowing occurs before cognition (Anderson, 2011). For most people, intuitive processes may inform logical reasoning and reflection, yet this often occurs outside of conscious awareness (Anderson, 2011; Harris, 2008). With practice, intuitive perceptions can be brought into conscious awareness and integrated with knowledge we already possess from the senses and analytic reasoning.

Intuition shares features with mystical experiences in that it is numinous and intangible. However, Anderson (2011) does identify five different intuitive research skills: (1) unconscious, symbolic, and imaginal processes; (2) psychic or parapsychological experiences; (3) sensory modes of intuition; (4) empathic identification; and (5) through-our-wounds. Appendix A provides a brief description of each intuitive style. Anderson (2011) summarises intuitive inquiry as a research paradigm that uses intuition in the context of scientific research to generate deeper, more nuanced insights and theories about being human that are grounded in the ethics of compassion. Accordingly, the fluid and interactive nature of intuitive inquiry inevitably changes both how the researcher understands the topic and how they understand themselves personally (Anderson, 2011).

Renaming the Research Cycles | The Rider Waite Tarot Archetypes

Intuitive inquiry comprises five hermeneutic cycles designed to move from parts of the experience to the whole of the experience and back and forth until the researcher is left with sensible meanings and no contradictions (Anderson, 2011; Polkinghorne, 1984). Anderson’s (2011) five phases of interpretation are cyclical and iterative; hence they do not fully correspond with traditional theses chapter titles like “Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Results and Discussion”. Instead of shaping the contents of intuitive

inquiry into a standard format, Anderson (2011) suggests that researchers use the five cycles as chapter headings.

Each phase of my research-as-spiritual-work, like the stages of kundalini awakenings, contained archetypal themes. Because consciousness is not a purely rational process, I used tarot cards throughout the research cycles as a means for getting in touch with my own unconscious and the pictures, symbols and archetypal situations of our collective psyches (Nichols, 1980). Accordingly, I renamed each research cycle with a tarot archetype. Thus, I added a further layer of meaning (for myself and the reader) and authenticity to each cycle by articulating the archetypal themes at play at each stage in the research. Throughout the thesis, each cycle opens with a tarot archetype that embodies the gestalt of cycles one to five. The thesis is structured in line with Anderson's (2001) five cycles. I offer a brief overview of each cycle below.

Overview of the Thesis

Cycle 1 | The Fool

The purpose of Cycle 1, The Fool Cycle, is to clarify the research topic. In the fool cycle, I articulated my naïve lense, explore my research motives and engaged with various hermeneutical 'texts' related to the topic. The fool cycle concludes with a precisely stated research topic and the disciplinary lens of critical health psychology.

Cycle 2 | The Hierophant

Cycle 2, The Hierophant Cycle, presents the literature review in four parts. In part one, I explore the philosophical underpinnings of science and psychology and feminine suppression. In part two, I review the academic kundalini literature. In part three, I explore the cultural underpinnings of kundalini, and in part four, I present autobiographical accounts of kundalini awakening. Also, in the Hierophant Cycle, I offer my preliminary interpretative lenses (PIL) to illustrate my understanding of the literature and the meaning I made from it.

Cycle 3 | The Chariot

Cycle 3, The Chariot cycle, has three parts: (a) data collection procedures; (b) data analysis; and (3) presenting a summary report of the findings. In part one of the Chariot Cycle, I describe my research procedures, introduce my co-researchers and articulate my researcher positionality. In part two, the data analysis phase, I frame the temporal

aspects of kundalini awakening in terms of ‘before’, ‘during’, and ‘after’ using Beasley’s (2013) tripartite transition model. Additionally, I present a double lens framework drawn from yogic theory and *te whare tapa whā* to frame kundalini experiences holistically and relationally. I also outline my deductive and inductive hybrid approach to thematic content analysis. Part three of the Chariot Cycle concludes with a summary of my findings presented as ‘before’, ‘during’ and ‘after’ kundalini awakening.

Cycle 4 | The Hanged Man

Cycle 4, The hanged man cycle, has two parts. In part one, I reflect on my preliminary interpretative lenses from the hierophant cycle and articulate how the research changed me. Next, I present ‘expanded lenses’ that further develop patterns in the data and ‘new lenses’ which reflect new understandings based on my findings. In part two, the ‘truth telling’ phase of the research, I talk about (a) the mistakes I made; (b) procedures that did not work out; (c) my apprehensions about the findings; (d) the intuitive processes I used; and (e) what remains unresolved or problematic.

Cycle 5 | The World

Cycle 5, the world cycle, completes the intuitive inquiry process in two parts “as though drawing a larger hermeneutical circle around the hermeneutical circle prescribed by the forward and return arcs of the study” (Anderson, 2004, p. 323) to look at the study as a whole. In part one, I reflect on the findings in relation to the literature and discuss the implications of the research. Part two concludes the thesis by suggesting future research trajectories and addressing the study's strengths, limitations, and validity. Figure.1 on the following page summarises the five cycles of intuitive inquiry and their corresponding tarot archetypes.



Figure 1. The five cycles of intuitive inquiry interpretation and their tarot archetypes. Adapted from "Intuitive Inquiry", Anderson (2011, p. 28) Transforming Self and Other Through Research.

CYCLE 1 | THE FOOL



Figure 2. The fool archetype. Adapted from Waite (1999), The Original Rider Waite Tarot Deck.

Introduction

The Fool is the first archetype in the Rider-Waite major arcana. This archetype represents the beginning of a new journey, courage, inexperience, making bold choices and stepping into the abyss from a place of confidence and trust in the universe (Sergel, 2017b). These elements were implicitly and explicitly at play when I began this research. When I approached my supervisor, I had done a few kundalini yoga classes on YouTube. Still, I had no idea what a kundalini awakening was, nor did I grasp that I was in the early stages of kundalini awakening. Thus, from a naïve lense, I would say I knew nothing about kundalini awakening; the topic was offered to me, and I claimed it. Although I could not cognitively acknowledge I was in the throes of embodied psycho-spiritual transformation, part of me knew. This part compelled me to reject a thesis topic I had previously been approved for and contact a supervisor I knew had spiritual research expertise. In doing so, I certainly stepped into the abyss

Clarifying the Research Topic

Traditional research is often based on current research trends or a review of the theories and literature related to researcher areas of interest. In contrast, intuitive inquirers tend to choose - or be chosen by - topics that they are passionate about or have lived experience of (Anderson, 2011). To clarify and refine the topic of interest, Anderson (2011) encourages intuitive inquirers to select images or 'texts' that attract their attention then engage with them through a process known as imaginal dialogue. In hermeneutical terms, the word 'text' broadly encompasses meaning-making (Freinkel, 2014). A text can be prose, a poem, an image, an experience, or something that repeatedly draws the researcher's attention and resonates with the research topic, often in abstract or ambiguous ways (Freinkel, 2014).

The process of imaginal dialoguing involves becoming aware of ideas, sensations, symbols, texts or images that were previously beyond conscious awareness or perhaps considered unrelated, and then engaging with them expansively (Anderson, 2011). Intuitive dialoguing employs any methods or techniques that facilitate states of expanded consciousness and further illuminates the topic. Initial impressions of the subject are often expansive and maybe preverbal or embodied. Adopting witness consciousness to this process facilitates remembering the contents of imaginal dialogues, which can then be explored later through journals, words, songs, artwork or

movement (Anderson, 2011). Imaginal dialoguing is an iterative, cyclical process that culminates in a precisely stated research question or topic (Anderson, 2011).

I came late to intuitive inquiry; therefore, my musings on this research phase are retrospective. Unsurprisingly to the "me" of 2021, despite no knowledge of Anderson's (2011) imaginal dialoguing, I found my instinctive modes of intuitive inquiry such as sketching, journaling, meditating, and participating in activities related to the topic aligned wholly with Anderson's imaginal dialoguing guidelines (see Appendix B).

Preliminary Steps in Clarifying and Refining the Topic

My preliminary steps in refining and clarifying kundalini awakenings as a research topic occurred experientially in 2017, the year before I started my thesis. There were two preparatory steps. The first was my postgraduate research-as-spiritual-work into cervical cancer. This research resulted in my cancer wounds and toxic illness narrative falling away and a more compassionate and loving story-of-self emerging in its place. The second step was the year-long yoga for trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) course that I participated in during 2017. The yoga course reconnected me to my body, resulting in spontaneous healing events, expanded sensory perceptions, and many other blissful and painful kundalini awakening phenomena. However, at this stage, I had no frame of reference and did not understand my experiences. Specifically relevant to intuitive inquiry, my emerging interoceptive awareness, gained through yoga, resulting in a newfound ability to bring the embodied and unconscious into conscious awareness, a practice Anderson (2011) describes as imaginal dialoguing.

In 2016 and 2017, I still characterized myself as an active agent in charge of my own destiny. However, looking back, there were forces at play outside of my control. I found it increasingly difficult to ignore debilitating anxiety, increased incidences of panic attacks, migrating physical pain, unexplained illnesses, extreme sensitivity to environmental stimuli, and visual phenomena. While some elements of personal kundalini experiences can be articulated, the cosmic or divine aspect is wholly beyond the grasp of reason (Krishna, 1979). In 2017, I was dimly aware of a purposeful driving force or God-consciousness propelling me into these activities. However, I could not, or would not, explore these changes and continued to hold fast to my rational orientation.

The research into cervical cancer (which I now see as spiritual preparation for this thesis) and the yoga course were necessary initial steps. Through these activities, I

released trauma, became proficient in imaginal dialoguing and created the mental and emotional space needed to research kundalini awakenings in Aotearoa, New Zealand. When I began my research at the beginning of 2018, I was already engaging in imaginal dialoguing and participatory activities related to kundalini awakenings. However, I was loath to incorporate imaginal dialogues into an academic thesis on kundalini awakenings because I believed that my intuitive processes were unscientific and had no place in academia.

Written and Experiential Texts

Despite my internalised negativity towards my own intuitive processes and ways of knowing, in the fool cycle, this is precisely how I was engaging with the research. I was claimed by poetic and experiential "texts" related to kundalini awakenings in three profound ways. The first text was a poem called *The Unbroken* by Rashani Réa (1991), which exquisitely described my physio-psycho-spiritual status early in the research in 2018. I had an embodied reaction to the poem. It ripped excruciating sobs from my body on many occasions, prompted spontaneous episodes of rapid breathing followed by fizzing vibrations that extended beyond my physical form. I read it again and again until my enchantment with the poem slipped away like a retreating tide. Although I still knew very little about kundalini awakenings and did not quite grasp my own experiences, in early 2018, I sensed that *The Unbroken* alluded to the embodied, transformative, psycho-spiritual potential inherent in the kundalini awakening process.

Figure 3 on the following page presents Rashani Réa's poem *The Unbroken* together with an image of Japanese Kintsukuroi (golden mend) pottery art that visually illustrates the meaning I made from this poem. Kintsukuroi is the Japanese art of mending broken things. The philosophy behind kintsukuroi is one of acknowledgement and authenticity. Rather than disguising cracks or discarding broken objects as inherently unrepairable, kintsukuroi art acknowledges the breakages and then repairs them (Doyle & Saying, 2015). In doing so, kintsukuroi art creates items that, arguably, are stronger and more beautiful than they were before they were damaged (Doyle & Saying, 2015).

My second and third "textual" manifestations related to the topic were experiential. Within the context of kundalini awakenings as a natural phenomenon, these experiential

texts served to encourage me into the research topic and depathologized experiences that had previously frightened me.

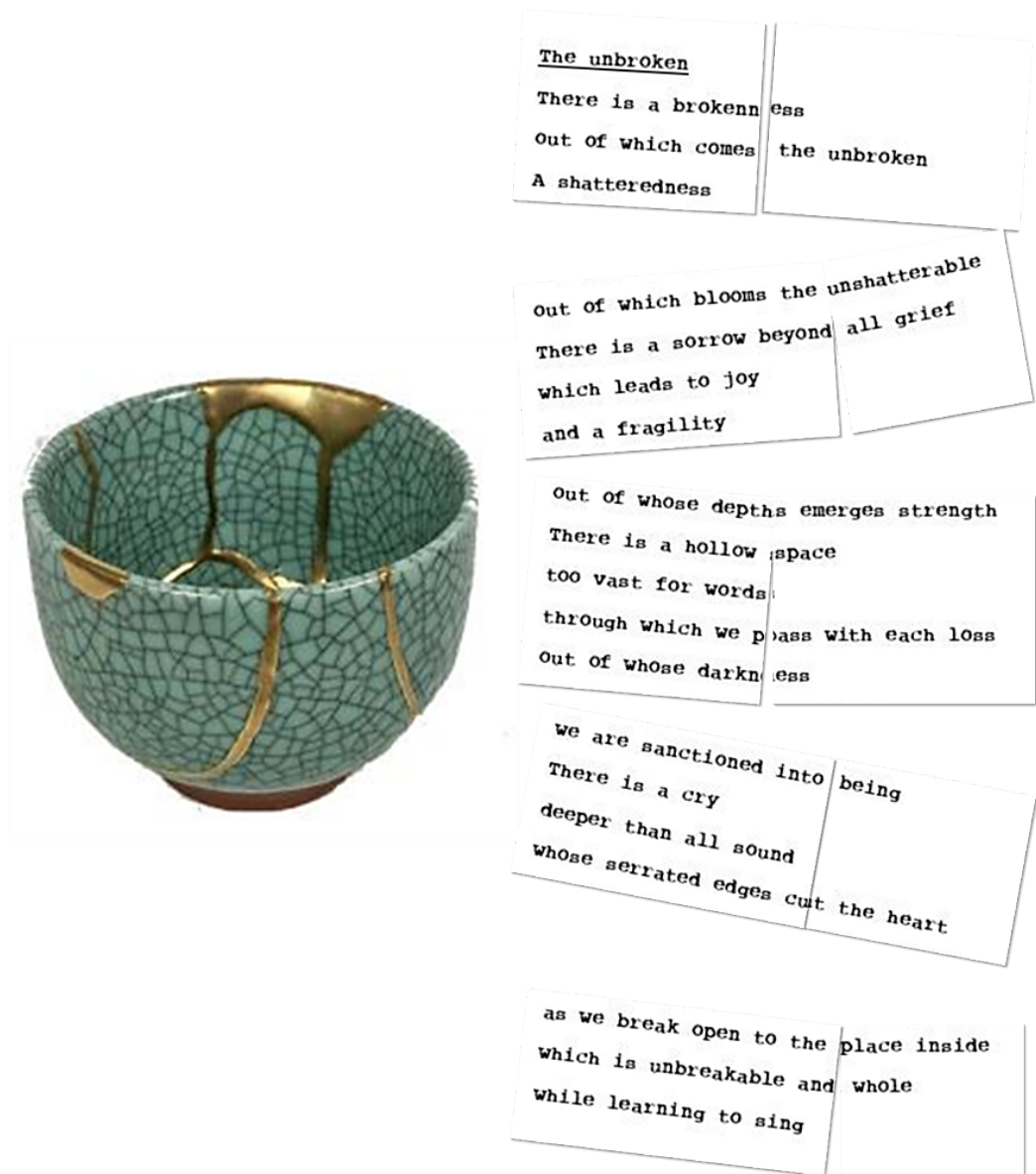


Figure 3. "The Unbroken" Réa (1991). Crackle Celadon Kintsugi Bowl image adapted from Lakeside Pottery (n.d)

Seeing Light

My first experiential text was so extraordinary, yet it occurred in the most mundane setting; hanging out the washing under a blue summer sky. As I looked up at my hands pegging out the washing, I saw radiant, golden shards of light emanating from my hands and arms. I shut my eyes, shook my head, and looked again, and the light remained

dancing against the blue sky. The light's quality and colour was the colour I had seen depicted in religious images of the halos surrounding Jesus, God, Mary and other Catholic Saints. I struggled to comprehend what divine light was doing in me, and I doubted my perceptions turning immediately to rationality and self-doubt to understand the experience. Did I have glaucoma, a tumour in my occipital lobe or some other type of macular degeneration?

Moreover, who was I to even consider myself as an embodiment of enlightenment?! To my conditioned mind, that idea appeared vain-glorious and delusional in the extreme. Yet this experience was none of those things. Despite grasping for rational explanations, at the time, I also understood this humbling experience as both a connection to God and a visible display of divinity within the human body of a middle-aged woman hanging out the washing.

For me, the most significant aspect of this experience was the integration of seemingly paradoxical polarities, being a damaged ordinary human, and being divine. God does not transcend humanity. Instead, divinity is the very essence that animates us (Krishna, 1970; Muktananda, 1979; Rele, 1950). Early in the research process, my light experience clarified and framed the kundalini awakening experience in one fundamental way; While Kundalini awakenings have transpersonal, metaphysical, and mystical dimensions, kundalini awakenings are inherently human experiences. They are not paranormal, untrue, anomalous, or abnormal.

Hearing Voices

My third experiential text in May of 2018 was an auditory experience, again in the most mundane of circumstances. I was standing in my room looking out the window, just about to begin work on my thesis, when a genderless voice BOOMED to the right of me:

"All is available!!"

The hairs on my body stood on end, and I whipped around to find its source. There was no one there. Even as I recount this experience, I feel my heart start to beat faster and my chest tighten. The tone of this voice almost seemed angry; however, I think this characterization is incorrect. Perhaps my limited human faculties, unable to describe what omnipotence sounds like, grasped instead for any adjective and failed. What did

the experience mean in relation to refining and clarifying the topic? The link between this experience and my thesis came much later when I discovered intuitive inquiry. This methodology acknowledged and validated that ALL my modes of engagement were AVAILABLE to study kundalini awakenings from within a scientific framework. Furthermore, I had the distinct impression this phrase spoke of yet to be experienced understandings.

I am cognizant that some could interpret my experiences and interpretations of them as perhaps fanciful daydreams, hallucinations or even delusions of grandeur. I have often wondered the same thing. However, I do not believe they are. For example, writing about cancer no longer evokes the emotions it once did. There is less anger, shame, and self-loathing left in my body; I simply feel compassion for the young woman I was. This evidences a change in state or letting go.

The letting go I experienced through research-as-spiritual-work concerning cancer showed me that kundalini awakenings have the potential to heal trauma. However, the psychological purges, illness, and migrating pain that started in mid-2016 continuing into 2020 intensified the depression, anxiety and emotional flooding I had lived with for nearly 30 years. This was extraordinarily destabilizing and affected every sphere of my life in ways I perceived as highly distressing. Although I had not yet grasped my experience, the visual and auditory experiential texts created two new understandings; (a) all people (myself included) are fully human and fully divine, and (b) you cannot experience spiritual transformation without a body.

Research Title and Disciplinary Lens

These activities and experiences collectively culminated in a precisely stated research topic and an emerging disciplinary lens from which to view kundalini awakenings. Because I had located kundalini in the body during the fool cycle, I recognised its potential to heal and destabilise. Hence, I intuitively gravitated towards the disciplinary lens of critical health psychology. Furthermore, I felt, but could not articulate, a resistance towards using transpersonal psychology, the traditional psychological lens for understanding mystical and spiritual experiences (Cunningham, 2011). Accordingly, this thesis's research topic and disciplinary perspective became: *The Lived Experience of Kundalini Awakenings in Aotearoa, New Zealand, From a Critical Health Psychology Perspective.*

Critical Health Psychology

Intuitive inquiry, with its feminist, heuristic, and hermeneutical underpinnings, is by nature is a critical/transformational research paradigm. Like intuitive inquiry, critical health psychology troubles dominant psychological assumptions and ideologies and engages with marginalised populations and research topics (Chamberlain, 2009; Morison, Lyons, & Chamberlain, 2019). Also aligned to intuitive inquiry values, critical health psychology encourages researcher reflexivity and critical, topic-focused methodologies. Corresponding with qualitative and intuitive inquiry approaches to research, critical health psychology is a caring and compassionate approach to the psychological understandings of individual and collective human experiences (Crossley, 2008). Finally, critical health psychology is broad in scope because it acknowledges humans are situated beings, and individual experiences take place within, and are influenced by, social, political, and cultural contexts (Morison et al., 2019). At this early stage in the research, critical health psychology informed my research intent and mirrored my values. I had a tacit awareness that the body was implicated in kundalini awakenings and that kundalini awakenings were not culturally accommodated in Aotearoa, New Zealand. However, these ideas were still in their infancy at this stage and were not further developed until later in the research process.

CYCLE 2 | THE HIEROPHANT



Figure 4. The Hierophant archetype. Adapted from Waite (1999), The Original Rider Waite Tarot Deck.

Introduction

The Hierophant archetype symbolizes institutions of learning, philosophies, and traditions founded on shared faiths or beliefs. Sometimes the hierophant is depicted as a pope representing the hidden connections between belief and action. The hierophant reversed expresses originality, breaking from tradition and unorthodoxy. Reversed, this archetype warns against blindly following any tradition without first examining the underlying values that inform its beliefs (Sergel, 2017c). The hierophant archetype epitomized my struggles to conceptualize my kundalini awakening, and those of my co-researchers, within an academic framework.

The hierophant cycle represents a detailed examination of the literature and resembles a traditional scholarly literature review (Anderson, 2011). In part one of the hierophant cycle, I explore the cultural underpinnings that inform science and psychology and suppress the feminine. Parts two and three of the hierophant cycle explore the dualistic assumptions underpinning western science, and by extension, psychology and contrasts them with nondual assumptions about the nature of reality. In comparing these two worldviews, it is not my intention to privilege one over the other. Both are valid means for deciding what is worthy of study and how it can be known, and both provide humanity with accepted truths. In a sense, they are complimentary; western dualistic science offers knowledge of the material realm, and nondual worldviews provide gnosis and epistemologies that guide experiential truths.

Going forward, I use the terms science and psychology (SAP) interchangeably because scientific ideology, ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions underpinned the emergence of mainstream psychology and continue to structurally dominate the field (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Pavlik, 2007). In part four, I present cross-cultural autobiographical accounts of kundalini and kundalini-like experiences. Parts one through three of the hierophant cycle each conclude with my preliminary interpretative lenses, which articulate my new understandings borne from engaging with the literature. Later, in cycle 4, the hanged man cycle, I revisit the hierophant cycle's preliminary interpretative lenses to discuss how my understandings of the topic have evolved during the research (Anderson, 2011). I close the hierophant cycle by grounding Tantric concepts in everyday language.

Part One: Becoming Familiar with the Texts Surrounding the Topic.

I struggled to find a point of view for the literature review section of this research because I was overwhelmed by embodied knowledge of Kundalini awakening that I could not articulate, seemingly possessed to read and thematically arrange and merge kundalini, mystical and spiritual phenomenology, unable to connect with most of the empirical Kundalini awakening literature and ill at ease within my academic disciplinary lenses of science and psychology. To be frank, in the early stages of engaging with the literature, I tried desperately to write the literature review using academic techniques that had yielded results for me in my graduate and post-graduate studies. That is, read the extant literature, paraphrase the work of others, replicate the procedural framework of other theses and hopefully add some small insights of my own. In essence, I lacked the courage and permission to use my own voice. I lacked knowledge of the cultural contexts underpinning Kundalini awakenings, and I was mostly unaware of the philosophical assumptions that guide mainstream academic research yet remain mostly unarticulated.

Academically and personally speaking, I was utterly enculturated within a western dualistic worldview that appeared not to accommodate my research topic, my experiences or those of my co-researchers. To move past this stage of auspicious bewilderment and to authentically locate kundalini awakenings within a Master of Science psychology thesis, I needed to go back to basics and learn why I felt such a disconnect between my subject matter and the disciplinary lenses I was situated in.

Judeo-Christianity | Science and Psychology

What do you think of when you think of the word science? I used to think this: "universal knowledge and an impartial truth that might unite all humanity" (Elshakry, 2010, p. 104); and this - "One should never speak of religious truth; only scientific truth exists" (Satron in Elshakry, 2010, p. 105). I thought of science in this way because scientific knowledge and western scientific methods have become the dominant truth narrative around the world. Scientific ideology informs global culture, cultural identities, government policies, medicine and related academic disciplines worldwide (Mazzocchi, 2006). However, nothing is created in a vacuum. What context did western science emerge from, and how has it become so dominant?

Today most people consider science a secular domain; however, the fundamental presuppositions that inform western science were borne of and saturated in Judeo-Christian metaphysics (Chamberlain, 2009; Ergene, 2008; Gosselin, 2006; Jaki, 1990; Leatherdale, 1974; Morison et al., 2019). Modern science emerged during the 16th and 17th centuries in European culture, a society where Christian worldview was dominant and permeated all aspects of life (Gosselin, 2006). In contrast to the tension seen between the church and science today, Early scientific activities embraced the spiritual and the material aiming to "manifest the Glory of God and enhance the Good of Man" (Ruse in Bradie , 1999, p. 671). Early science was built in the service of individuals, society and God. Accordingly, scientists were afforded powerful social status and thought to possess states of grace and God mandated power to control nature (Bradie, 1999)

Jaki (1990) contends that the Judeo-Christian concept of an omniscient creator God was an essential component in the emergence of western theoretical and experimental science and that the natural God-given order of the material world could be known with certainty; a belief that continues to this day only slightly diluted by hypotheticalism and interpretative paradigms (Ergene, 2008; Leatherdale, 1974). Christian churches created and financially supported emerging scientific and medical institutions. Additionally, many 17th-century mathematicians and scientists were also practising clergy (Ergene, 2008). For example, Roger Bacon, a Franciscan friar, wizard, and necromancer, is often credited with formalising the scientific method (Clegg, 2004). While renowned scientists like physicist Isaac Newton, plant anatomist Nehemiah Grew and chemist Robert Boyle were all keenly interested in spiritual matters (Bradie, 1999; Merton, 1973).

By the 19th-century, material monism ontological, realism and positivism were the dominant ideologies informing western science and ideas of what constitutes truth (Crotty, 1998; Ergene, 2008; Mazzocchi, 2006). Materialist monism is the idea that only matter should be studied, and there is a natural order that can be known through our sense organs (Mazzocchi, 2006). Gosselin (2006) relates the core of materialist monism ideology to Judeo-Christian cosmology, the belief that God is separate from humans, created the world and its laws of nature, and that they could be understood by "priests of nature" whom we now call scientists (Murphy, 2013).

Western science surmises that scientific laws connect the universe, society and humans and that scientific discoveries illustrate scientific laws' independence within time and space. Ergene (2008) characterises these underpinnings of western science as a "secularized version of Christian thought" (para. 10) where God is replaced by the natural world.

Over time scientific materialistic rationality and the scientific method, both originating from Judeo-Christian ideologies, have superseded theology and religion as philosophies for acquiring knowledge (Ergene, 2008). Consequently, ultimate reality in the west is not defined as the existence of God but as reason. The successes of material science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its influence in psychological, political, and economic arenas have made it the dominant discourse of knowledge in most academic fields (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Crotty, 1998; Ergene, 2008; Fleischman, 1998; Mazzocchi, 2006; Rozin, 2007).

Over time, the assumptions underpinning scientific enquiry have morphed into three distinct paradigms; positivism, interpretivism and critical theory, each with four main components; ontology, epistemology, method, and methodology (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). However, physicalism's structural dominance remains (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Chamberlain, 2011). Consequently, the primary principles of western scientific worldview (rationality, infallibility, and universality reliant on place, person and time) have indoctrinated all aspects of the modern intellectual and collective psyche (Ergene, 2008). Accordingly, the western worldview privileges rational knowledge obtained by scientific method. Meanwhile, methods of inquiry that include knowledge gained by direct insight and beyond person, place and time are viewed as unscientific in nature and therefore illegitimate (Capra, 1975; Ergene, 2008; Mehta, 1970).

Science is a philosophy, and as such, it is no different from other ideologies. However, it has gained epistemological supremacy (Ergene, 2008). Although there is growing dissatisfaction in the scientific field about the dominance of materialism and empiricism, this view is slow to change because the scientific method and structural positivism remain so powerful (Crotty, 1998). According to Gosselin (2006), this leaves us with a philosophy of science, that without God and spirit, is ideologically incomplete.

Psychology

Mainstream psychology suffers the same woes as modern science. Heavily informed by western scientific ideologies, psychology explicitly positions itself as a science (Rozin, 2007). To illustrate this point; the American Psychological Association (APA) defines psychology as "the study of the mind and behavior ... a diverse scientific discipline ... [that] involves observation, experimentation, testing, and analysis to explore the biological, cognitive, emotional, personal, and social processes or stimuli underlying human and animal behavior" (American Psychological Association, 2020). The structural hegemony of dualism, material monism and positivism remain firmly entrenched within western psychology. This is further evidenced by (a) predominantly positivistic university psychology courses offered in universities; (b) the mainly quantitative research published in psychological journals; and (c) in professional psychological practice guidelines (Baker, 2011; Bjornes, 2011; Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Chamberlain & Murray, 2009; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018; Mazzocchi, 2006; New Zealand Psychologists' Board, 2018; Pavlik, 2007; Peddie, 2014).

Consequently, when investigating mystical and spiritual experiences like kundalini awakening, mainstream psychology attempts to synthesize and interpret these core dimensions of being human from within the bounds of science (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Sanford, 1903; South, 2000). Breen and Darlaston-Jones (2010) further suggest that mainstream psychology, with its monocultural orientation, risks becoming socially irrelevant if it does not address the problematic underlying assumptions on which psychology bases its practices and theories.

Australian and New Zealand psychologies were strongly influenced by North American psychology, a discipline criticised for under-investigating theoretical concerns and focused on the scientist-practitioner model dominated by experimental approaches (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010). It appears these issues remain in the New Zealand context also. While stating an expectation of responsiveness to new knowledge, diversity, culture and Treaty of Waitangi principals, The New Zealand Psychologist Board's (NZPB) (2018) list of core competencies and expected knowledge bases is saturated with positivism and scientism. The NZPB positions psychologists as scientist-practitioners and lists foundational competencies as knowledge, scholarship and research.

Knowledge is acquired by "investigating, describing, explaining, predicting and modifying behaviour, cognition and affect". New Zealand psychology scientist-practitioners must possess "knowledge of psychological theories and models, [and] empirical evidence", must have an "understanding of, and respect for the scientific underpinnings of the discipline (i.e. knowledge gained and/or tested by the scientific method)" to ensure "psychologists are good consumers of the products of research" (New Zealand Psychologists' Board, 2018, p. 5).

The ideological and structural dominance of scientism in psychology marginalises researchers who use non-traditional epistemologies and study emerging phenomena and strengthens the positivistic status quo (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010). Instead of seeing phenomena like kundalini awakenings as a normal consequence of human psychospiritual maturation and species evolution (Edwards, 2014; Krishna, 1970; Lucas, 2011), these core human experiences are philosophically and ontologically unaccommodated within dominant medical and psychological narratives (Peddie, 2014). For now, in mainstream psychological research, these assumptions that inform axiology, epistemology and methodology remain largely ignored (Blake, 2013; Chamberlain & Murray, 2009; Crotty, 1998; Yanchar, Gantt, & Clay, 2005).

However, psychology was not always like this; it has forgotten its roots. Psychology comes from the Greek root word *psychē*, meaning "breath, principle of life, soul," and *logia* from the Greek *logos*, which means "speech, word, reason". Later, these terms morphed into the Latin *psychologia* meaning the "study of the soul" (Psychology, n.d). In contrast to contemporary mainstream psychology, early psychologists like Edmund Gurney (1847-1888) and William James (1842-1910) viewed spiritual and religious states as worthy of investigation (Sommer, 2019). In a similar vein Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), credited with establishing the first psychological research laboratory, initially included introspection as a research method to extract subjective phenomenological information. However, his approach was critiqued for lacking in scientific rigour (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010).

Wilber (1999) cites empirical science's refusal to acknowledge the interior dimensions as ideological rather than evidence-based for two reasons. Firstly, science tends to associate mystical modes of consciousness with processes in the brain (Wilber, 1999), an idea that comes from the "Cartesian philosophy of consciousness", or mind-body

dualism (Beasley, 2013, p. 39). This reduces otherworldly or transcendental experiences and events to the biomaterial brain (Wilber, 1999). Secondly, interior modes of knowing cannot be validated using sensory-empirical methods, so they are disregarded as idiosyncratic and subjective (Beasley, 2013; Wilber, 1999). Psychology once acknowledged a higher non-material power, validated the spiritual dimension of being human, and employed introspective ways of knowing. Unfortunately, to legitimise itself as a scientific discipline, psychology appropriated dualistic natural sciences philosophical assumptions and reduced humans to body and mind (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Pavlik, 2007; Rozin, 2007).

Digesting the Information

For me, part one of the literature review was illuminating. I realise now I was looking for congruence between kundalini awakening and the disciplinary lenses of science and psychology. This was motivated by an unconscious awareness of the dissonance between my subject matter and my academic situatedness. When I researched and then articulated the philosophical beliefs underpinning mainstream science and embedded New Zealand culture, I realised I no longer see the world purely from a Judeo-Christian/scientific perspective. Despite this, I was still trying to privilege dualistic ontological beliefs and variations on the scientific method as the only valid means for framing and producing knowledge. This is because I was never taught about other ontologies or other ways of knowing.

When I learnt that science and psychology both once included God in their research, acknowledged the spiritual aspects of being human, and even employed introspective ways of knowing, the dissonance I had felt between the disciplinary lenses of science and psychology and kundalini awakenings dissolved. In its place emerged a quiet confidence that I could do justice to my research topic. The spiritual aspects of being human were once considered worthy of investigation within science and psychology; we just forgot.

I felt a huge swell of relief after exploring the underpinnings of SAP and finding an authentic ontological coherence between my subject matter and my disciplinary locale, and I was excited to begin writing. Then I became stuck again because I couldn't find my voice. All of my academic writing up until this point followed the guidelines for good scientific writing.

It was impartial, objective, logically structured and "I" was removed from it. Previously, I was rewarded with excellent grades for writing in this way. However, it was nearly impossible to write about the Goddess Kundalini and the Goddess worship culture she emerged from with any semblance of authenticity using my academic voice; so, I stalled again and wondered why that was. A big part of the problem was a personal lack of confidence, a crumbling worldview, and no experience in using my own voice. However, another factor was a lack of exposure to the female voice in academic writing; I had no role models. You may not be surprised to find this feminine literary invisibility harks back to the suppression of the Goddess by Judeo-Christianity and is perpetuated in culture by its secular successors' mainstream science and psychology.

Suppression of the Goddess

There are so many names for feminine kundalini energy paralleled by many different traditions and cultures worldwide, so why had I, and none of my co-researchers, ever heard of shakti-kundalini until we experienced it? Choudhury (2018) suggested that the various teachings of kundalini were secreted away, and the knowledge of such practices was punishable by death. But there is another aspect related to the suppression of western equivalents of kundalini shakti, which is the suppression of feminine power (Baring, 2002; Browne, 2009; Edwards, 2014; Eisler, 1998; Haas, 2005; Osborn, 2012).

Mother Goddess worship dates back more than thirty thousand years, and except for the last five to seven thousand years, source energy was conceptualized as female (Edwards, 2014). During the period of Goddess centred consciousness, civilisations lived in harmony with the rhythms of nature and the cycles of death and rebirth (Eisler, 1998). The principles of the divine feminine were reflected in the societies that worshipped her; they were cooperative, neither patriarchal nor matriarchal, with little evidence of war and fortifications (Eisler, 1998). Increasingly patriarchal systems of religion, social structure and politics emerged and disenfranchised the Goddess. This change from Goddess centred consciousness to God centred consciousness brought with it more aggressive civilisations, war, armaments and domination of nature (Eisler, 1998). As patriarchal ideologies took hold, priestesses that had once been revered for their wisdom and connection to the cyclical nature of life became despised for their power, demonized as witches, and murdered (Eisler, 1998)

In Judeo-Christian traditions, the divine feminine was displaced by patriarchal priests and the power of creation assigned to the male principle (Browne, 2009). Among other names, before her displacement, she was known in Hellenistic, Gnostic and esoteric Christian traditions as Sophia the Goddess of Wisdom (Osborn, 2012), Theodora, the Goddess of fertility, Isis, Cybele and Mother God (Browne, 2009), and conceptualised as God's female soul and the source of his power. Specifically related to academic study, the Goddess Sophia is worshipped primarily for her feminine wisdom and knowledge rather than for her reproductive and mothering functions (Romanoff, 2005).

There are scant references to Mother God in the bible. However, hidden symbols of Goddess worship were incorporated into the temples and altars of the Jewish faith. Also, archaeological excavations of Solomon's palace found remains of the Ziddonian Goddess Ashtoreth and numerous feminine fertility symbols (Browne, 2009).

Additionally, in the Gnostic gospel of Thomas, Jesus made explicit reference to feminine power, saying, "The Holy Spirit is my Mother" (Edwards, 2014). However, in Christian traditions, the feminine holy spirit was relegated to the lesser role of Mother Mary and no longer worshipped for her fecundity but for her chasteness (Edwards, 2014). Meanwhile, strongly patriarchal Middle Eastern religions banished the Goddess altogether and branded her an abomination (Edwards, 2014)

In a New Zealand context, *Tehei Mauri Ora!* translates as "the sneeze of life" (Moorfield, 2005). According to Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview), these words were spoken by the first female human, *Hineahuone*, whose name translates as feminine earth energy, breath or life force (Pihama, 2001; Te Ahukaramū, 2005). Pihama (2001) asserts Māori women by rights should be able to claim and speak the life-giving words of their tūpuna whaea (female ancestors); However, this is not always the case. One young Māori woman who used those words in her school was told: "women are not to say those words; they are only for men" (Pihama, 2001, p. 17). This is yet another example of the enduring suppression of feminine power across cultures. To rectify the appropriation of linguistic feminine power, Pihama (2001) explicitly articulates Maori people's life force as feminine.

In stark contrast to these examples, the active feminine aspect Shakti-Kundalini in her many permutations is worshipped to this day in India alongside Shiva, the static masculine principal.

Sharing some parallels with Shiva-Shakti, *Yab-yum* (Father-Mother in Tibetan) is symbolic of the primordial union (often depicted as a sexual embrace) between the masculine and feminine aspects of divinity. As a primary visual symbol of Buddhist teachings, yab-yum symbolises that enlightenment is obtained through the marriage of feminine wisdom and masculine method and compassion (Neville, 1987; Sinha, 2017; "Tibetan Art,"). In a Buddhist context, feminine wisdom refers to realising the non-existence of phenomenal appearances (Andresen, 2000; Ch'en, 1957). Often translated as 'skilful means', method is "the manner by which one attempts to assist sentient beings" and is primarily demonstrated via compassion (Andresen, 2000, p. 358). Together, yab-yum's sexual embrace serves as a visual metaphor for the bliss of union ("Tibetan Art") and a reminder that both the masculine and feminine aspects of divinity are required to transcend the false duality of the phenomenal world.

The Divine Feminine in Christianity | From Goddess to Saint

While mainstream Christianity "puts 'he' to everything and even draws God as male" (Beavis, 2016, p. 134), Celtic Christianity, with its roots in Celtic paganism and Goddess worship, reveres the feminine divine more so than the wider Christian world (Corning, 2006). Many scholars attribute modern Celtic Christianity to the fusion of Christianity with medieval Celtic and Druid traditions. Within Celtic traditions, Brigid, the principal Goddess within the Celtic pantheon, was venerated as a triple-Goddess, or three sisters, to illustrate the complexity of her divinity, totality, and oneness (Connelly, 2009). As a triple Goddess, Brigid presided over poetry, smith-craft and healing. She was also associated with perpetual fire and viewed by the Celts as a Mother Goddess for her connection to the land and her actual physical motherhood (Connelly, 2009; Pettersson, 2018).

Although Celtic paganism was displaced by Christianity as the dominant belief system in Ireland during 400 CE to 800 CE (Connelly, 2009), Goddess Brigid survived in Celtic Christianity as the Christianized Saint Brigid, who is still venerated to this day in Celtic Christianity (Bowman, 2005; Connelly, 2009; Pettersson, 2018). Like the Goddess Brigid, Saint Brigid is revered for her healing powers, association with water, perpetual fire and abundance. However, unlike the Goddess Brigid, who was described as a 'female physician', and associated personally with miracles and magic, Saint Brigid's healing powers were ascribed to a miraculous higher power (Pettersson, 2018).

Additionally, in her transformation from Goddess to Saint, Brigid lost her poetry and, although she remained connected to fertility, gained virgin-status in the Christian church (Pettersson, 2018). Today, Goddess/Saint Brigid still share feast days. One example is Imbolg, the Goddess Brigid's pagan festival celebrated each year on the 1st of February, which is now observed as Saint Brigid's feast day (Pettersson, 2018).

It is generally acknowledged that Saint Brigid was a historical person, although her existence cannot be proved. Regardless, Goddess/Saint Brigid's existence and rituals are still affirmed in Celtic Christianity, and she remains highly esteemed (Pettersson, 2018). We see this in Celtic Christianity's characterisation as a nature-oriented, egalitarian, spiritually instinctive type of Christianity that emphasizes a unique love of Saint Brigid (Bowman, 2005; Connelly, 2009; Witt, 2006). To this day, in a tradition that possibly stems from pagan worship of the Goddess Brigid, flame keeping *cills* (churches or religious groups comprised of nineteen women), including Saint Brigid's nuns, still tend to Goddess/Saint Brigid's flame in Kildare (Pettersson, 2018). Goddess/Saint Brigid remains entrenched in Irish culture. Even today, across Ireland, wells and streams have female names because water (symbolic of the Great Mother's womb openings) is seen as a manifestation of the divine feminine (Connelly, 2009).

Finding my Voice

Now I knew that my feminine voice was cross-culturally associated with wisdom, knowledge, and life force. But, pragmatically, (a) how would I bring this knowledge into an academic space, and (b) how does this space perceive my feminine voice, which cannot be separated from my identity as a female researcher? Feminism and postmodernism present the main challenges to western dualistic epistemology. Feminist standpoint epistemologies begin with the understanding that we are embodied beings and what we know about the world comes from a situated societal perspective. From the feminist standpoint, the world is mainly patriarchal, and culture is masculine, and this dominance extends into knowledge production and dissemination (Harris, 2008; Moon & Blackman, 2014).

The principles of scholarly writing emerged from nineteenth-century rationalism and empiricism. These standards mirror and reinforce empirical study values, objectivity, and authority with technical and depersonalized language designed to convey only facts (Fleischman, 1998).

The dominance and power of science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its influence on political and economic arenas have led it to become the dominant discourse of knowledge in most academic fields (Fleischman, 1998; Heilbrun, 1989). Thus, our dominant discourse of knowledge is masculine. In the masculine knowledge discourse, the author disappears, the subject is banished, and the experiencing self is dislocated from the work produced (Fleischman 1998). In contrast to male language, feminist scholars argue that when women write, "the private is the public, the personal is political", and for many female writers, the mind is "impassioned". (Fleischman, 1998, p. 975). However, given the dominance of objectivity and empiricism, structurally, women continue to be "trapped in a script they didn't write, coping with male language that won't say what they wish" (Fleischman, 1998, p. 976).

Using the pronoun "I" instead of the authoritative third person, where the author is forced to objectify themselves, alludes to the subjective inner world; this is dangerously expressive, emotive and unverifiable by empirical methods (Fleischman, 1998). Accordingly, the party line of western epistemology is that emotion obscures obtaining knowledge even though, in our culture, women are required to shoulder emotional capacity while men are conditioned to suppress their feelings. This exclusion of emotion from legitimized ways of obtaining knowledge automatically undermines female epistemological authority, reinforces masculine rationality and is pervasive across disciplines (Fleischman, 1998). For example, mainstream psychology is frequently critiqued for its implicit assumptions that females and their knowledge can be adequately explicated from within the bounds of theories and knowledge created by men (Cheals, 2002). Tompkins (1989, p. 122, cited in Fleischman, 1998) articulates this linguistic straitjacket as follows:

The public-private dichotomy, which is to say, the public-private hierarchy, is a founding condition of female oppression. I say to hell with it. The reason I feel embarrassed in my own attempts to speak personally in a professional context is that I have been conditioned to feel that way. That's all there is to it.

From my lived experience, I say never were truer words spoken. In the course of learning why I could not find my voice, I realised that the act of reclaiming female discourse as authoritative and legitimate is situated within postmodern or poststructuralist feminist standpoints (Cheals, 2002).

However, I still chafed a little with these labels. I am writing about kundalini's divine Goddess energy; Can you imagine how dry it feels to explore this phenomenon while situated within a postmodern or poststructuralist feminist standpoint?

My unease unconsciously resonated with the idea that many feminist standpoint epistemologies still assume an objective reality out there that can be known (Harris, 2008). Fortunately for me, feminists are also reclaiming language in the theology space, which is generally understood as a discourse on the feminine divine from a post-patriarchal feminist perspective (Raphael, 1996, 1998). Goddess feminism aligns with my values as an implicated researcher, my research topic, my disciplinary lens and intuitive inquiry, my research design. This adds another layer of cohesion and authenticity to my research. From this standpoint, I reclaim my position as a speaking subject, privilege my knowing and resist an abstract power 'knowing' for me (Cheals, 2002). Raphael (1998) calls this enabling subject position Goddess feminism, and it is political. Goddess feminism affirms feminine spiritual and political power and harks the renewal of female-centred value systems, ways of knowing, and articulating that knowledge (Raphael, 1996, 1998).

Summary

In part one of the hierophant cycle, I challenged the assumptions and power relations I am situated within by exploring the Judeo-Christian influence on science and psychology and explored suppression of the feminine and the divine feminine in Christianity. In doing so, I found my voice and freed myself from the straitjacket of male language. I close part one of the literature review by articulating my preliminary interpretative lenses based on my learnings thus far.

Preliminary Interpretive Lenses | The Disciplines I am Situated Within

I value SAP and acknowledge its value in generating hypotheses that can be tested and verified, thus producing generalisable claims. However, SAP's empirical and analytical approach marginalises the subtle realms. I also know these ideas extend to the human body's conceptualisations, but I haven't grasped how yet.

I learnt science is a culturally constructed ideology that shares some similarities with Judeo-Christian worldviews. Therefore, rather than being a secular, objective, value-free means for producing knowledge, SAP reflects unacknowledged Christian values, and these are embedded in their ontologies and epistemologies.

I learnt the discourse of knowledge is inherently male. Within this framework, I lacked vision and clarity of voice. I moved from being unknowingly situated in the father tongues, to postmodern and post-structural feminism, to Goddess feminism. Now I have found a space for myself and my language that shares fidelity with Goddess Kundalini. Thus, I am epistemologically coherent.

Preliminary Interpretative Lenses | Emerging Researcher Positionality

My belief systems once reflected secular and Christian western worldview. Personally, my material rationalism is crumbling. Paradoxically, I'm still conditioned by 'subtle Cartesianism' and 'intra-subjective reductionism' (Beasley, 2013), the deeply ingrained tendency for researchers to revert back to the prevailing western view. I accept this, and now that I am consciously aware of these pulls, I can reflect on them.

At this stage in the research, I have no other frameworks to approach the research from and no confidence in my own ways of knowing. However, I am shifting towards a post-dualistic epistemological stance that has no separate researcher. Beasley (2013, p. 106) defines post-dualism as an " 'either–neither-or-both' mentality". It is the ability to accept apparently contradictory views and acknowledge that different facets of reality are amenable to different research approaches. The distinction between dualism and post-dualism is value-based. It encapsulates a set of values, attitudes, and strategies towards obtaining knowledge and is characterised by conscious intent and an inclusive state of mind that includes cognitive and embodied knowing (Beasley, 2013). This is not an immediate shift; instead, it is both surrender and acceptance, surrendering those ideas that do not serve the research and accepting this surrender (Beasley, 2013).

I am reclaiming my voice. Wherever it is appropriate in the body of this work, I will use it with authority as women once did before the rise of Judeo-Christianity and patriarchy. It feels liberating to be me right now.

Part Two | Narrowing my Focus

In part two of the Hierophant cycle, I narrowed my focus to texts directly related to Kundalini awakening. Initially, these texts came from peer-reviewed literature. However, over time, the texts that dominantly informed my understanding of Kundalini awakening came from the YouTube channels, podcasts, and blogs of scholar-practitioners with lived experience of kundalini awakening. The following section provides an overview of the academic research into kundalini awakening. First, I present the foundational kundalini research followed by research into kundalini and its links with near death experiences (NDE), panic attacks, psychosis, physical illness, psychedelic drug experiences, and other spiritual experiences. Secondly, I introduce the kundalini awakening scale and research that investigates the healing potential of kundalini energy. Part two of the chariot cycle concludes with an overview of research relating to disclosure and the efficacy of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders–Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) religious or spiritual problem category.

Foundational Research

Bentov (1977) was a biomedical engineer interested in the physiological and psychological changes related to altered states of consciousness. His physio-kundalini model mapped the progressive nature of kundalini symptoms by body location, body sensations and psychological symptoms. Bentov suggested kundalini experiences emerged when the sympathetic resonance of various oscillating systems in the body caused electrical polarization and increased magnetic currents of the motor and sensory cortices and cerebrospinal fluid. He further suggested that kundalini refined the nervous system so that “it may enter into resonance with outside energies” (Bentov, 1977, p. 182). Well before his time, Bentov (1977), like Krishna (1970), suggested kundalini may be an evolutionary force, and as more individuals activated and broadcasted, more people would become activated (Lim, 2013). Bentov has been criticised by some researchers who believe his model is too simplistic and fails to address kundalini's spiritual and evolutionary aspects. Also, there is a suggestion that Bentov (1977) perhaps was measuring pranotthana, a heightened form of *prana* (further discussed in part three), and not kundalini activation (Greenwell, 2002; Lim, 2013).

However, Bentov (1977) kept his model intentionally simplistic and focused on the mechanical-physiological aspects of kundalini awakening to “put at the disposal of the

medical profession, a reasonable working concept of a syndrome that until now has not been described at all” (Bentov, 1977, p. 178).

Sannella (1987), a Californian ophthalmologist and psychiatrist, is most well-known for expanding on Bentov’s (1977) physio kundalini model and medicalising some of the experiences. His book *The Kundalini Experience: Psychosis or Transcendence* (1987) summarises the experiences of nearly one thousand individual case histories of kundalini awakenings. Sannella (1987) described the entire kundalini experience as a purificatory process culminating in “rebirth” and noted a clear distinction between psychosis and the physio-kundalini cycle, noting that some schizophrenia-like conditions he observed came about because of clinician ignorance, negative feedback, social pressure and social conditioning. Sannella (1987) described kundalini awakening as a normal human experience that could take months or years to move through but ultimately culminated in a “psychically transformed human being” (Sannella, 1987, p. 7).

Based on the phenomenology of his case histories, and importantly, taking all phenomenology at face value, Sannella (1987) broke kundalini experiences into two categories, signs (objective indicators) and symptoms (subjective observations), and four subcategories. Motor signs could be quantified and independently observed. Sensory symptoms were subjective sensations of light, sound and internal feelings. Interpretative symptoms included changes in mental processes and emotions, distortions in thought process, detachment and disassociation, and non-physiological phenomena related to “factors for which physiological explanations are not sufficient” (Sannella, 1987, p. 93). Sannella (1987) noted experiences were not linear and discrete but could overlap and happen simultaneously and repetitively.

Like Bentov (1977), Sannella (1987) supported Krishna’s (1970) theory that kundalini leads to higher states of consciousness and, therefore, could be an evolutionary mechanism. Sannella also suggested kundalini could be used as therapy, noting that one of his case studies who had had a psychotic break and was unstable was strengthened in all aspects of his being through a guided kundalini awakening (Sannella, 1987).

This is one of many anecdotal experiences Sannella shares in his book about the healing potential of kundalini awakenings managed appropriately. Both Bentov’s (1977) and Sannella’s (1987) later work was seminal because they were the first researchers within

a material science paradigm to recognise kundalini phenomena, provide a nonpathological framework to explain some kundalini experiences and differentiate them from psychiatric disorders (Prosnick & Evans, 2003).

Kundalini and Panic Attacks

Australian parapsychologists Thalbourne and Fox (1999) questioned whether (1) for some people, panic attacks may be a “difficult kundalini experience”, and (2) whether panic attacks were associated with mystical or paranormal experiences. Their correlational study of 62 individuals experiencing panic attacks and 53 control subjects found a strong association between panic attacks and kundalini experiences and a link between panic attacks and mystical and paranormal experiences. Furthermore, the authors also found panic attacks were linked to transliminality (a variable that indicates permeable psychological boundaries, previously associated with manic-depression and schizophrenia). It remains unknown whether kundalini is associated with transliminality or if it triggers transliminality.

When Thalbourne and Fox (1999) compared their kundalini scale with the Manic-Depressiveness Scale and Magical Ideation Scale (two measures of psychopathology), they found high scores on the kundalini scale were positively correlated with these measures. Thalbourne and Fox (1999) focused on physical symptoms, which are only part of the kundalini experience and can be distressing without a frame of reference. Additionally, their scale asked questions about hearing voices and seeing auras without considering whether participants viewed them as positive or negative and did not include items relating to the subtle changes in consciousness and positive experiences. Perhaps these are reasons for the correlation between measures of psychopathology and kundalini awakening. However, other researchers have found, within context, there is little overlap between kundalini awakening and symptoms of mental illness (Greyson, 1993b; Holden, Vanpelt-Tess, & Warren, 1999; Sannella, 1987).

Kundalini and Mental Illness

Greyson (1993b) also investigated claims by Krishna (1972) and Bentov (1977) that psychiatric patients may be suffering from morbid kundalini release and were misdiagnosed as psychotic. Compared to NDErs and the general public, psychotic patients were statistically significantly less likely to check items on the Physio-Kundalini Syndrome. Although kundalini and schizophrenia have visual and auditory

hallucinations in common, Greyson (1993) observed schizophrenics tend not to experience body temperature changes, sequences of pain travelling through the body and out of body experiences. Schizophrenia can further be differentiated from kundalini activation, as those with active kundalini tend not to have schizophrenic phenomena such as worsening hygiene, confused speech and thoughts (Greyson, 1993). Holden, Vanpelt-Tess, and Warren (1999) echo these findings. They concluded that while there were superficial similarities between spiritual emergencies and psychosis, an individual having a spiritual experience (even with psychotic aspects) had insight into their condition and was able to maintain and establish therapeutic relationships while psychotic individuals could not. Sannella (1987) observed physio kundalini syndrome and psychosis to be distinct from one another, citing a vast difference in presentations between an individual who was “psychically active” and someone with “discordance” of the psyche.

Benning et al. (2018) presented a case study of a female psychiatric outpatient who was ‘eventually’ diagnosed with physio-kundalini syndrome by a psychiatrist. The 40-year-old woman presented multiple times to the emergency room with physical complaints that were met with various medical diagnoses. Later, she was diagnosed with a social anxiety disorder and generalized anxiety disorder by a psychiatrist. Benning et al. (2018) summarised there was minimal overlap between the symptoms of kundalini and psychosis. Instead, a lack of theoretical framework and empirically tested treatments led clinicians to misdiagnose and pathologize her kundalini experiences until she was diagnosed with physio kundalini syndrome three years later. Benning et al. (2018) further suggested, in the absence of these tools, phenomenological analysis of physio kundalini syndrome and psychosis may elucidate a more binary relationship between kundalini and psychosis with little crossover between the two.

Kundalini and Near-Death Experiences

In a correlational study comparing psychiatric patients with near-death-experiencers (NDErs) (a population in earlier research who scored highly for kundalini arousal), Greyson (1993a) used a 19-item questionnaire based on Bentov’s model to investigate whether psychiatric patients would acknowledge fewer physio-kundalini symptoms than NDErs. The findings showed that psychiatric patients reported fewer kundalini-type experiences than the NDE group, and in particular psychotic patients reported even

fewer kundalini presentations (Greyson, 1993). Based on the findings, Greyson (1993) suggested kundalini is non-pathological and that certain specific physio-kundalini symptoms can help differentiate kundalini awakening from mental illness. There is criticism that Greyson's (1993) research may be measuring NDE, which Sanches and Daniels (2008) suggest could be a different population from kundalini experiencers. However, despite this critique, Sanches and Daniels (2008) did base their Kundalini Awakening Scale partially on Bentov's findings. Viewing Greyson's (1993) research 28 years later, there arise ethical concerns related to the ability of a psychotic patient to provide informed consent. Also, given the stigma surrounding mental health, psychiatric patients may have wished to minimise their symptoms so as not to appear 'crazy'.

It is important also to note that other cultures do not always pathologize psychosis. For example, a psychic condition that Western medicine would probably view as an acute schizophrenic break is a requirement for initiation to the priesthood in one South African tribe (Sannella, 1987). Similarly, trance mediums, shamans, and the God-intoxicated Masters of India, who to western eyes might look psychotic, delusional or disassociated, are not pathologized when viewed from an appropriate spiritual context (Sannella, 1987). Instead, they are viewed as spiritual beings going through a transformational process.

Correlational research by Ring and Rosing (1990) and Prosnick and Evans (2003), using short-form physio-kundalini syndrome indexes, and by Kason (1994), who explored the historical and research evidence, also suggest there is a link between kundalini awakening and NDEs. While linked only theoretically and through correlational evidence, Ring and Rosing (1990) and Kason (1994) suggest kundalini may be the spiritual force and mechanism underpinning NDEs.

Another possible link between NDEs and kundalini awakenings is that both experiences appear to be occurring more frequently. Worldwide there are increased reports of NDE experiences (Goretzki, 2008; Greyson, 1993a), kundalini awakenings (Grof, 1988; Harris, 1994; Mookerjee, 1982) and spiritual experiences (Brook, 2018). While the growing interest in and awareness of spirituality could be a factor in the increased reports, if NDEs are underpinned by kundalini, this could be further corroboration of increasing kundalini cases worldwide.

Kundalini and Physical Illness

In addition to the psycho-spiritual manifestations of kundalini, there are many physical symptoms and latent illnesses that can manifest during kundalini awakening. These illnesses can mimic neurological syndromes such as Icelandic disease, gastrointestinal disorders, bradycardia, heart palpitations, tachycardia, food allergies, eating disorders, and migrating pain, especially the spine and head, which are difficult to diagnose (Greenwell, 2002; Kason, 2008; Sannella, 1987). Additionally, symptoms such as muscular contractions, shaking, and twitching are easily misdiagnosed as neurological disorders, which lead to some kundalini experiencers undergoing unnecessary medical tests and procedures with no biomedical explanations found. Kundalini awakenings can also cause illness in those who are physiologically unable to integrate the massive increase in energy system that strain the nervous system (South, 2000).

As with the concept of psychosis, there are different ways to frame physical illness. In the context of spiritual transformation (e.g. in shamanic traditions), illness as a 'sacred malady' can be understood as part of the purification process or initiation into higher consciousness orchestrated by a benevolent intelligence (Linders & Lancaster, 2013). The association between kundalini awakening and illness suggests that, for some, (1) both medical and spiritual support would be appropriate, and (2) the biomedical model could reduce unnecessary medical interventions if they considered that illness can sometimes arise in the context of embodied psycho-spiritual transformation.

Kundalini and Psychedelic Drugs

Based on the phenomenological similarities he found between psychedelic drug experiences and kundalini awakening literature, De Gracia (1997) hypothesised that psychedelic drugs' effects and phenomenology would be similar to descriptions of kundalini awakenings from esoteric literature. De Gracia (1997) created a 38 question online survey asking about hallucinogenic drug experiences. He hypothesized the effects of psychedelic drugs would be similar to kundalini awakening as described in esoteric texts. To test the hypothesis, he embedded 19 questions related explicitly to kundalini's effects within the motor (autonomic, efferent), sensory, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual domains.

The survey was posted in four internet groups that discussed psychedelic drug use. 61 individuals responded. 15% were female, 85% were male, and came from America

(60%), Northern Europe, Australia, and Canada (40%). De Gracia (1997) found a definite overlap between kundalini awakening and psychedelic drug experiences. For example, 75% of participants described feeling vibrations and chills, and within that subset, 45% reported the sensations occurring along the spine or back. In yogic theory, these sensations correspond with the ascent of kundalini (De Gracia, 1997). Other psychedelic drug effects that occurred with high frequency included spontaneous laughter (70.9%), increased empathy (75.4%), visual hallucinations (96.7%) and explicit spiritual experiences (86.9%). One surprising finding was 40% of respondents recalled out of body experiences which are not usually associated with psychedelic drugs.

Taken as a whole, De Gracia's (1997) research found the effects of psychedelic drugs overlapped with kundalini awakening phenomena. Based on the similarities between kundalini activation and psychedelic drug-induced states, De Gracia concluded a "definite biological basis for the kundalini phenomena" (De Gracia, 1997, p. 130). He further suggested controlled studies of the effects of psychedelics underpinned by Eastern kundalini phenomenology could form the backbone of a neurobiological framework understanding of kundalini awakenings. This research indicates that recreational psychedelic drug use may facilitate kundalini arousal or awakening. However, De Gracia (1997) notes his research fails to include standard neurophysiological observations of brain function; thus, his correlations are speculative. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that throughout the spiritual history of humanity, indigenous cultures have used psychedelic plants such as ayahuasca, peyote, and psilocybe mushrooms (among others) in spiritual practices designed to expand consciousness and connect with the divine (Grof, 1988).

Overlap between Kundalini, Mystical, Religious and Spiritual Experiences

As with NDEs, there is an overlap between kundalini awakenings and spiritual and religious domains. These areas are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, briefly, Goretzki (2008) cites kundalini awakening as one of 10 types of spiritual emergency. White (1993) frames kundalini awakening as a mystical or unity experience alongside over 100 categories of human experience, and Grof (1972) includes kundalini awakening among his taxonomy of transpersonal experiences. In the religious domain, Regner (1999) found similarities between kundalini awakenings and Christian

conversion experiences. While South (2000), in a comparative study of St Teresa of Avila's enlightenment experiences and kundalini phenomenology, found St Teresa's experiences of fire, light, and currents of energy shared parallels with kundalini awakening phenomenology. The similarities between kundalini awakening NDEs, spiritual, mystical and religious experiences begs the question; is kundalini a 'type' of experience among many, or are all NDE, spiritual, mystical and religious experiences in fact kundalini by another name?

Psychometric Measures of Kundalini

Drawing on yogic theory, Grof and Grof (1989) work on spiritual emergencies and literature from Bentov, Sannella and Gopi Krishna, Sanches and Daniels (2008) developed the kundalini awakening scale (KAS) comprised of 76 questions over five dimensions. The categories were (1) changes in behaviour, mental function, perception and consciousness, (2) negative or frightening experiences, (3) positive experiences, (4) involuntary body postures, and (5) physical symptoms. Cronbach's alpha for the finished KAS was 0.981, suggesting the KAS to be a highly reliable measure. Results from 117 participants concluded that regular meditators and individuals who participate in transpersonal activities exhibit common symptoms that could be associated with kundalini awakenings. These symptoms did not tend to be seen in populations that did not join in transpersonal practices.

Additionally, the KAS found negative kundalini arousal symptoms occurred more frequently when transpersonal activities were unguided and unstructured. Thus, different activities elicit different kinds of kundalini arousal, some positive, some negative.

This work is worthy of mention because Sanches and Daniels (2008) manage to use eastern and kundalini phenomenology to create a highly reliable psychometric measurement which suggests kundalini can be studied using traditional empirical methods. Sanches and Daniels (2008) suggested the KAS could also be used longitudinally in populations with active kundalini to assess changes over time. Finally, they noted their findings were consistent with the eastern and western kundalini phenomenology they had based the KAS on.

The Therapeutic Potential of Kundalini

The healing potential of kundalini energy is observed in the literature. For example, Sannella (1987) describes many anecdotal accounts of spontaneous healing and new healing abilities attributed to kundalini awakening. Lockley (2013) described two cases of spontaneous physiological healing associated with kundalini awakening. In one case, a woman spoke of a “pristine force” entering her body and afterwards notice a lump that had been at the base her spine disappeared. In another case, also attributed to kundalini, a woman found the severe spinal curvature she had lived with for most of her life disappeared completely (Lockley, 2013). Dixon (2008, p. 6) suggests the healing potential of kundalini awakening is multidimensional and “entails a full spectrum lifestyle change which addresses all ... types of imbalances”. This perspective is supported by recent research into the transformative impact of kundalini awakening by Woollacott, Kason, and Park (2020) who found 50% of kundalini experiencers reported (a) an increased capacity to heal and (b) increases in overall health.

Despite observations that kundalini has healing potential, there has been little evaluation of kundalini energy's possible therapeutic properties. However, some researchers have investigated kundalini energy's healing potential via kundalini yoga (KY) as a possible treatment for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), hypertension, mild cognitive impairment, PTSD, and addiction.

In a randomized controlled trial (RCT), Shannahoff-Khalsa et al. (2019) compared the effectiveness of KY designed to treat OCD compared to two non-specific medication protocols and concluded KY yoga techniques could be a useful adjunct treatment for OCD. In another RCT, Eyre et al. (2017) investigated the effects of KY compared with memory enhancement training on mild cognitive impairment.

The authors found after 12 weeks, the KY group showed significant improvements in executive functioning, depressive symptoms, and resilience while the MET group did not. An RTC was also used by Jindani (2015b), who compared the effects of a KY protocol on PTSD symptoms and general wellbeing compared to a waitlisted control group. In this study, both the KY group and the control group showed changes over time; however, the KY yoga group showed significant improvements in the domains of PTSD, insomnia, perceived stress, positive and negative affect, resilience, stress, and anxiety scores. (Jindani, 2015a) followed up with the RTC participants in a qualitative

study. Based on the qualitative analysis's major themes, the author concluded KY strategies related to self-management and self-care were accessible, empowering and perhaps could address the mind-body elements of PTSD.

In a controlled trial (CT), Wolff, Sundquist, Lönn, and Midlöv (2013) investigated the effects of (1) KY practised at home compared, (2) instructor-led group KY classes, and (3) no KY intervention on blood pressure and quality of life (QOL) for individuals diagnosed with hypertension. They found KY classes did not improve blood pressure or QOL measures; however, The KY at home group showed significant improvement in self-rated QOL compared to the control group. The authors concluded home-based KY practices could have an antihypertensive effect and positive effects on QOL

While these results are encouraging, the authors were rightly cautious in their conclusions and suggest further research is needed. Attrition rates ranged from 20% to 50% in the RTC and CTs, and Shannahoff-Khalsa et al.'s (1999) research into OCD was underpowered with only 22 participants. This affects confidence that their findings are statistically significant.

The KY interventions were not homogenous in class length, frequency, setting, content or trial duration. Combined with the diversity of conditions investigated, it is not possible to generalize the findings. Furthermore, none of the studies specified their exact KY protocols, so other researchers could replicate the studies and perhaps verify the results. Finally, the RTC and CTs decontextualized KY by focusing mainly on the physiological aspects of breathing, physical movements and meditation. For example, Eyre et al. (2017) described their KY intervention as 'this secular practice'.

Spiritually informed practices like kundalini yoga, meditation and mindfulness are increasingly used to alleviate symptoms and promote wellness in the bio-medical model with little thought to the original intent (Benning, Harris, & Rominger, 2018; Lomas, 2015). Yet, we do not know what, or if any, information the researchers gave their participants about the possible ramifications of such practices.

In a palliative care setting, Kumar (2002) suggested kundalini energy could be awakened in those close to death via *shaktipat* (the transmission of kundalini from guru to disciple). In this philosophical discussion paper, Kumar (2002) suggests palliative kundalini awakening could reduce anxiety related to death, help individuals surrender to the process, and dissolve karma, thus making the transition between life and death more

serene. However, Kumar (2002) did acknowledge that mainstream science has no explanation for shaktipat or kundalini. Two case studies by Shannahoff-Khalsa (2005) also evidence how kundalini can be utilised to alleviate fear and empower terminal cancer patients. Shannahoff-Khalsa (2005) used kundalini meditation with a terminal breast cancer patient to reduce her anxiety and fear related to death. After one session, the woman experienced rapid relief of her fears and had learnt a coping technique that could be performed from her bed whenever she felt the need. In the case study of a male with terminal prostate cancer, Shannahoff-Khalsa (2005) taught the patient various kundalini yoga techniques in two sessions. According to the patient, kundalini yoga alleviated the discomfort of radiation therapy, improved the efficacy of medical treatments, and greatly improved his feelings of self-determination concerning his treatment plan and outcome (Shannahoff-Khalsa, 2005).

Disclosing Spiritual Experiences

Disclosing experiences like kundalini awakening is correlated with spiritual, psychological and physical benefits (Palmer & Braud, 2002). However, Davis, Lockwood, and Wright (1991) found that fear of being invalidated, ridiculed or labelled ‘crazy’ were common motivations behind non-disclosure of spiritual experiences. Those who did disclose were extremely discriminating in who they chose to tell. These fears are not unfounded. Research by Roxburgh and Evenden (2016) found the majority of those who did engage with helping professionals felt silenced and dismissed, confirming apprehensions they already had about disclosing their experience and preventing any further exploration of the phenomena.

Similarly, Woollacott et al. (2020), who interviewed 106 kundalini experiencers, found 80% of those who spoke to health professionals were dissatisfied with the responses given, especially from traditionally trained health care providers.

In related research, Holden, Kinsey, and Moore (2014) found 19% of NDErs who disclosed their experience to health care professionals and non-professionals perceived negative responses. Furthermore, disclosures made soon after an NDE and more intense NDEs resulted in “extremely negative, unpleasant, and harmful” disclosure experiences (Holden et al., 2014, p. 284). In view of their findings, Holden et al. (2014) suggested all healthcare providers needed improved spiritual competency so they may do no harm.

Kundalini and the DSM-IV

The category of religious or spiritual problem was added to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - Fourth Edition* (DSM-IV) to depathologize spiritual experiences and increase the empathy and competence of mental health professionals engaging with those in spiritual or religious crisis (Benning et al., 2018). However, there is little literature as to the efficacy of this addition to the DSM. For example, Brown (2005) surveyed 258 American clinical psychologists about their knowledge and use of V-code 62.89. They found that while 45% of those who responded stated they were aware of V-code 62.89, 66% did not employ it in practice. Qualitative elements of the research suggested that while the psychologists regularly worked with individuals experiencing spiritual issues, they tended not to use V-code 62.89 as a diagnostic tool. Reasons given for not engaging included feeling V-code 62.89 was too clinically weighted, inadequate reimbursement and a lack of training (Brown, 2005).

In a similar vein, Scott et al. (2003) found that within a respondent pool of 1000 clinical psychologists, only a small number referred to V-code 62.89 for assessing or treating clients, despite many acknowledging the roles religion and spirituality play in wellbeing and mental health. The category of religious and spiritual problems explicitly creates a space for a non-pathologizing orientation towards spiritual and religious dimensions in therapy. However, the scant amount of research into the category and an apparent reluctance by clinicians to engage with V-code 62.89 could mean it has not been as effective as first hoped for (Scott et al., 2003).

Furthermore, therapists who want to become competent in religious and spiritual practices and their effects on emotions, cognitions and attitudes towards health have little information or training resources to rely on (Benning et al., 2018). Finally, O'Connor and Vandenberg (2005) found mental health care professionals pathologized non-Christian practices more than normative Christian practices.

Summary

In part two of the hierophant cycle, I presented the academic literature related to kundalini awakening. This included foundational kundalini research, research that identified relationships between kundalini and NDEs, panic attacks, psychosis, physical illness, psychedelic drug experiences, other spiritual/religious experiences, and the

KAS. Much of this work used variations on Sannella's (1987) expanded physio-kundalini model. Additionally, I presented research that investigated the potential therapeutic benefits of kundalini, spiritual competency, and disclosure reluctance. In the next section, I articulate my preliminary interpretative lenses based on my learnings from the academic literature.

Preliminary Interpretive Lenses | The Academic Literature

The overlap between kundalini and NDEs, psychopathologies, physical illness, psychedelic drug states, and religious, mystical and spiritual experiences suggests western research lacks an overarching framework to explain the different domains kundalini awakenings manifest within. Perhaps this is because dominant SAP ontology and epistemology is incongruent with kundalini awakening.

This research certainly demystifies kundalini awakening and adds to our body of knowledge. However, much of the empirical research appears ethnocentric, reductionist and cognicentric because it is constrained within SAP ideology. It is ethnocentric in that it uses its own view of the human psyche and reality to understand kundalini awakening. It is reductionist because the RTC and CTs especially reduce kundalini, a spiritual phenomenon, into its parts to satisfy empirical requirements. Finally, the cognicentric approach to knowledge acquisition means knowledge gained through internal modes of perception are not available to researchers. More and more, I like intuitive inquiry because it facilitates broader science by embracing cognition AND intuition.

Researchers showed that kundalini and psychosis are distinct and separate. However, kundalini can co-occur in those with pre-existing psycho-physiological conditions. The strain of awakening can disrupt psychological and physiological functioning and look like biological dysfunction or psychopathologies in the context of kundalini could be (a) purifying or purging processes, (b) evidence of systematic overwhelm, (c) organic biological disorders, or (d) perhaps a combination of any and all categories.

It also suggests the DSM V-code 62.89 is perhaps not as helpful as hoped for. For me, this research mirrors my own disclosure reluctance within the biomedical setting. I have underlying physical illnesses, and I did not know how to contain the huge surges in energy in the early stages of awakening. I think this manifested as intensified anxiety,

depersonalisation, dissociative states, and panic attacks. Additionally, although I did not cognitively understand at the time, in hindsight, I have experienced a number of ‘sacred maladies’ over the last three years, which I framed from a biomedical perspective. I do wish I could have accessed spiritually competent medical support, and I still wish for it. However, I am reluctant to disclose kundalini to my doctor for fear of being invalidated or pathologized.

Part Three | The Cultural Underpinnings of Kundalini

Introduction

In terms of western research, Valanciute and Thampy (2011, p. 839) wrote, "One of the contributing factors [to our] insufficient understanding or acquisition of [kundalini knowledge] is a superficial interpretation of the eastern tradition or philosophies". This was evident in the surface level descriptions of kundalini as originating from “various sacred traditions” (Kason, 1994); “ancient yogic texts” (De Gracia, 1997; Greyson, 1993a; Regner, 1999; Ring, 190; Thalbourne & Fox, 1999); and “traditional Indian metaphysics” (Ossoff, 1993). It was also evident in the secularization of KY techniques in the RTCs and CTs. After engaging with the academic literature, I still felt confused about (1) the cultural context and origins of kundalini and (2) how the RTC/CTs researchers had framed kundalini. So, in part three, I explored kundalini awakening from within its cultural context.

In just the same way I struggled to locate my topic within my disciplinary lens and find my voice, I struggled to justify using oral platforms in an academic thesis because I was taught to dismiss this kind of knowledge as illegitimate. This is because modern science credits the written word as a causal factor in the birth of science. This privileging of the written serves to undermine the legitimacy of knowledge that emerges from oral traditions or is disseminated orally (Gosselin, 2006; Grimes, 1996).

Nonetheless, during the research, I was drawn towards teachers with direct experience of kundalini. As I listened to their oral transmission of kundalini knowledge from within a guru-disciple relationship of my own making, my body vibrated and expanded and spontaneously engaged in yogic breathing and *mudras* (sacred hand movements). The Guru-disciple relationship and the oral transmission of knowledge are cornerstones of Tantric knowledge acquisition and dissemination (Saraswati, 1984). In my own way, I

was embodying Tantric learning practices, so it felt very natural to learn about kundalini awakenings in this fashion.

However, I tempered my intuitive, embodied reactions with rational discernment. Therefore, while this next section draws from academic literature, it is primarily informed by a new generation of professional scholar-practitioners in the Tantric traditions who write academically and offer their teachings through online platforms. These teachers are (1) Christopher Wallis, a respected *Sanskrit* scholar-practitioner who wrote the book *Tantra Illuminated* (2013) and founded the Tantrika Institute; (2) Christopher Tompkins, a PhD scholar-practitioner with degrees in Religion and Sanskrit who writes about Yoga as embodied in the traditions of *Tantric Shaivism*; and (3) Igor Kufayev, an artist, and spiritual teacher whose teachings draw from the Zen, Sufi, and Tantric Kashmir Shaivism traditions. I add the caveat, however, that "simple direct knowingness" is beyond traditions, concepts, languages, and "isms" (Beasley, 2013; Kufayev, n.d-a).

The Cultural Underpinnings of Kundalini

Tantra grew out of indigenous Indian Goddess worshipping shamanist practices to become India's predominant religion during the medieval period (600-1200) (Bjonnes, 2011; Wallis, 2013). Tantric employment of the body to attain freedom and liberation profoundly influenced all yogic traditions, including Patanjali's eight limbs of ashtanga yoga (a framework of practices designed to stabilize the gross and subtle bodies and support the kundalini awakening process), and *Hatha yoga*, the foundation of modern yoga (Friedman et al., 2010; Wallis, 2013). Yogic body-based practices and philosophies, including asana (yogic postures); mudras (sacred hand gestures); *mantra* (sound vibrations); pranayama (breath control) and meditating on subtle body chakras, all have their roots in Tantric Shaivism (Wallis, 2013).

Over time Tantric scriptures and practices influenced and underpinned the major theistic schools of post-Vedic India such as Buddhism, Vaishnavism, Jainism and Indian Islam and later diffusing into East Asia, Indonesia and Southeast Asia (Wallis, 2013).

Traditions such as Vajrayana Buddhism practised in Tibet and Bhutan, and Japan's Shingon Buddhism (which contains elements of Vajrayana Buddhism) exemplify the different paths tantric lineages have taken and their influence on Eastern religions and philosophies (Allison, 2019).

At the surface level, Vedanta (not-two) and Tantric Shaivism both acknowledge kundalini-Shakti and adhere to a nondual doctrine of one essential reality: supreme consciousness as the ground of all being. However, these two traditions differ in their ontological ideas of what is real. For Vedantans, only *Brahma* is real, and the everchanging, phenomenal world, *Māyā-Shakti*, is nothing more than a projection of Brahman. Therefore, the illusory *Māyā-Shakti* world of appearances is not accorded the same status as *Brahma*, the immanent ground of everything (Das, 2020; Kufayev, 2013). There is a dualism inherent in the Vedic traditions between Brahman and *Māyā*, illusion and ultimate reality, and immanence and finiteness that Tantric Shaivism does not subscribe to. For Shaivites, all levels of existence are real without exception. There is no hierarchical distinction or separation between the consciousness of unmanifest Shiva and the manifesting energy of Shakti; where Shakti exists, so does Shiva (Kufayev, 2013). From this perspective, only supreme consciousness exists in numerous permutations as Shiva-Shakti registering on differing perception levels (Das, 2020; Kufayev, 2013; Wallis, 2013).

Merging with the Ground of Being.

When all thought edifices are removed, humans arrive at the ground of awareness. Saivites refer to that ground of being as Shiva and Vedantans as Brahman (Kufayev, 2013). For Vedantans merging with Brahman constitutes enlightenment and oneness. However, after enlightenment, the body continues due to the residual imprint of past actions. Thus, true liberation (*videhamukti*) is bodiless.

In contrast, *Tantrikas* bring their enlightened state and refined perception back into the world. With new eyes, the world becomes nothing more than Shiva-Shakti, or God in ourselves and everything (Kufayev, 2013). Broadly speaking, these two rivers of Indian philosophy represent two paths to God. Vedic traditions embody the life renouncing, contemplative masculine principle of consciousness, while Shaivic *Tantrikas* exemplify the embodied life-affirming view that Shiva-Shakti is present in all things (Kufayev, 2013).

What Does Shiva-Shakti Represent?

The Tantric scriptures based on discourses between Shiva-Shakti inform Tantric beliefs about the nature of reality and God. Shiva-Shakti is inseparable in essence. Together

they are responsible for all creation and all existence. From this undifferentiated state, ‘Om’, the seed note, or vibration, of the universe emerged (Joyce, 2015)

Although Shiva-Shakti can never be separated, Tantric theory ascribes different qualities to the masculine Shiva and the feminine Shakti. Shiva is, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent (Kufayev, 2020). Shiva is also referred to as *Prakasha* in reference to the luminosity that emanates from immanent consciousness. In the human body, Shiva abides in the sahasrara (crown) chakra while Shakti-Kundalini lies at the root of the spine in the muladhara chakra (Mumford, 2005). However, it is essential to emphasise that while the personal aspect of Shiva-Shakti abides in different parts of the body, they also pervade all things.

Transcending all layers of existence, space and time, the Shiva aspect of Shiva-Shakti is variously named "the unseen one", "the one without form", *spanda* (the vibration), *hṛdaya* (the heart) and *vāk* (the word) or spoken of as awareness, pure silence, totality and absoluteness (Choudhury, 2018; Kufayev, 2020; Wallis, 2013). References to Shiva in Shaivism as "the word" define the word ‘OM’, as the causative sound of creation. The term *spanda* describes the all-encompassing divine pulsating vibration that forms the matrix of the cosmos (Wallis, 2013). Together, Shiva and Shakti underpin, create and perfuse everything that is, was, and will ever be, with no exceptions (Kufayev, 2020).

Similar ideas of an omniscient creator with light and sound qualities are enduring across time and culture. The Abrahamic religions speak explicitly of divine luminosity and sacred sound as causal factors in creating the universe. Similarly, Catholic metaphysics conceives of a dynamic ground of consciousness (St. Romain, 2010).

Within the luminous Shiva-Shakti consciousness lies the power of awareness, and that power is represented by the word Shakti. From the tantric viewpoint, Shakti (pure potentiality) is the power of Shiva (pure awareness) (Bharati, 2015; Kufayev, 2020). Tantric ideas of a cosmic energy with two principal polarities or energies is mirrored around the world. Some examples include *Papatūānuku* the earth Mother and *Ranginui* the sky father from Te Ao Māori; the interconnected yet seemingly opposite yin and yang of Chinese philosophy; Taoist concepts of *wu-wei*; and Western understandings of emptiness and matter, to name but a few (Bharati, 2015).

Shakti on the Move

Bound within the formless consciousness and unlimited potential of Shiva, Shakti creates, sustains, dissolves and conceals all creation and absorbs all forms back into herself (Edwards, 2014; Krishna, 1975; Kufayev, 2020). As she does so, her names change. For example, the term prana (life force, breath) is interchangeable with the term Prana-Shakti, which illustrates prana is simply a different manifestation of Shiva-Shakti energy (Beck & Taylor, 2015). The same is true of the term Shakti-Kundalini, a word representing the idea that embodied kundalini power and cosmic shakti power are the same and ultimately emanate from Shiva-Shakti.

Prana

While material science finds the existence of prana or 'life energy' controversial, unverifiable and non-scientific (Cooper, Harris, & Clark, 2015; Rock & Clark, 2015; Taylor, 2015). The word prana contains multiple complex meanings. Prana is variously described as "the first essence underlying the breath" (Mumford, 2005, p. 239), "the vibration between atoms" (Rose, 2019, para.2), or quite simply, the air we breathe (Krishna, 1970).

Tantric literature describes three expressions of pranic energy. *Para-Kundalini*, the first manifestation, refers to unmanifest cosmic energy (Shumsky, 2003). The second expression of prana is *Prana-Kundalini*, the vital energy underpinning the created universe which animates all things, including mind-body function in humans (Shumsky, 2003). In Tantric traditions, this energy, Prana-Kundalini, is simply referred to as kundalini (Saraswati, 1984). Shakti-Kundalini is the third manifestation of kundalini energy, which expresses as consciousness and acts as an intermediary between unmanifest cosmic energy and the dynamic energy of creation (Shumsky, 2003). Fundamentally, these three forms of kundalini energy are one energy manifesting in different ways. What these ideas suggest is that humans are not separate from each other or the universe. Rather, *Chit-Kundalini's* aspect (the power of consciousness or consciousness itself) is present in the body of every man, woman, child and thing in the cosmos (Kufayev, 2020) pulsating quietly for most, but partially or fully awakened in some. In essence, prana ontologically validates the idea that we are connected to the universe, and the universe is connected to us.

Similar ideas of an elemental, life-giving and sustaining energy exist around the world. For example, prana goes by Ruah in Hebrew, Qi and Ki respectively in Chinese and Japanese, Hasina in Madagascar and Nyama in West African cultures (Dixon, 2008; Grof, 1988; White, 1979). Krishna (1970) asserts prana is fundamental to life on earth; every molecule and atom has prana, and pranic radiation emanates from the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars. Te Ao Māori also acknowledges a prana like principal called Mauri, which Māori describe as an elemental essence that all things are imbibed with (Joyce, 2015; Love, 2004). An Arabic Ḥadīth (records of the words and actions of Prophet Muhammad) also refers to the cosmic breath of life as illustrated in this quote: "Then Allah sends an angel ... Then the soul is breathed into the body" (Costian, 2018, p. 93).

From a scientific perspective, a growing number of scientists theorize the vacuum in our cosmos and empty space in our cells is not emptiness. Instead, it is a universal energy that connects all things and from which all things originate (Lim, 2017). In a 1944 speech, Max Planck, the father of quantum theory, spoke of a force that both vibrates atomic particles and keeps the atom intact (Lim, 2017). Furthermore, he suggested this vibrational and connective force's foundation to be an intelligent and conscious mind, describing this mind as "the matrix of all matter" (Lim, 2017, p. 142). This idea resonates remarkably with Tantric concepts of spanda and prana.

Shakti-Kundalini

Much of the academic literature drew on Krishna's (1970) idea of kundalini as the biological mechanism behind individual enlightenment and species evolution and concepts found in Arthur Avalon's book *The Serpent Power*. A composite description of kundalini awakening taken from the academic literature describes her as; a coiled dormant energy (Ossoff, 1993; Parker, 2018) at the base of the spine (Grof & Grof, 2017; Sanches & Daniels, 2008) that once awakened travels up the chakras (De Gracia, 1997) and strengthens or purifies (Linders & Lancaster, 2013; Parker, 2018) the gross and subtle bodies producing mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual effects (Bronn & McIlwain, 2015; Greyson, 2000; Harris, 1994). When kundalini reaches the crown chakra, individuals experience enlightenment, mystical states of consciousness and other powers (Greyson, 1993a; Parker, 2018; Prosnick & Evans, 2003).

However, there is more to kundalini awakening than metaphorical representations of kundalini as a serpent power ascending up the subtle body anatomy. While groundbreaking when first published, Avalon's understandings of kundalini, which still continue to inform western thinking, are now outdated and superseded by better work (Tompkins, 2017; Wallis, 2018). Tompkins' (2017) recent translations of tantric scriptures understand the kundalini serpent metaphor to represent subatomic spin or vibrations (spanda) as a core natural principle underpinning the woven universe rather than a dormant energy coiled at the base of the spine. Thus, while embodied, kundalini is also a perfusive, active, coiling and uncoiling vibrational force undifferentiated from Shiva-Shakti. Lim (2017, p. 144) further articulates the vibrational and perfusive nature of kundalini by describing it as the "combined light from individual and universal consciousness" and "an energy exchange with the universal energy source at the quantum level". Based on translations of the *Kālottara Tantra* and other Tantric texts, Tompkins (2017) suggests kundalini is never dormant, and in fact, if it were, the body would be lifeless. From top to bottom, Figure. 5 on the following page presents artwork from the *Kāṅkala Mālīnī Tantra* (date unknown), which depicts coiled and ascending kundalini, not as dormant, but as the sonic vibration of Shiva-Shakti.

Kundalini-Shaktipat or Top-Down Awakening

Within *Siddha Yoga* and tantric traditions, kundalini is also described in terms of the descent of cosmic grace. Usually, the descent of grace occurs within a Guru/disciple relationship through energy transmission from one person (an enlightened being) to another (the initiate). This kind of experience is known as Kundalini-Shaktipat, which translates as the 'pat' (descent) of Shakti (Lim, 2017). According to tantric scriptures, shaktipat, which can be transmitted short or long distances by touch, word, look, and thought, is the safest method of awakening (Saraswati, 1984; Tirtha, 1962; Wallis, 2013; Woollacott, Kason, & Park, 2020). However, descent of grace, or top-down kundalini experiences, also occur outside of guru/disciple relationships and yogic traditions.

Kundalini Moving in the Body

Inside you is a fire, and once that fire is lit, you become connected to the cosmic fire that forms the very foundation and source of the intelligent cosmos; it is the fire of creation (Choudhury, 2018).



Figure 5. Shiva-Shakti Kundalini. Kāṅkāla Mālinā tantra (date unknown). Tompkins, C. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr1-hxZeXwM>

In sacred literature from around the world, including *The Kabbalah*; the *Tao te Ching*; the *Upanishads*; the Qur'an; the Bible; Vedic and Tantric scriptures; and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the movement of spiritual energy or kundalini in the body is explained in terms of heat and light (Goretzki, Thalbourne, & Storm, 2013; Panameno, 2013). Further supporting the phenomenological evidence of spiritual heat and light, scientific research by Benson et al. (1982) and Kozhevnikov, Elliott, Shephard, and Gramann (2013) found reliable increases in the body temperature of expert meditators who used *Tummo* practices and visualisations.

Te Ao Maori makes reference to kundalini heat and light in ancient Maori *karakia* (prayer), where she is known as *Ahi Tawhito* (ancient fire), *Ahi Tipua* (supernatural fire) and in other terms depending on how the kundalini experience manifests herself (Ngata, personal communication, 02 July 2019). In Christian mystical traditions, Kundalini is said by some to be the holy spirit or holy fire; however, this is not a consensus view (Gnostic Instructor, 2012; St Romain). Nonetheless, the illumination/enlightenment experiences of medieval Christian mystics such as St. Theresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena, and contemporary contemplatives like Meister Eckhart, all include accounts of heat and light (Cunningham, 2011; Saraswati, 1984). In Buddhist traditions, embodied kundalini is known as *prabhasvara* (uncreated light), while the corresponding term for kundalini in Tibetan is *tummo* which means "fierce one" (Louchakova & Warner, 2003).

Kundalini and Subtle Body Anatomy

Samkhya (a school of Hindu philosophy), Vedantic and Tantric scriptures conceptualize the impermanent human body and the permanent soul as existing simultaneously in two parallel dimensions; the gross body and the subtle body which are connected by the causal body (Mookerjee, 1982; Saraswati, 1984). The gross body dimension refers to the physical body which is born, eats, breathes, moves, and then dies (Mookerjee, 1982). The subtle, or astral body, is comprised of subtle elements invisible to the naked eye. The subtle body vivifies the physical body's functions and relates to how we feel or act and our perceptive sense organs (Mookerjee, 1982). The causal body anchors the physical and subtle bodies together and is the seed from which a subtle body springs in each lifetime. It holds a karmic record of our past habits, thoughts and actions and carries the permanent soul from one life to the next upon reincarnation

(Greenwell, 2002; Saraswati, 1984). Concepts of time, space and objectivity do not exist within the causal body. Saraswati (1984) writes that, while kundalini is connected to the physical body, its primary abode is in the causal body.

Within these three bodies, or dimensions, are five layers of being, or cosmic folds of ever-decreasing density (Mookerjee, 1982). The material body contains the *annamaya kosha* (the food layer). The subtle body has three layers; the *pranamaya kosha* (prana or life force), the *manomaya kosha* (the energy of the mind, emotions, and thoughts) and the *vijnanamaya kosha* (the dimension of discernment, knowledge and intellect). Finally, the causal body contains the *anadamaya kosha* (associated with the capacity for joy and bliss consciousness), which is instrumental in unity consciousness experiences (Greenwell, 2002)

The idea of many layers of being is not confined to Indian philosophy. The Kabbalah speaks of five subtle bodies (Panameno, 2013), and ancient Egyptian traditions recognised five interconnected bodies ranging from the gross physical to the subtle (Masters, 1988). Paulson (2002) suggests the human body comprises seven levels from the material to the divine, while Brennan (1988) conceptualises human beings as made up of a seven-fold human energy field.

Additionally, the Vajrayana traditions of Tibetan Buddhism conceive of the rainbow body, which manifests through and around the body creating five different physical fluorescence colours (Louchakova & Warner, 2003). Closer to home, Te Ao Māori frame human beings as made up of interrelational spiritual, mental, and physical dimensions. This holistic perspective links health to the ebb and flow of mauri (life force), an energy that originates in the *hāmano* (pure soul) and manifests into the physical body via the spiritual and astral body (Joyce, 2015; Mark & Lyons, 2014). These ideas of multi-layered, cosmically connected holistic bodies contrast deeply with empiricist, bio-reductionist western medicine. However, they cannot be objectively and scientifically observed, tested or measured (McKee & Chappel, 1992).

The Nadis

According to Tantric subtle body anatomy, which informed Ancient Vedic yogic texts and scriptures, *nadis* are a subtle nerve network comprised of 72,000 nerves that circulate prana flow, maintain organ function, and connect the subtle and gross bodies together (Joyce, 2015). The three major nadis are the *sushumna nadi*, the *ida nadi* and

the pingala nadi. The sushumna nadi runs parallel to the spine, and the ida and pingala nadis helix up the spine on either side of the sushumna nadi (South, 2000).

Ideas of subtle nadi and meridian channels also resonate with Te Ao Māori views of the body. In a speech describing the eight dimensions of being, esteemed Māori *Tohuna* (priestess) Rangimarie Pere describes the human body as housing divine Mother energy on the left side and divine father energy on the right (Pere, 2018). Hatha yoga, sometimes referred to as the yoga of sun and moon, alludes to the importance of ida and pingala nadis in embodied psycho-spiritual transformation. Hatha yoga aims to strengthen the physical body and the subtle body channels in the pursuit of yoga, or union with all parts of oneself and with the divine (Judith, 2004). The meridians in Chinese medicine and acupuncture are also similar to the nadis (Baring, 2002). The central channel is represented by Hermes's caduceus in European culture (Collie, 2000; Dixon, 2008; Mumford, 2005) and sometimes referred to as the *avadhūtī* in Buddhist traditions (Samuel, 2013). Similarly, Te Ao Māori describes a subtle *Te aka* (cosmic vine) which runs parallel with the spine connecting the *hāmano* (pure soul), *Manawa* (heart/ mind), *Ata* (shadow/ astral body), and *Kiko* (physical body) together (Joyce, 2015).

The Chakras

Many traditions worldwide have a chakra system ranging in number from five to twelve or more, depending on the lineage or scriptures followed. However, in the West, the chakra system's most commonly known version has seven chakras (the root, sacral, solar plexus, heart, brow, and crown) (Friedman et al., 2010). Distributed between the chakras are *granthis* or psychic knots. As kundalini ascends through the chakras, it dissolves these psychic knots related to the mind, body and spirit, which act as barriers to liberation because they inhibit prana flow in the sushumna nadi (Greenwell, 2002). Appendix C provides a further discussion on the ascent of kundalini through the nadis, chakras and granthi knots.

Originally chakras were visualization tools designed to help direct mantras (sound-energy) up the Sushumna channel during meditation (Saraswati, 1982; Tompkins, 2008). However, some yogis and new age authors correlate the chakras with nerve plexuses, endocrine functions, and organs in the human body. Krishna's experiences of circular vortices of energy in his nerve plexuses and organs led him to regard the

chakras as an experiential reality (Krishna, 1970, 1972, 1975). The same is true for Kashmiri Saivites, who, from direct experience, describe vibrating wheels or vortices in the body (South, 2000).

Seeman (2002, p. 276) described a peer's contemporary experience of the chakras during a dramatic Kundalini awakening which brought with it the ability to visualise chakras as "vortices of white light" and acupuncture points as smaller chakras. Another contemporary experiencer stated that he "could feel the vortexes of electricity around the places that have been described as chakras" (White, 1979, p. 155). Sivananda (2006), from a yogic and Vedantic perspective, locates chakras in the subtle body. Still, he notes they correspond to regions in the spinal column and nerve-plexuses in the physical body where each chakra exerts control over specific aspects of human physiology. Swami Rama (cited in Sivananda, 2006, p. 191) asserts chakras do have "physical correspondences in the various plexuses of the body ... but they are not physical centres".

Cross-cultural examples of the chakra system are found around the world. For example, Te Ao Maori speak of *waharoa*, or gateways, in a similar context to the chakra system. (Ngata, personal communication 02 July 2019). In Tibet, these energetic centres are called *Khor-lo*, or Kālacakra, and aligned to the term chakra, translate as round, or "the wheels of circulation" (Samuel, 2013, p. 92)

Modern western understandings of the seven chakra system stem from Arthur Avalon's introduction of the Hatha Yoga seven chakra system and Carl Jung's reinterpretation of the chakras through the lens of Western Psychology (Judith, 2004; Tompkins, 2008; Wallis, 2013). Rightly or wrongly, over time, the seven chakra system has evolved to merge with western cultural constructs. In the new age community, authors have mapped the chakra model onto psychological models of development, including Freud's (1905) psychosexual stages of development, Jung's (1923) theory of individuation, Assagioli's (1965) psychosynthesis stages and Erickson's (1963) stages of development (Dale, 2011; Judith, 2004; Myss, 2013). In doing so, these authors offer expanded western theories of psychosocial development that include the metaphysical.

The Abode of Kundalini

According to Dale (2011, pp. 2-4), kundalini is a Sanskrit feminine noun meaning spiral or coiled. Some scholars suggest a correlation between muladhara chakra (kundalini's

abode) and the sacrum bone. This idea is evident when we unpack the word kundalini's etymological roots.

Kun: Means earthen pit or cavity.

Da: Means to give or 'bestow'.

Lini: Means the beginning and end, omega and alpha.

Referring back to the etymology and the Sanskrit root words 'di' or 'da', we see it speaks of a little pot of earth (Kunda) or a single cell. These root words perhaps allude to kundalini in the body. Thus, from an etymological perspective, kundalini can be described as a feminine, coiled, primal earth energy originating from a single cell that gives rise to consciousness by the grace of the bestower (Dale, 2011).

The sacrum bone is recognised the world over as the abode of consciousness, or shakti-kundalini, in the human body (Costian, 2018; Dixon, 2008; Gardiner, 2006; Louchakova & Warner, 2003; Mumford, 2005; Myrick, 2015; Rele, 1950). Rele (1950) writes that ancient yogic descriptions of the Kanda are similar to those for the sacrum. From this perspective, both are described as cavities, where the seed of consciousness lies. This idea is further illustrated by yoga postures designed to balance the muladhara chakra, which typically involves either elongating or compressing the sacral bone area (Batalha, 2018). *Yogis* and *yoginis* are not alone in this understanding.

Ancient Egyptians associated the sacrum with Osiris, the god of the afterlife and early Greek, Muslim and Jewish civilisations associated the sacrum with resurrection (Stross, 2007; Sugar, 1987). The German word for sacrum *Kreuzbein* translates as 'crossbone', which is an apparent reference to the crucifixion of Christ and the resurrection that followed (Ojumah & Loukas, 2018). In the secular bio-medical space, the anatomical name for the sacrum, used since the time of Hippocrates in 400 BC, is *hieron ostoun* which translates to the holy bone in Greek and was later translated to sacrum (Latin for sacred) by the Romans (Costian, 2018; Fox, 2010). In ancient Hebrew, the sacrum was referred to as *Luz*, which means hazelnut (Sugar, 1987). Additionally, in Western esoteric traditions, the sacrum bone is represented by the zodiac sign Aquarius (the water bearer) and the holy grail, a cup depicting the water of life (Stross, 2007).

The Biomedical Body

According to Louchakova and Warner (2003), the way forward for western psychology and medical sciences is to move away from the concept of the body as flesh solely innervated by the soma-sensory cortex in the brain and explore non-physical notions of the subtle body. Louchakova and Warner (2003) also observe that the lack of transpersonal body-theory and marginalisation of the body is incongruent with the many body-orientated therapies used in transpersonal therapy, a discipline that acknowledges the spiritual. Beck and Taylor (2015) assert that humans can both generate and interact with external energies, which influences physiological mechanisms. These concepts suggest that the human body comprises different levels of materiality and interacts with the energetic field in nature.

Enduring cross-cultural conceptualizations of the body as fleshy, energetic, and perfused with cosmic consciousness contrast powerfully with the dominant western scientific, bio-medical and psychological narratives that inform how we see our bodies (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Deacon, 2013; Harris, 1994). The biomedical paradigm rests predominantly on two assumptions; the doctrine of mind-body dualism and reductionism (Bishop, 1994; Ogden, 2012). Mind-body dualism suggests the body lies in the physical domain while the mind occupies the mental or spiritual domain (Bishop, 1994; Ogden, 2012). From the biomedical perspective, human beings are viewed as biological organisms (materialism) who can be understood by investigating their constituent parts (reductionism), using the principles of physiology, anatomy, physics and biochemistry (Mehta, 2011). Within the biomedical approach, aspects of wellness and illness are reduced to the flesh while the spirit is ignored, and psychological and social factors are obscured (Bishop, 1994; Ogden, 2012). The dualist philosophical framework that underpins our ideas about the body are so ingrained in western science, medicine, psychology and culture that most of us treat the biomedical view of the body as fact and consider nonbiological conceptualizations of the body, health and illness as unscientific in nature and therefore illegitimate (Mehta, 2011)

Catalysts to Kundalini Awakening and Types of Awakening

While kundalini awakening appears to be a cross-cultural phenomenon, not all awakenings manifest in the same way. Beck and Taylor (2015) suggest three factors that influence kundalini awakening experiences. First, the levels of prana a body can

produce differ between individuals. Secondly, the quality or purity of prana varies from person to person. Thirdly, the physiological makeup of people is different. Some individuals have a physiology that can adapt to the increased prana and associated changes in the brain and body. Others have a system that struggles to adjust and integrate the upsurge in energy. Thus, one individual may have kundalini manifestations such as surges of creativity, increased psychic abilities and genius, while another individual may experience psychosis and physical breakdown (Beck & Taylor, 2015). Kundalini release is enhanced or disrupted by many factors, for example, health, diet, genetic predispositions, environment, and past experiences, to name but a few (Beck & Taylor, 2015). Less tangible influences on kundalini release to the Western reader are past lives and karmic debts (Dixon, 2008; Mark, 2008). Taylor (2015) makes a distinction between high and low arousal kundalini awakenings. He characterises high arousal awakenings with active, ecstatic or psychotic elements as ergotropic and lower arousal awakenings with more serene experiences as trophotropic.

Traditionally kundalini awakenings took place within a guru-disciple relationship with suitably prepared and screened aspirants. As such, traditional yogic and tantric texts tend not to focus on the potential difficulties of spontaneous kundalini awakening or non-yogic catalysts (Taylor, 2015).

Comprehensive training and preparatory disciplines in Vedic and tantric yoga practices focus on breath, postures, sound vibration and intention to uncoil and recoil kundalini in the sushumna nadi and move prana through the ida and pingala nadis (Mookerjee, 1982). These practices are explicitly designed to catalyse safe, gradual, kundalini awakenings underpinned by personal effort and divine grace (Tompkins, 2017; Wallis, 2018). When overwhelming or frightening experiences do happen in the context of structured traditions, they are framed as part of the process, that although difficult, ultimately lead to positive outcomes (Fonteiijn, 2019; Greyson, 1993a). Most Eastern philosophies suggest kundalini awakenings that occur outside of proper guidance and preparation are dangerous and can induce adverse effects, including psychosis (Greyson, 1993a).

Once well-guarded practices for spiritual enlightenment that were available to only a select and prepared few are evolving and spreading worldwide as they move away from their cultural origins. The internet hosts a wide variety of information, platforms and

communities related to kundalini awakening (Fonteijn, 2019). It can be challenging for those interested in or experiencing kundalini awakening to distinguish between contemporary, safe, effective methods and potentially dangerous and exploitative offerings. Many new-age consciousness-raising tools are offered in good faith. However, some are hawked by individuals and organizations less concerned with spiritual development than making money (Beasley, 2013; Collie, 2000).

There is a degree of commodification at play here, too. One example of contemporary shaktipat among many is Venant Wong, who describes himself as a ‘kundalini activation process’ (KAP) facilitator and “transmission vehicle” who transmits raw Kundalini & deep consciousness (Wong, 2020). The KAP programme holds worldwide five-day workshops with follow up online support to those interested in becoming KAP facilitators charging USD \$6990 per person. I am not inclined to disbelieve that Venant Wong transmits kundalini; however, when I explored his website, the main student prerequisite appeared to be the ability to pay.

Increasingly, kundalini awakenings are occurring outside of the traditional yogic framework. Consequently, western researchers describe a wide variety of triggers or catalysts to kundalini awakenings and kundalini-like-experiences that are unrelated to yogic practices. (Cunningham, 2011; Dixon, 2008; Fonteijn, 2019; Grof & Grof, 2017; Harris, 1994; Kaselionyte & Gumley, 2018; Lim, 2017; Mookerjee, 1982; Tzu, Bannerman, & Griffith, 2015; Woollacott et al., 2020). Unlike the structured yogic path to awakening, catalysts or triggers outside of the traditional yogic and tantric frameworks are homogenous only in their variety.

Table. 1 on the following page presents a (non-exhaustive) summary of kundalini catalysts or triggers as identified in yogic/tantric literature and by western kundalini researchers (Bragdon, 2006; Dixon, 2008; Edwards, 2014; Goretzki, 2008; Greyson, 1993a; Louchakova & Warner, 2003; Mookerjee, 1982; Saraswati, 1984; St. Romain, 2010). To provide some structure, I sorted the triggers into categories; however, I acknowledge many of the experiences can fall into two or more categories.

Preliminary Interpretive lenses | Kundalini Contextualized

There is a marked contrast between the worldviews underpinning SAP and Tantric/Vedic worldviews. This is not contradictory for me. Both worldviews generate knowledge regarding the different facets of being human.

Table 1: Summary of kundalini catalysts or triggers from the Eastern and Western literature

<i>Yogic and Tantric catalysts for awakening</i>	<i>Catalysts for awakening outside of tantric and yogic traditions</i>
<p><i>Tantra:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tantric alchemy Sexual rituals (not focused on to the degree found in the west) Tantric soma-spiritual rituals <p><i>Siddha yoga:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shaktipat (transference of spiritual energy from Guru to disciple) <p><i>The eight limbs of yoga:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yama (self restraint) and Niyama (positive duties and observances) Asana (yogic postures) Pranayama (breath control) techniques Pratyahara (the withdrawal of the senses) Dharana (single-pointed concentration) Dhyana (meditation) Samadhi (absorption) <p><i>Specific tantric and yogic practices to raise kundalini:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mudra (sacred hand gestures) Mantra (vocal sound vibration) taught under a Guru's supervision Bandhas (somatic yogic locks or binds designed direct prana flow) Releasing karma (the sum of ones current and past actions) Releasing samskara (mental impressions left by thoughts & actions) <p><i>Other yogic philosophies designed to raise kundalini:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raja yoga (mental regulation through meditation) Bhakti yoga (acts of love and devotion) Jnana yoga (obtaining spiritual knowledge and wisdom) Karma yoga (unselfish action) Laya yoga (the dissolution of self/merging with supreme consciousness) Kundalini yoga (practices mantra, tantra, yantra, yoga, and meditation) 	<p><i>Spiritual / religious triggers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buddhist meditation Christian baptism Sufi whirling dances Monastic contemplation Unfocused thought, prayer and contemplation <p><i>Secular trigger:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intellectual contemplation <p><i>Interpersonal triggers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual activity Childbirth Orgasmic asphyxiation Heartbreak or romantic love Safe, happy and supportive childhoods Exposure to individuals with awakened kundalini Energy medicine modalities and energetic practices <p><i>Environmental:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to acoustic or mechanical vibrations Interactions between universal energy source and embodied electrons Sun and moon cycles Energetically charged geographical locations Sacred geographical locations Being at altitude Clean air and water Pleasant and unpleasant nature experiences <p><i>Embodied:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme emotional release Loss, abuse, emotional deprivation, loneliness Recreational drug use Near-death experiences The decompression of DNA through intention Physical exertion and athleticism, or dancing and singing Genetic predispositions Age

Notes:

* Tantra influenced all yogic traditions including Patanjali's eight limbs of ashtanga yoga

There are two paths to awakening. The masculine Vedantic approach renounces the phenomenal world and the body, while the feminine Tantric path embraces everything as Shiva-Shakti. Understanding kundalini awakening from these non-dual perspectives makes kundalini awakening a participatory yet detached experience, relational yet impersonal, and embodied yet cosmic. I am comfortable with these paradoxes.

The difference in whether kundalini/prana/life energy can be validated lies in ontological assumptions about reality and which methods are considered valid for obtaining knowledge. Western science perceives prana and kundalini as unverifiable using empirical methods. So far, research has used the body or western psychological constructs as proxies to quantify parts of the kundalini phenomena. In contrast, Tantric/Vedic traditions acknowledge both empirical knowledge and internal ways of knowing and suggest true knowledge is found within. Thus, from the Vedic/Tantric perspective, kundalini is ontologically valid and can be known through experience as a normal part of individual and collective human psycho-spiritual evolution.

As the traditional chakra system evolves due to the cross-pollination of western thought, ideas regarding the reality of chakras become a moot point. What matters is the evolving chakra model provides a conceptual subtle body framework for westerners to understand human experiences that are bigger than the limiting flesh and bone biomedical view of the body most of us are familiar with.

I was able to explicitly locate kundalini in the body, and I found that ideas of a feminine seed power situated in the body endure across traditions. This finding is salient to SAP and medical disciplines, which still orient from a worldview that dichotomises the body while structurally rejecting the ontological validity of subtle body conceptualizations.

When I was researching catalysts, I noted a difference in understanding between academic and tantric viewpoints. The Vedic and tantric traditions have a sophisticated soma-spiritual framework for understanding kundalini that focuses on self and guru directed embodied psycho-spiritual growth and acknowledge God's role in the process. In contrast, the academic literature had no overarching framework, tended to speak of catalysts in terms of something that "happens to" an individual, and focused on the more dramatic triggers. Despite the different catalysts and cultural contexts kundalini awakening occurs within, the research has shown physical correlates of kundalini related to spiritual activation.

For example, there is evidence meditation and the perception of subtle energy are correlated with alpha brain waves, a slower heart rate, and changes in breathing rates (Lim, 2017; Saraswati, 1984). Therefore, one might suggest, in the context of kundalini awakening, that Tantric/yogic catalysts to awakening like Dhyana (meditation) could elicit the same physiological response as unfocused prayer, thought or quiet contemplation. Additionally, perhaps the physiological correlates of spiritual activation could be considered as proxies for prana.

Western health care providers are often criticised for pathologizing, ignoring or misdiagnosing kundalini awakenings in the research. However, a devout practitioner within a guru-disciple relationship in a culture that accommodates kundalini will have a very different experience than someone who was not seeking enlightenment and is situated within a culture that does not understand kundalini.

The similarities between Te Ao Māori worldview and the Tantric and Vedic perspectives were surprising to me. In New Zealand, we already have an indigenous

Māori framework that sees the body as holistic, perfused with mauri/prana and connected to all things. Thus, Māori worldviews can accommodate kundalini experiences. This is a significant, new understanding for me. I understood kundalini-shakti and/or prana-shakti as a great mother energy that simultaneously is (a) embodied; (b) vivifies the body with life through prana; and (c) is inseparable from Shiva-Shakti, the cosmic consciousness that perfuses all of creation. From this perspective, humankind is human and divine. This new understanding brought into conscious awareness a fully formed thesis title: *Her Breath in our Holy Bones*.

Part Four | Autobiographical Accounts of Kundalini Awakening

Some researchers have framed kundalini as a type of spiritual emergency and noted psychotic elements do present with some kundalini awakenings (see Benning et al., 2018; Goretzki, Thalbourne, & Storm, 2013; Greyson, 1993b; Holden, Vanpelt-Tess, & Warren, 1999; Lockley, 2013; Ossoff, 1993). While other researchers, noting the overlap between kundalini experiences and mystical experiences, have categorized kundalini awakening as a kind of religious or spiritually transformative experience (see Brook, 2019; Lockley, 2013; Woollacott et al., 2020). In contrast, authors investigating the link between NDEs and kundalini awakening frame kundalini as both the catalysing force behind NDEs and as the energy underpinning them (see Greyson, 1993a; Kason, 1994, 2008; Ring, 1990). As we know from part two of the hierophant cycle, I have framed kundalini awakening in terms of the tantric worldview that Shiva-Shakti permeates reality. Therefore, it is incongruent for me to hierarchically position kundalini as a subset of psycho-spiritual experiences. From a non-dual perspective, kundalini underpins all spiritual experiences, and this is evident in the culturally diverse autobiographical accounts of kundalini and kundalini-like experiences I present below.

Dr Willem Fonteijn | Spontaneous Awakening After a Vipassanā Retreat

Clinical psychologist Fonteijn (2019) from The Netherlands framed kundalini and its energy as a natural process where energy lying dormant in the central nervous system wakes up and then “throws off stress”. In his article, Fonteijn (2019) defined his experience as a spontaneous awakening. He then described the process of integrating psycho-spiritual changes into both his personal life and psychotherapeutic practice. Fonteijn’s kundalini awakening occurred after attending a ten-day intensive silent Vipassanā retreat. He described the experience as follows:

In the first three days, I felt a lot of bodily discomfort with a backache. I got all kind of memories of mutual destructive experiences with my wife, and I made a firm decision that this negative spiral must stop. The fourth day the awakening began with shaking and vibrating of my body. The remaining days of the retreat were emotionally calm and serene even though the shaking continued. Some other visions about the circle of life appeared. I had an OBE, and a vision of my passed away father-in-law with a personal message for me. The years after the retreat [were] like a roller coaster ... The kundalini energy was very active and rushed through my body especially during meditation and tantra ... [Later] I received Shaktipat or Deeksha and learned how to transmit this Kundalini energy to others (Fonteijn, 2019, pp. 3-4).

Once his kundalini stabilized, he found he could utilize his newfound equanimity and compassionate witness consciousness during interpersonal dealings with clients. This included educating clients in witness consciousness, or “neutral observer stance”, as a tool for observing dysfunctional emotions and transforming them into healthier emotions. Now, within the Psychotherapeutic setting, he simply teaches his clients to “observe, accept and transform”.

Fonteijn (2019) noted that while observation and acceptance aspects need to be learned, transformation happens organically if clients are willing to embrace change.

Fonteijn (2019) also acknowledged the growing discussion around kundalini awaking on social media platforms. Yet, he perceives kundalini as not tied to any lineage or practice. Instead, Fonteijn (2019) framed kundalini as a universal energy that compels mental and physical purification. Through his direct experience of kundalini phenomena, Fonteijn divided the experiences into four subtypes of experience (body, emotion, cognitive and spiritual) and noted that not all individuals experience all symptoms, or to the same degree.

Christina Grof | Kundalini Awakening During Childbirth

Christina Grof described her kundalini awakening experience during childbirth as an “enormous spiritual force” she did not understand releasing within her. The experience was halted by the administration of morphine (Dixon, 2008). Christina described feeling fearful and embarrassed about losing control of herself within the biomedical framework. However, during her second child's birth, a more powerful version of her initial childbirth awakening experience occurred again. After her second child, Christina

threw herself into yoga. Although she had yet to acknowledge yoga as a spiritual tool, her practice led to other kundalini experiences (Dixon, 2008). Later still, meeting Swami Muktananda catalysed an awakening she had been resisting; Something ‘snapped’ inside her and a powerful force unleashed in her body. Like Swami Muktananda, Christina described currents of energy that began in her toes, up her legs and spine, and into the top of her head (Dixon, 2008). During this encounter, Christina was overtaken by involuntary breathing rhythms that, in combination with the other sensations, both terrified and excited her (Dixon, 2008).

Usui Reiki | Universal Healing Energy

Separately the kanji ideographs rei (霊) and ki (気) mean ‘spirit or divine’ and ‘breath of life’ or ‘consciousness’ (Halpern, 1993). Together, reiki (霊気) translates into English as universal life force energy. However, like the concept of prana, empirical evidence does not support its existence (Lee, Pittler, & Ernst, 2008). While reiki’s precise origins are unknown, similar energetic healing systems can be traced to India and Tibet’s earliest scriptures (Gilberti, 2004).

This orally disseminated practice became lost over time until the ancient Sanskrit texts were revealed to Mikao Usui, the founder of Usui Reiki, on holy Mount Kurama during a 21-day prayer and fasting practice Usui had embarked on in preparation for his death (Gilberti, 2004). On the last day of his practice, Usui Sensei saw a light hurtling towards him at speed. His first impulse was to escape, but instead, he remained still and surrendered to the experience. The light descended and struck him on the forehead, and he became enlightened (Gilberti, 2004; Rand, 2013). During the incident, large transparent bubbles containing Sanskrit symbols appeared before him. As each bubble moved into sight, each Sanskrit symbol’s healing potential was revealed to him and committed to memory. Usui Sensei understood his experience as God-sent spiritual life force energy that bought with it the ability to transmit healing vibrations (Gilberti, 2004; Rand, 2013).

After his miraculous experience, Usui began healing beggars and the infirm in Kyoto. Over time Usui Sensei codified universal healing energy into a healing system that could be passed on to other healers through ‘attunement’ (Rand, 2013), a practice that shares similarities with the act of shaktipat. In contrast to Western cultures whose scientific methods doubt the existence of life force energy, the Japanese government

honoured Usui Sensei for his healing services to others (Rand, 2013). This is perhaps unsurprising given the presence of Shingon Buddhism in Japan, early evidence of Tantric philosophies propagating into East Asia and the Japanese term 気 (ki), which etymologically supports the idea of universal life energy. Today, over 4,000,000 reiki practitioners worldwide use reiki to release emotional blockages, relieve stress and pain, balance subtle body energies, accelerate natural healing, and support traditional medical healing modalities (Rand, 2013).

Richard Bucke | Cosmic Consciousness

Dr Richard Bucke, author of the 1901 book *Cosmic Consciousness* about spiritual illumination and a distinguished scientist and physician, described an “illumination” experience he had aged 38. His illumination experience was precipitated by a significant shift in awareness aged 35 after an evening of reading Browning, Keats, Shelly, Wordsworth and Whitman with friends (Greenwell, 2002; Kason, 1994; South, 2000). That evening, Bucke (1901) described being in a peaceful and calm state of mind.

Ruminating on the pleasant evening and ideas discussed, he suddenly found himself “Wrapped around, as it were, by a flame-coloured cloud”. He wrote of a Brahmic splash of splendour and an “intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe” and “upon his heart ... one drop of Brahmic bliss leaving thence forward for always an aftertaste of heaven” surging into his brain and permanently changing his life (Greenwell, 2002, p. 123). Bucke’s co-emergent experience was a spontaneous enlightenment experience.

However, during the occurrence, also he retained normal mental function (Parker, 2018). Bucke (1901) described his enhanced intellectual and moral state that followed as “perennial cosmic consciousness.” (Lockley, 2013). Following his cosmic experience, Bucke gathered 34 records of similar experiences and found they occur most frequently in mid-life at around 37 years of age (Lockley, 2013). As a scientist, and from direct experience of enlightenment, Bucke considered spiritual and religious phenomenon amenable to serious scientific study (Lockley, 2013). While Bucke did not use the term kundalini awakening explicitly, many of the experiences he catalogued could well be categorised as kundalini awakenings (Lockley, 2013). Like Ring (1992) and Krishna (1970), Bucke suggested perennial cosmic consciousness to be the next stage in human evolution (Kason, 1994).

Preliminary Interpretive Lenses | Autobiographical Accounts

The autobiographical accounts of kundalini awakening, kundalini-like experiences and reiki awakening occurred within different contexts, countries, and points in time. Yet, they share remarkable similarities with kundalini phenomenology. These accounts show that individuals can experience multiple ‘bottom-up’ kundalini rising experiences and/or ‘top-down’ descent of grace experiences. Thus, while kundalini awakenings occur in and through the body, the transmission of God’s grace plays a vital role in the background. Table. 2 below summarises the types of awakenings, catalysts, and experiences described in the autobiographical accounts of kundalini and kundalini-like awakenings.

Table 2: Preliminary interpretive lenses for autobiographical accounts of kundalini awakening

<i>Author</i>	<i>Type of awakening / Catalyst or trigger</i>	<i>Experiences</i>
Dr Willem Fontein	(1) Spontaneous awakening (2) Shaktipat Spiritual/religious trigger: Buddhist Vipassanā retreat Siddha yoga: Shaktipat (from Guru to disciple)	Backache Release and purging of destructive memories Involuntary shaking and vibrating Equanimity Internal visions Out of body experience Encounter experience Mental and physical purification
Christina Grof	(1) Spontaneous awakening (2) Shaktipat Interpersonal/embodyed trigger: Childbirth Siddha yoga: Shaktipat (from Guru to disciple)	Felt sensation of enormous spiritual force A snapping force felt internally Currents of energy Involuntary breathing rhythms
Usui Reiki	(1) Descent of grace Spiritual/religious trigger: 21-day prayer / fasting practice	Seeing external light Direct knowledge of healing
Dr Richard Bucke	(1) Descent of grace Secular trigger: Intellectual contemplation	Equanimity Seeing external light Intellectual illumination Bliss Witness consciousness Profound change in world view

Grounding the New understandings of the Hierophant Cycle

Before exploring my co-researchers’ kundalini experiences in the chariot cycle, I want to ground the hierophant cycle’s ideas relating to shaktipat, mantra, kriya and states of consciousness in every-day terms. From the tantric standpoint, kundalini awakening is a normal human potentiality.

Indeed, the experience is on a spectrum where some people experience partial awakenings, others gentle full awakenings and others explosive, destabilising

experiences. However, these people have bodies just like ours, and we live in the same world. Thus, as I see it, these experiences are not foreign to your body or your lived experience of the world.

Everyday shaktipat: Quite simply, this is the transmission of energy from one being to another. We have all experienced being in the presence of individuals who lift our spirits, elate and delight us. In contrast, we've all had draining experiences devoid of physical contact with people like Colin the Energy Vampire from Taika Waititi's *What we do in the Shadows*. These different people are a part of humanity's collective evolutionary impulse, and they transmit energy. Consequently, we are all experiencing varying degrees of shaktipat with every interaction.

Everyday mudra, kriya, mantra, and pranayama: Think about when a song you love plays on the radio while you are driving. Perhaps you will snap your fingers or tap the steering wheel. To me, this is a mudra. When you involuntarily stretch your body after waking in the morning or while you are sitting at your desk, I think this is kriya. If you have had experiences that moved you, angered, or overwhelmed you, you have experienced emotional kriya. Finally (I think), when you find yourself face to face with beauty, the feeling is often expressed verbally (mantra) or as gasps of awe (pranayama). Simply put, everyday kundalini, in all her various manifestations, is the force that sends shivers up our spines (or sushumna channel), makes our hearts (or anahata chakra) sing, and blows our minds (or sahasrara chakra) wide open.

Everyday Alpha waves and changes in breathing and heart rate: Think about your conscious states and your transitions between wakefulness, sleep, and dreaming. Alpha states are associated with daydreaming, resting, or in the early stages of sleep. Thus, it is not just meditators or contemplatives that experience these states related to kundalini activity. As we move between conscious states, we, too, experience changes in breathing and heart rates in our daily lives. So, while these experiences occur in spiritual contexts, they also underpin everyday aspects of being human.

CYCLE 3 | THE CHARIOT

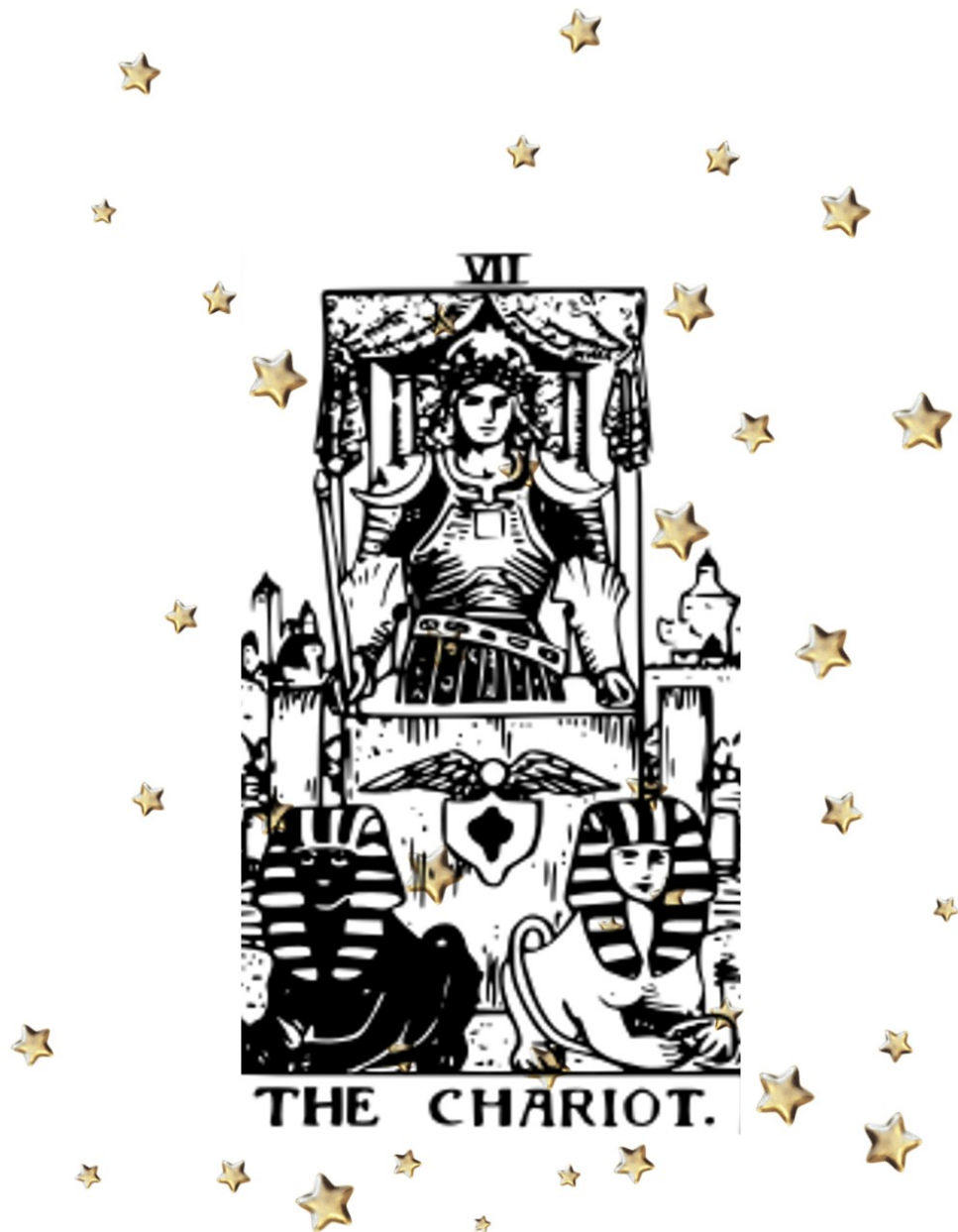


Figure 6. The Chariot archetype. Adapted from Waite (1999), The Original Rider Waite Tarot Deck.

Introduction

The chariot represents forward momentum, discipline, willpower and focus. The Chariot signifies being outwardly focussed, overcoming conflicts, and implementing a plan of action that, if successful, contributes to eventual victory (Sergel, 2017a). The Chariot archetype embodied the forward momentum involved in finding co-researchers and collecting the data. It also represented the discipline required to transcribe the interviews and the focus needed to analyse and present the summary findings.

During cycle 3 of intuitive inquiry, the researcher “(a) identifies the best source(s) of data for the research topic, (b) develops criteria for the selection of data from among these sources, (c) collects the data, and (d) presents a summary report of data in as descriptive a manner as possible” (Anderson, 2011, p. 45). Anderson (2011) urges the researcher to follow their enthusiasm and intuition, a suggestion I have never encountered in a research methodology yet one which resonated with me immensely. For example, the recruitment phase of research contained synchronistic and intuitive elements; however, none of the other research approaches I engaged with had a framework for describing this process.

Cultural Context

This research was conducted in Aotearoa, New Zealand, a country that can be described as an increasingly multicultural and secular culture with a marginalized indigenous population. Despite growing secularization in New Zealand (Statistics NZ, 2019), as a western country, our institutions and culture are steeped in the residue of mainstream Christian religious values, rituals, and doctrines (Berman, 2009; Dawson, 1961). However, Christianity in New Zealand and around the world is shifting. Ward (2005) suggests we are not becoming less spiritual or irreligious. Instead, we are becoming ‘unchurched’ in that our relationship with God no longer necessarily leads to affiliation with religious institutions. Furthermore, immigration and the internet has loosened the grip organized religion once had on western societies. Consequently, western cultures are becoming more spiritually and religiously pluralistic societies, where exposure to various belief systems can be personalised to suit the individual's requirements (Ward, 2005).

One example of this shift is the blending of Christianity and Goddess Spirituality. Beavis (2016) describes this shift as ‘Christian Goddess Spirituality’ (CGS).

This umbrella term encompasses (1) ‘revolutionary Christian feminism’ which uses predominantly female language to express relationships with God/dess and deities and blends Christian and Neo-Pagan elements; (2) ‘renovationist theology’, which employs some female symbolism for deities and assigns some female roles to deity; and (3) ‘revisionist Christianity’ which uses gender-neutral and non-oppressive words for God/dess. Beavis (2016) suggests this could be characteristic of an emerging recognition of the Christian female divine. For example, within the CGS umbrella, she cited a Christian feminist organization, a Catholic sister and the Christian college they were situated within who saw no conflict between ‘Goddessianism’ and Christianity. Within the CGS umbrella, practitioners self-identified as Christian, Christo-Pagan, Christian-Wiccan, and Muslim-Christian-Goddessian (Beavis, 2016). So, while a Catholic sister may prefer to worship Saint Brigid, a Christian-Wiccan may prefer to venerate Goddess Sophia; yet both see themselves as Christian. Beavis (2016) writes this emerging bricolage or inter-spirituality within Christianity somewhat resembles East Asian attitudes that see religions as complementary value systems that can co-exist without contradiction (Beavis, 2016).

Another aspect of our shifting Christianity worth noting is the worldwide growth of charismatic Christianity which now accounts for a quarter of all Christians worldwide. (Anderson, 2013; Granberg-Michaelson, 2015). Charismatic Christianity, also known as Spirit-filled Christianity, includes Pentecostalism, Charismatic, and Neo-charismatic movements (Burgess & Van der Maas, 2010; McCloud, 2015). Charismatic Christianity emphasizes powerful conversion experiences and encounters with God via the Holy Spirit, which present variously as psychic gifts like glossolalia (notably within Pentecostalism), involuntary bodily movements, swooning, prophesying, faith healing (laying on of hands), and modern-day miracles (Cook, Powell, & Sims, 2009; Edwards, 2014; Robbins, 2004; St. Romain, 2010).

Neo-charismatics, which are now more prevalent than Pentecostal and charismatic movements, often consider themselves post-denominational (Burgess & Van der Maas, 2010; McCloud, 2015). Thus, like CGS, neo-charismatics focus more on unscripted and egalitarian spiritual experiences than denominational hierarchies and labels. Although

they are not mainstream, the various forms of CGS and charismatic Christianity perhaps present evidence that we are experiencing religious change.

This change potentially provides a space for validating kundalini awakenings within a Western Christian framework for those who want it.

Part One | Research Procedures

The chariot cycle has three parts. Part one presents the research procedures, co-researcher vignettes and my researcher positionality. In part two, I describe my hybrid approach to thematic content analysis. Then, in part three, I present a summary report of the findings. However, interpretation of the findings is forestalled until cycle 4, the hanged man cycle.

Ethics

Ethically, I grounded this project within The Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants (2017) and The Treaty of Waitangi concepts of partnership, participation, and protection. My research proposal (4000019213) was peer-reviewed and notified to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee as low risk. This project presupposes the researcher has a caring disposition and is an ethical being. This caring disposition fundamentally reframes the research project as a mutual interaction between the researcher and co-researcher with personal consequences for all involved. I gave my co-researcher pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity and excluded specific references to place names and places of work tied to an individual co-researcher within the thesis. After transcription, I returned a copy of each transcript to every co-researcher. This step acknowledged the data was co-created and provided further opportunity for co-researchers to address any concerns or discomfort they had regarding their data. The research invitation and consent form are presented in Appendix D.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

During the data collection stage, I interviewed eight individuals from around Aotearoa who had experienced kundalini awakening. My eligibility criteria included English speaking individuals of any gender at least 2 years post initial awakening experience in New Zealand.

Recruitment | Intuitive, Purposeful, Snowballing, and Synchronistic

Initially, I followed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) purposeful sampling guidelines (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2004). Additionally, snowball recruitment was a helpful technique that helped access hidden kundalini experiencers I may not have otherwise encountered (Van Meter, 1990). In total, I recruited six women and two men. I followed Osborne's (1990) suggestion to use the term "co-researcher" rather than subject or participant for two reasons. Firstly, my co-researchers were more knowledgeable than I. Secondly, although I was yet to cognitively grasp my own kundalini awakening, I instinctively knew I was implicated in the research; so, there was no "me" and "them".

I directly contacted three co-researchers via Facebook messenger. One co-researcher had publicly disclosed their experience on several platforms. I found the next co-researcher advertising a spiritual event while absent-mindedly scrolling through Facebook while the third co-researcher offered services on Trademe. The second and third co-researcher made no mention of kundalini awakening, yet intuitively, I felt a strong, non-rational embodied knowing to invite them to participate in my research. This embodied intuition was underpinned by a quiet certainty they would agree to participate. These initial three encounters led to the snowball participation of five other co-researchers. My eighth co-researcher approached me after I posted an invitation and study information on the Facebook group Lightworkers of New Zealand. Like me, she had just joined the group and characterised my invitation as synchronistic, saying, "When they accepted me [your invitation] was the first thing that I saw. We needed to do this, and I got accepted so that I could see [your invitation] on there". For my part, again, although I did not know much about the group, I had felt an intuitive urge to post my research invitation on the platform.

Woollacott et al. (2020) describe kundalini awakenings as a "socially hidden phenomena" at odds with mainstream western ways of experiencing the world, so it stands to reason it could have been difficult to recruit participants. But it was not; the recruitment process just flowed. I felt serene and guided the entire time, and people simply showed up. This feeling of flow and serenity was quite a new and puzzling feeling for me.

Paradoxically, it occurred within the context of explosive anxiety, episodes of depersonalisation, teariness, pain, extreme sensitivity to environmental stimuli, and seeing internal and external lights and visions.

Co-Researchers

Six co-researchers came from the Auckland region, one from Wellington, and one from the Waikato. Two co-researchers were born in the UK and emigrated to New Zealand; five identified as New Zealand Pākehā and one identified as Māori/Pākehā. They came from a variety of professional backgrounds, and many co-researchers maintained multiple professional identities simultaneously. These work identities included writer, contract graphic designer and DJ, counselling student, inner child therapist, life coach, retreat organizer, doctor, yoga teacher, nutritionist, sickness beneficiary, and retired ballet dancer. The youngest co-researcher was 32 and the oldest 57. The mean age of awakening was 33 years old (SD 5.31).

Co-Researcher Vignettes

Selene was 43. Her first Kundalini awakening experience occurred in her mid-20s after visiting a healer in Hawaii. She had a second significant kundalini experience with psychotic elements when she was 30. Selene described a typical day as “getting up at 7:00 – 7:30, hanging out with my [child] and getting ready for school and mostly writing, organizing ... or seeing clients”.

Apollo was 44. His first kundalini experience happened in the context of Vipassanā meditation when he was around 37. Describing his life currently, he said, “I’m a solo dad. My two beautiful kids live with me 50% of the time. I’ve set my life up, so I’m available for my kids. I’ll pick my children up from school, hang out with them, make them dinner, play with them, just be there for them. Then I’m doing reading or doing assignments.”

Artemis was my youngest co-researcher at 32. Her first kundalini awakening occurred when she was 27 in a kundalini yoga class. When I asked Artemis about her life, she said, “I have no routine, but I have ritual. Every day is completely different; I’m not one of those people that get up, meditate, eat the same thing go for a walk and then start my day because every day my energy is different”.

Gaidir was 34, and her first kundalini awakening experience took place aged around 27 in a kundalini yoga class. I asked Gaidir what a typical day looked like for her. She replied, “I get up around 3:30 am in the morning, and then I practice. I don't usually work a lot of evenings. I always do my practice for a couple hours every morning, and I have done that for maybe 8 or 9 years”.

Vitus was 57. His kundalini awakening occurred during an Osho meditation class when he was in his mid-thirties. When I asked him for a brief snapshot of his daily life, he said, “My days tend to be quite different. The first thing that I've always done and most important for me is I go out into the garden, and I inspect my roses. I always want to be highly productive in the morning because I'm like a sloth at night-time”.

Laetitia was 36, and she understood her kundalini awakening to have occurred two years earlier in the context of reading *Proof of Heaven* by Alexander Eiseley. She said on an average day, “I get woken up by my six-year-old calling out that he wants to get up. Tuesdays, I have a session with a psychiatrist counsellor. Any other day the week is pretty much just what I want to get done”.

Sirona was 44 when I interviewed her. Her first kundalini experience occurred in a kundalini yoga class, and overtime “just sort of unfolded”. Describing an average day, Sirona said, “It's definitely different each day. Some mornings I get up in the morning, I might go for a walk with my dog or with my partner and other days I get into my little office, meditation area and put some chanting on and just the meditation, a little bit of a warmup before that happens”.

Peregrine was 44. Her kundalini awakening occurred when she was around 40 or 41 after seeing a spiritual healer and in the midst of pain and post-natal-depression. When I asked about a typical day, Peregrine replied, “Since I had my experience... I've been doing a daily meditation practice. I pick and choose, but I generally do something every day, and in addition, I do qigong. I've just discovered kundalini yoga in the last couple of months and am semi addicted to that”.

Interviews

The interviews took place from July to September 2018. Following IPA guidelines, I chose a semi-structured interview format to learn about the living experience of Kundalini Awakenings in New Zealand. (Smith et al., 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2004).

I generated 34 interview questions structured within seven loose themes that were designed to cover (1) pre kundalini awakening, (2) the experience of kundalini awakening, and (3) post kundalini awakening. See Appendix E for the full interview schedule.

1. Grand tour question to establish rapport
2. Life before kundalini awakening
3. Co-researcher understandings of kundalini awakening
4. Signs of kundalini awakening
5. Kundalini awakening and support
6. Implications of kundalini awakening (how is life different now?)
7. After kundalini awakening – advice for others

From an academic perspective, my themes were based on previous engagement with the kundalini literature. However, as I write this section, I see unacknowledged aspects of a wounded researcher guided my questions regarding support after kundalini awakening (Romanyshyn & Anderson, 2007). These questions were motivated by my negative experiences within the New Zealand health system. My prejudices implicitly assumed some of my co-researchers would share these experiences, so I took care not to superimpose my experiences onto my co-researchers' narratives when interpreting the data.

I interviewed co-researchers in their homes and via phone. Some interviews followed a linear question-answer format. Some felt (to me) like a conversation between new best friends. In one interview, I surrendered my schedule entirely and just listened to the story, retrospectively organising the narrative into themes. The interviews were recorded with each co-researcher's permission and were on average 1 hour and 15 minutes long, with the shortest being 46 minutes and the longest two hours and eight minutes long. In addition to the interview data, one co-researcher provided me with their kundalini awakening diary. Additionally, I began listening to one co-researcher's podcast, reading books my co-researchers had found helpful and exploring links one co-researcher thought would help with the research. Thus, my research began to contain elements of action research in the sense that I was conducting research with the help of my co-researchers (Dick, 2007).

Transcription

I transcribed all the interviews verbatim and included conversation fillers, inaudible sections, pauses, false starts, and emotional content (MacLean, Meyer, & Estable, 2004). Also, I listened to each interview while I meditated and noticed strong somatic and energetic responses to much of the content. Consequently, at the transcription stage, IPA stopped resonating with me, but I did not know why. I felt (but had yet to consciously articulate) a vast dissonance between the empathic resonance I felt when engaging with the data and the IPA emphasis on ‘interpreting’ my co-researchers’ lifeworlds. IPA seeks to decipher the hidden meanings that lie beneath apparent meanings in ways participants may be unable or unwilling to do themselves (Eatough & Smith, 2008). I felt disingenuous “interpreting” my co-researchers’ kundalini experiences because all the co-researchers were exceptionally open, literal, and cognisant of their own kundalini experiences and the meanings they made from them. In fact, they understood a lot more about kundalini than I did. I wanted to engage with their descriptions and understandings of kundalini awakenings “quite literally” (De Gracia, 1997) at “face value as genuine occurrences” (Sannella, 1987, p. 93), and “treat them as an expression of experience itself” (Willig, 2007, p. 210). I began to feel that IPA did not support my feminine, intuitive, embodied ways of knowing, yet I had no other methodological framework; so, I stalled.

Methodolatry

Anderson (2011) describes this state in the research as “auspicious bewilderment”. However, I perceived nothing auspicious about my bewilderment at the time. When I wrote using IPA, I hated what I saw. My writing was jilted and jangly and hollow and stilted. Mentally, I was confused and plagued with indecisiveness. I simply could not integrate the steps of IPA with the interview data. I had been privileging a ‘proper’ qualitative research methodology at the expense of the phenomena being investigated because I uncritically chose an “off the shelf” methodology kundalini awakenings could be pigeon-holed into at the cost of my intuitive ways of knowing (Chamberlain, 2000; Crotty, 1998)

Although IPA's values aligned with the research, the methods did not, and I did not know how to proceed. In early 2019, I also used the interview transcripts as a roadmap to interpret and understand parts of my own kundalini experiences.

At this time, I had not yet grasped or named what I was experiencing; however, my dualistic worldview was falling away, and I had nothing to replace it with. Consequently, I could not articulate my researcher positionality. Neither could I reconcile kundalini awakenings with psychology, a discipline I was coming to experience as reductionist, dualistic and science-based. The auspicious bewilderment I found myself steeped in 2019 forced me to explore the philosophical underpinnings of mainstream western psychology. In doing so, I was able to reconcile my research topic with psychology and validate my ways of knowing.

Researcher Positionality Substantiated

My research process was never value-free. I am an implicated researcher from a health psychology post-graduate background and align myself with qualitative research values. My academic goals were to validate my eight co-researchers' experiences, fill gaps in the research literature, and educate healthcare professionals about kundalini awakenings. However, the research process morphed into research-as-spiritual-work because it was instrumental in helping me understand and integrate my own kundalini awakening (Romanyshyn & Anderson, 2007). Moreover, as the research progressed, I transformed as a researcher. I became more confident using my own voice and privileging the topic and less attached to research paradigms and methodologies. Now I situate myself as a researcher within a transformative and critical research paradigm who is cognizant of the axiological, ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning methodology. From this standpoint, any methods, be they qualitative, quantitative or other, are suitable for transformational research. The only caveat is the methods must be appropriate to the topic and provide an in-depth understanding of the subject matter (Anderson, 2011; Frey, 2018)

Part Two | Data Analysis: A Hybrid Approach to Thematic Content Analysis

Introduction

Kundalini awakenings seem to catalyse a change in attitudes, orientation, and behaviours over time. To express the longitudinal nature of kundalini awakening, I applied Beasley's (2013) tripartite transition model to my kundalini awakening interview data. The model is intentionally simple, can be applied to individuals or communities, and describes three distinct phases of transition: before, during and after.

Just like the transitions between childhood, adulthood, and old age, there are no defined boundaries between transitions in the tripartite transitions model, but they are clear nonetheless (Beasley, 2013).

I chose a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive thematic content analysis (TCA) to analyse the lived experiences of kundalini awakening in Aotearoa. In the context of intuitive inquiry, TCA is employed to objectively illustrate the thematic content of interview transcripts by identifying semantic level themes in the data set (Anderson, 2007). My approach to creating a thematic framework was flexible and evolved during analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

TCA's atheoretical position and its fluid methodologies have been critiqued as having an 'anything goes' approach that can result in superficial descriptions of 'emerging' themes and opaque auditable decision trails (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Wilbraham, 1995). All eight co-researchers were articulate and self-aware; thus, I did not look for anything beyond semantic content patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, the sorting and naming of TCA themes and codes did require some interpretation. To demonstrate the rigour and credibility of my themes and codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Inductive Analysis | 'Before' Kundalini Awakening

For the 'before' section of the data, I wanted to present a clear summary of the thematic content unencumbered by a layer of theory, so I used an inductive or 'bottom-up' coding strategy where the themes and codes were derived from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 1990). I balanced the TCA analysis with aspects of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection and embodied resonance. Van Manen (1997) suggests that some inductive meaning units (underpinning themes or codes) extracted from a given phenomenon are unique and relate only to those phenomena; these are called essential codes. Incidental codes, while they may occur frequently, are only incidentally related to the phenomena under study. Some of my codes contained both essential and incidental meanings. I called these codes fused to illustrate the combination of the two elements (Fielden, 2003). I loosely based my inductive analysis on Anderson's (2007) guide to TCA, Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis and Fereday's (2006) hybrid approach towards inductive and deductive coding.

However, I created my own auditable four-step system for hermeneutically moving between intuitive coding and final themes for the inductive stage of analysis.

Step One | Inductive Coding

In step one, having become familiar with the individual transcripts and having a tacit sense of commonalities across the data, I began generating inductive codes for each transcript based on the data's content. This resulted in 55 inductive codes, which I grounded with exemplars from the data and sorted in order of prevalence to represent some level of patterned responses across the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Steps Two and Three | Phenomenological Meaning Units

In step two, I categorized the phenomenological meaning units within each code as essence (16), fused (23) or incidental (16) (Fielden, 2003; Van Manen, 1997). In step three, I grouped related codes into ten superordinate themes, which I present below.

1. Essence: Foreshadowing
2. Essence: Previous knowledge of kundalini
3. Essence: Triggers or catalysts
4. Fused: Family background
5. Fused: Being before kundalini
6. Fused: Significant illness or injuries
7. Fused: Mental health and wellbeing
8. Fused: Recreational / Pharmaceutical drug use
9. Fused/Incidental: Contextual
10. Essence/Incidental/Fused: Deductive

Themes one through eight are explicitly referred to in the summary report of 'life before kundalini awakening'. The contextual theme, made up of eight codes, informed my analysis but was not explicitly represented in the final summary. I did not include the deductive theme, made up of 12 codes, in the 'before' analysis because this content was addressed in more depth later in the 'during' and 'after' deductive themes.

Step Four | Somatic Validation

One of my co-researchers, Peregrine, described how she would think of words (some triggering, some not) and then observe her body's somatic response.

This technique resonated with me, so out of curiosity and as an embodied means of validating my inductive coding, I sat with each 'essence', 'fused' and 'incidental' code and observed my somatic response to the codes contained within themes one to eight.

This process was surprisingly powerful on two counts. Firstly, quite intense somatic reactions brought my researcher wounds related to the codes named ‘trauma’, ‘depression’ and ‘health care providers’ again into conscious awareness (Romanyshyn & Anderson, 2007). Secondly, I experienced pleasant, expansive reactions to many of the codes featured in my eight themes. I took these responses as validation of both my inductive coding and their subsequent arrangement into themes. (see Appendix F for the inductive coding auditable decision trail).

Deductive and Inductive Coding | ‘During’ and ‘After’ Kundalini

Phase One | Four Initial Deductive Themes

Creating and refining the deductive themes was a two-part process. In phase one, I made an a-priori template (hereafter referred to as a codebook) of deductive themes and codes by extracting kundalini phenomena meaning units (KPMU) from the academic and grey kundalini literature. I did this to illustrate that my co-researchers’ kundalini experiences were not isolated or anomalous, but in fact, synonymous with a vast body of ancient and contemporary kundalini phenomenology. Table. 3 on the following page summarizes the processes involved in phase one. (see Appendix G for the deductive coding auditable decision trail).

This phase generated my first four deductive themes below:

1. *Kriya Yoga* (Embodied spiritual development)
2. *Jnana Yoga* (The mind or intellect).
3. *Laya Yoga* (Dissolution of self, merging with supreme consciousness)
4. *Bhakti Yoga* (Changes in self-orientation, self-substantiation, and self-realization)

The deductive codes worked well for the thematic content related to kundalini phenomena; however, the initial four themes did not elucidate the relational or culturally situated aspects of kundalini awakening. Also, I recognized I was using a completely yogic scaffolding to frame New Zealand experiences. Thus, step one felt a little dis-situated because I am not a yogi, and most of my co-researchers, while they had practices and rituals, were not yogis or yoginis in the explicit sense little dis-situated because I am not a yogi, and most of my co-researchers, while they had practices and rituals, were not yogis or yoginis in the explicit sense.

Table 3: Phase one, creating and refining deductive themes and codes

<i>Steps</i>		<i>Summary of the processes</i>
1 (a)	Extract KPMU	Extract 700 KPMU in a systematic fashion across kundalini literature from 11 authors
1 (b)	Identify the authors' organizing frameworks or taxonomies and select a thematic framework*	No lineage (Krishna, 1970), tantric (Mookerjee, 1982), yogic (Greenwell, 2002; Dixon, 2008), chakra model (Saraswati, 1984), variations on the physio-kundalini model (Bentov, 1977; De Gracia, 1997; Fonteijn, 2009; Greyson, 1993; Ring and Rosen, 1990; Sannella, 1987)
1 (c)	Create four deductive themes based on Dixon's (2008) yogic framework	1. Kriya yoga (embodied spiritual development) 2. Jnana yoga (the mind or intellect). 3. Laya yoga (Dissolution of self, merging with supreme consciousness) 4. Bhakti yoga (changes in self-orientation, self-substantiation, and self-realization)
1 (d)	Transform Dixon's KPMU (n=48) into 48 deductive codes situated within four yogic themes	Theme 1: Kriya yoga. Codes: Somatic/physiological kundalini experiences Theme 2: Jnana yoga. Codes: Mental and emotional kundalini experiences Theme 3: Laya yoga. Codes: Unity experiences, encounter experiences, audio-visual experiences Theme 4: Bhakti yoga. Codes: Transcendence of ego, unconditional love, bliss, paradigm shifts, distortion of space, time and the felt body**
2 (a)	Synthesize categories and KPMU	(1) Synthesize the remaining 10 authors categories of experience onto Dixon's (2008) four yogic categories. (2) Map the remaining KPMU from 10 authors into 4 themes and 48 deductive codes based on Dixon's (2008) yogic framework
2 (b)	Review	Assess phenomenological similarities across themes and codes. This stage showed my deductive codebook was a robust theory-based template
3	Apply codebook to the interview data / refine codes	Remove deductive codes (e.g. 'great thirst' not present in the data. Merge similar codes (e.g. 'facial contortions' and 'body pressure, clenching'. Deductive codes reduced from 48 to 30

Notes:

* I chose Dixon's (2008) yogic framework to base my deductive codes on because the physio-kundalini model variations seemed too 'biomedical' and the chakra models felt too complicated for non-yogis to engage with

** I added the code 'distortion of space, time and the felt body' to the bhakti yoga theme because I conceptualized this code as a merging and dissolution experience

Phase Two | Considering the Yogic Themes with Te Whare Tapa Whā

As I sat with the dissonance, my awareness returned to the parallels between Te Ao Māori and Tantric non-dual worldviews I had tacitly articulated in my interpretative lenses. In Aotearoa, New Zealand, the Te Whare Tapa Whā (TWTW) unified model of health conceives of humans as multidimensional beings. From the Māori perspective, individual and communal health emerges from the interconnected dimensions of the body, mind, spirit, family and broader society (Mark, 2008). These interconnected cornerstones of wellbeing are embedded in unbroken relationships with *whenua* and *whakapapa*. Whenua, among other definitions, translates into English as ‘land’ and ‘placenta’. Implicit in these dual meanings is that we are sustained within, and born from, the placenta. Just as mothers nourish their children in the womb and on their breasts, Papatūānuku (mother earth) sustains the land and every form of life (Marsden, 2003; Pere & Nicholson, 1991). Thus humans, animals and the land are intertwined with Papatūānuku, a living organism that synergistically nourishes all her children (Marsden, 2003). This idea of relational interconnection is further evidenced by the word whakapapa, a term that encompasses the "genealogical descent of all living things from the gods to the present time" (Barlow & Wineti, 1994, p. 173).

Like yogic philosophies, TWTW conceptualizations of individual and collective wellbeing acknowledge the material, subtle, relational, and spiritual dimensions of being. Similarly, both worldviews acknowledge an omnipresent and formless root cause or supreme creator. Māori traditions speak of a supreme being called *Ionui*, and like the tantric traditions, give this being various names to describe its dimensions and manifestations (Joyce, 2015; Marsden, 2003).

I considered the ontological synergy I saw between Ionui and Shiva-Shakti and the shared ideas that we live in a conscious universe (Joyce, 2015). Then I reflected on the dimensions of Dixon's (2008) yogic themes in relation to the five dimensions of *hauora* (wellbeing) described in TWTW (Durie, 2001; Mark, 2008). I saw parallels in these domains as well. I saw similarities between *taha tinana* which is concerned with physical growth and development (Love, 2004; Rochford, 2004) and kriya yoga (embodied spiritual development). *Taha hinengaro* describes the emotional, psychological, and behavioural dimensions of being (Love, 2004; Rochford, 2004); I considered Taha hinengaro shared an affinity with jnana yoga (the mind or intellect).

Taha wairua relates to the spiritual dimensions of personhood, culture, and environment (Love, 2004; Rochford, 2004). I felt a connection between *taha wairua* and *laya yoga* (Dissolution of self, merging with supreme consciousness) because both these dimensions consider humans to be perfused with *Ionui/Shakti-Shiva* and *prana/mauri ora* (vital life energy). *Bhakti yoga* is concerned with changes in self-orientation, self-substantiation, and self-realization. For my co-researchers, these changes manifested over a variety of domains and were often relational. Within an Aotearoa, New Zealand context, I contemplated *bhakti yoga* as manifesting in the domains of (a) *whānau* (family and societal relationships); (b) *hauora* (wellbeing); (c) *wairua* (spiritual manifestations); and (d) *whakapapa* (ancestral/genealogical dimensions).

In phase two, based on the convergences of connection between TWTW, my four yogic themes and engaging with the interview data, I further refined my codebook. First, I renamed my themes to illustrate the double lenses I was viewing the data from. Next, I added a new inductive theme, ‘*karma yoga/whānau*’ (the path of service / family and societal relationships), to illustrate the thematic content within the domain of *whānau* (family and societal relationships). Thirdly, I added five new inductive subthemes within *Bhakti yoga* to my codebook as below.

1. Kriya Yoga / Tinana
2. Jnana Yoga / Taha hinengaro
3. Laya Yoga / Taha Wairua
4. Bhakti Yoga /
 - a. Whānau
 - b. Hauora
 - c. Wairua
 - d. Whakapapa
5. Karma Yoga / Whānau

These refinements resulted in my final codebook, which consisted of five themes (four deductive, one inductive) underpinned by 55 kundalini codes (30 deductive codes, 25 inductive) codes which framed the thematic content related to the ‘during’ and ‘after’ stages of awakening.

Adding Te Ao Māori worldview into the codebook was ethical, healing, and practical. Ethically, I acknowledged Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles of actively engaging in partnership, participation and protection of Te Ao Māori. For me, engaging with Te Ao Māori was healing because it opened a connection to my Māori whakapapa (ancestry) I had previously lacked the confidence to engage with. Finally, it was practical because this research took place in New Zealand, so it seemed sensible to frame the data using a holistic Māori model of health indigenous to New Zealand.

Summary

In part one of the chariot cycle, I addressed the cultural and religious contexts that my co-researchers were situated in, described my research procedures and introduced my-coresearchers. In part two, I introduced Beasley's (2013) tripartite model to show change over time and my hybrid approach to TCA. Using a double lense codebook, I provided a culturally and situationally resonant framework that framed kundalini awakening in New Zealand as a normal manifestation of embodied psycho-spiritual growth.

Part Three | Summary report of the findings

Part three of the chariot cycle presents a summary of the findings. Findings described in cycle 3 should be descriptive, not interpretative, so the readers can draw their own conclusions about the findings. The 'before' summary, based on inductive themes, presents the fused and essence themes related to life before kundalini. The 'during' summary presents a composite narrative of kundalini awakening and two contrasting accounts of kundalini awakening. The 'after' summary is scaffolded by my final double lense codebook and covers themes related to (a) ongoing kundalini phenomena; (b) changes in self-orientation, self-substantiation, and self-realization; (c) the implications of awakening; and (d) support and disclosure. One 'super' element that perfused all stages and domains of kundalini awakening was 'observed synchronicity'. Apollo succinctly captured his experience and articulated mine by saying, "Synchronicity started coming into my life, but I didn't even know what synchronicity was". This theme was explicit for six researchers and latent in all the thematic content.

‘Before’ Kundalini Awakening | Inductive Themes

This section presents three essence themes related to life before kundalini awakenings: ‘foreshadowing’, ‘previous knowledge of kundalini awakening’, and ‘trigger’s and/or catalysts’. The essence themes are contextualised by the two fused themes, ‘family background’ and ‘being before kundalini’. Elements relating to the fused themes of ‘mental health and wellbeing’, ‘recreational/pharmaceutical drug use’ and ‘significant illness or injury’ appear within the essential ‘triggers and/or catalysts’ theme. The remaining co-researcher narratives related to ‘mental health and wellbeing’, ‘family background (upbringing)’ and ‘significant illness or injuries’ are presented in Appendix I.

Fused Theme | Family Background

Seven of the eight co-researchers came from Christian families who ranged from nominally to devoutly religious. Figure. 8 on the following page illustrates the religious traditions my co-researchers were raised in or exposed to.

Fused Theme | ‘Being’ Before Kundalini

Gaidir and Artemis both professed a love of spiritual activities, books, and artefacts from a young age. The other six co-researchers were not particularly spiritual or religious. They were ordinary people carrying their life experiences and worldviews assimilated from the western cultures they were situated within. Figure. 9 on page 91 provides a snapshot of my co-researchers describing ‘being’ in the world before their kundalini awakening.

Essence Theme | Foreshadowing

As Lim (2013) notes, it is important to understand that “pre-awakening” experiences and events often take place beyond the level of consciousness or within collective and individual conceptual frameworks that misinterpret or do not recognise the significance of these events and experiences. Despite growing up in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, both seemingly secular societies, all of my co-researchers exhibited meaningful foreshadowing to kundalini awakening. These manifested as [earlier spiritual experiences](#), [seeking or questioning natures](#), and perhaps as [genetic predispositions](#). Many co-researchers had multiple manifestations of foreshadowing. Figures 10 to 17 on

pages 92 to 95 present these experiences as Venn diagrams to illustrate the intertwined nature of spiritual phenomena foreshadowing kundalini awakening.



Figure 8. Fused Theme: Family Background



Figure 9. Fused theme: 'Being' before kundalini



Figure 10. Essence theme: Gaidir, foreshadowing

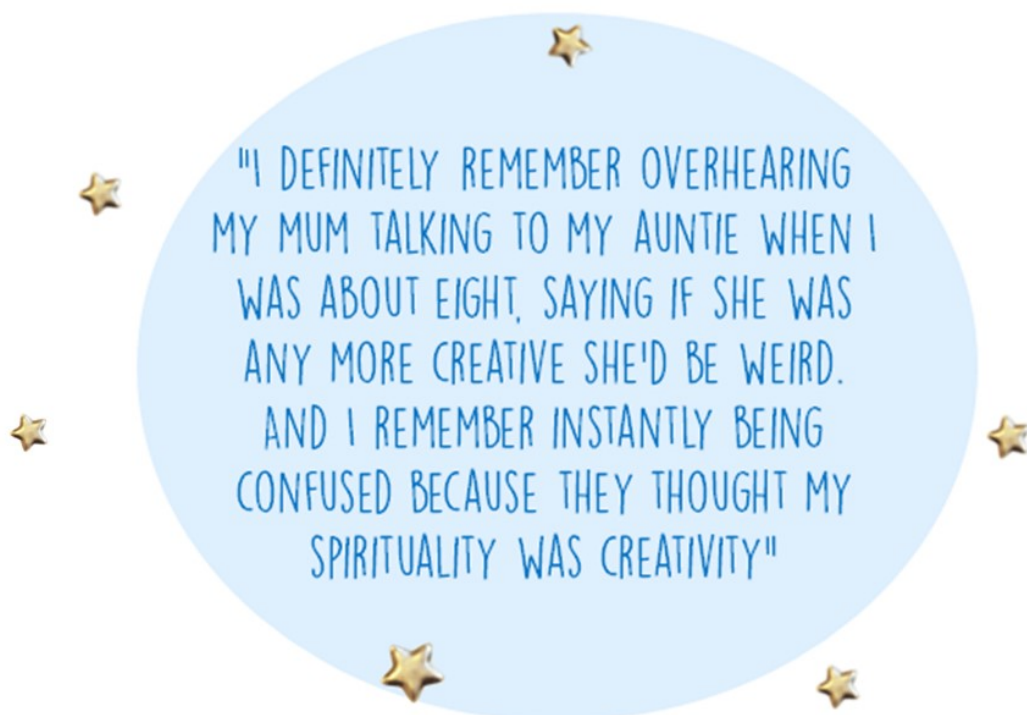


Figure 11. Essence theme: Artemis, foreshadowing

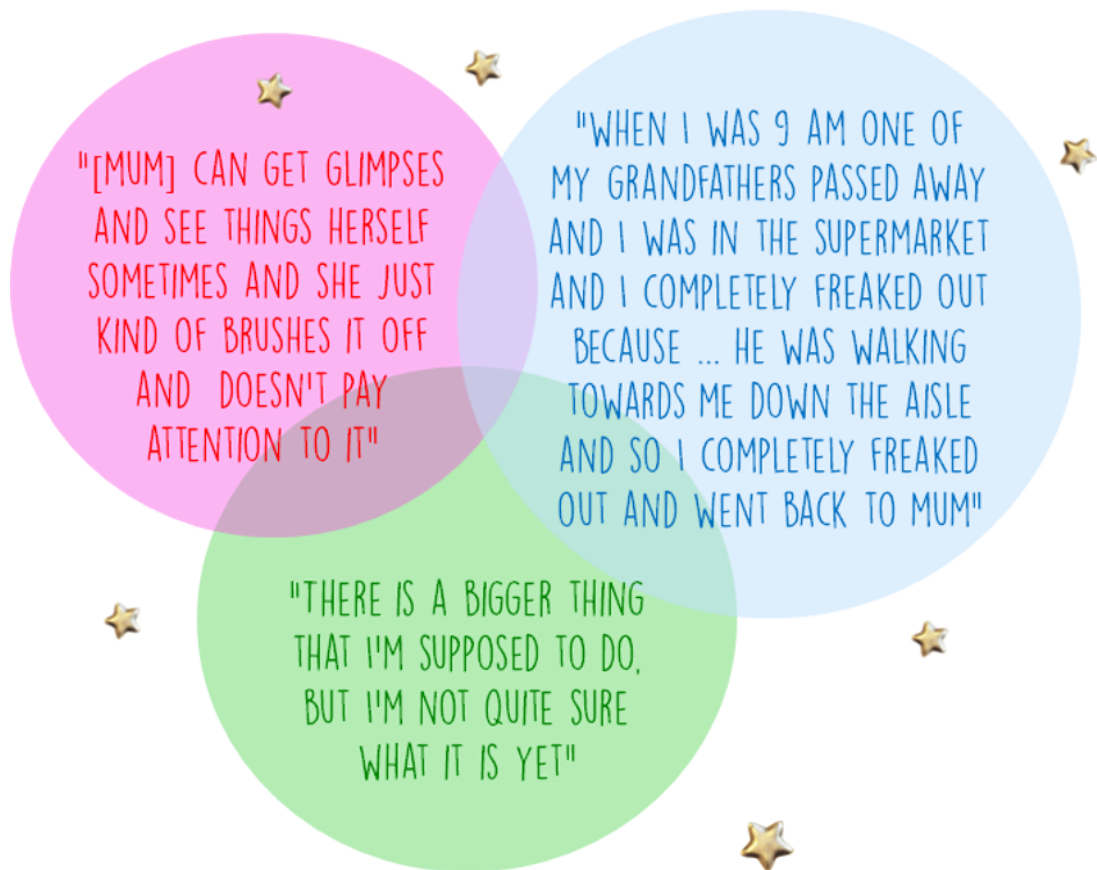


Figure 12. Essence theme: Laetitia, foreshadowing

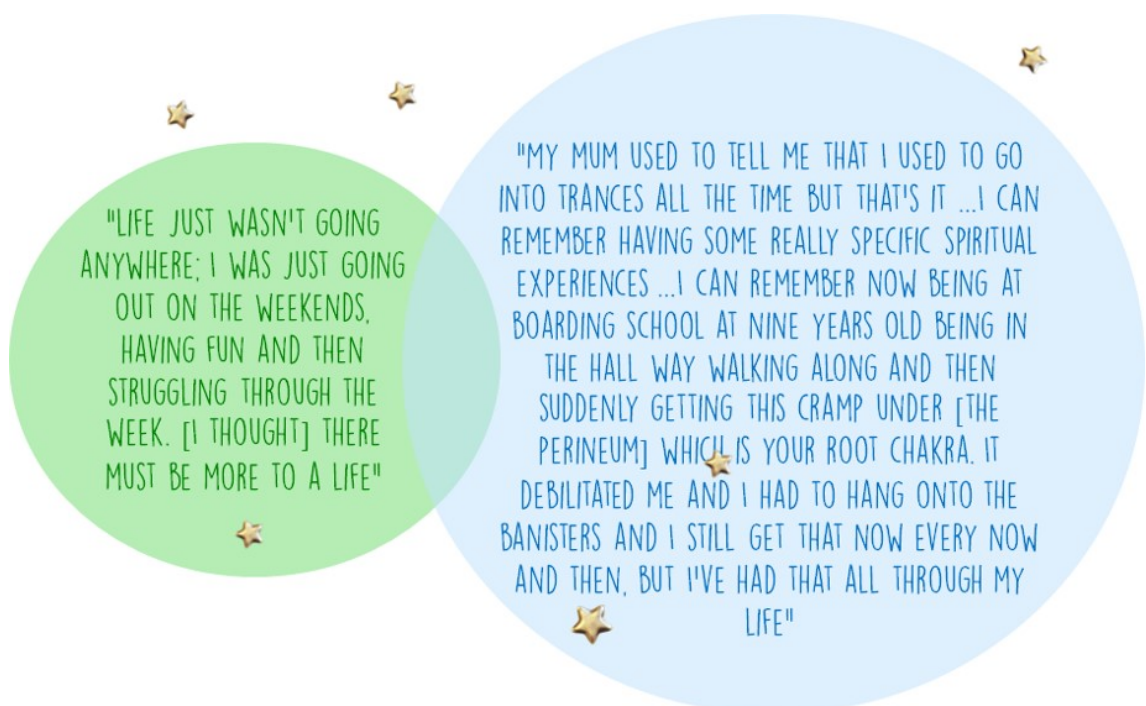


Figure 13. Essence theme: Apollo, foreshadowing

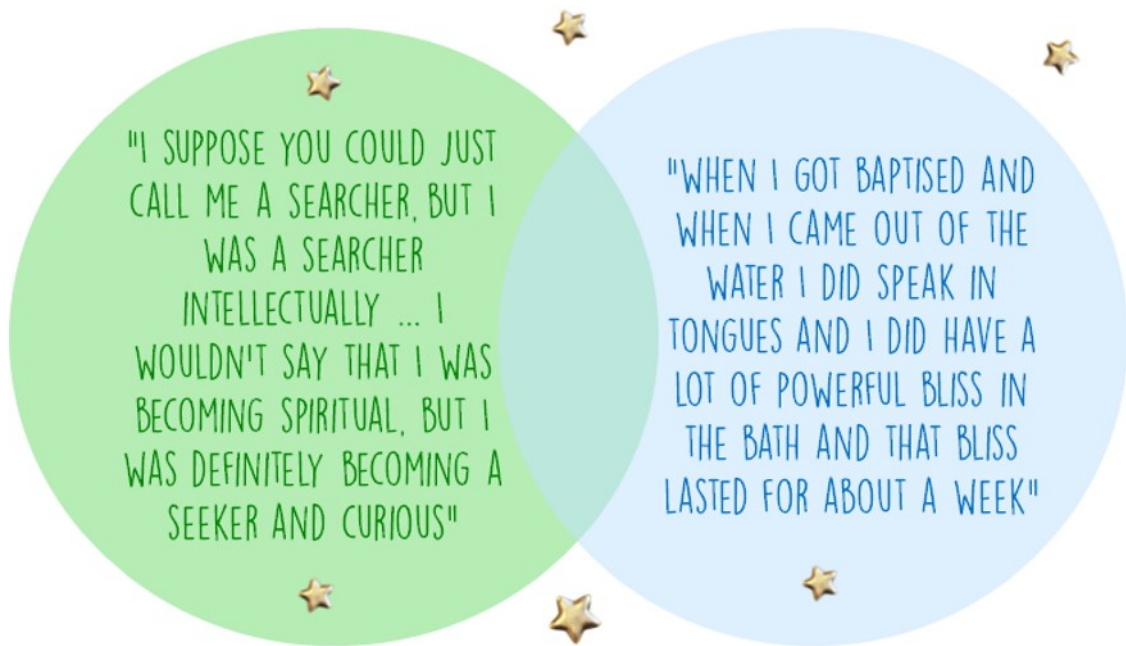


Figure 14. Essence theme: Vitus, foreshadowing



Figure 15. Essence theme: Sirona, foreshadowing



Figure 16. Essence theme: Peregrine, foreshadowing

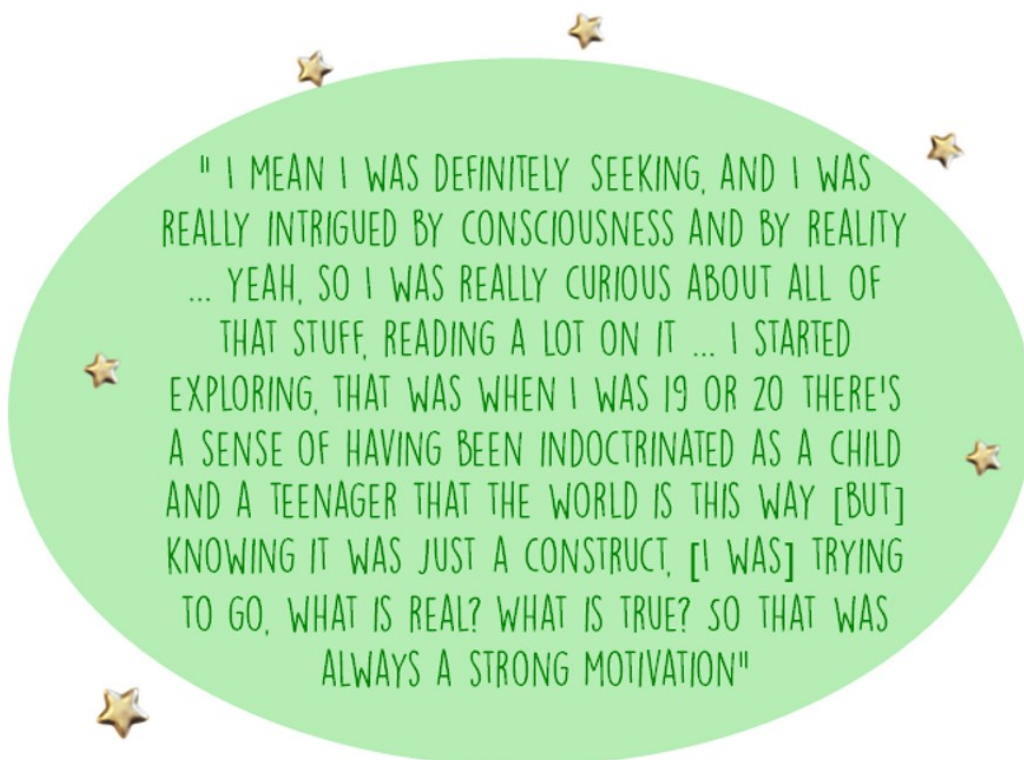


Figure 17. Essence theme: Selene, foreshadowing

Essence Theme | Previous Knowledge of Kundalini Awakening.

I asked my co-researchers if they had any prior knowledge of kundalini awakening. None of my co-researchers, even those with existing yogic practices, or Gaidir who grew up in a spiritually supportive family knew about kundalini or had a conceptual framework from which to understand their experiences. I used the cross symbol again in Figure. 18 below. This illustrates that my co-researchers' lack of prior understanding was situated within a western culture embedded with dualistic Christian beliefs.



Figure 18. Essence theme: Previous knowledge of kundalini awakening

Essence Theme | Triggers and/or Catalysts

Initially, Apollo, Peregrine, Selene and Vitus described their kundalini awakenings as intense and spontaneous. In contrast, Sirona, Laetitia, Gaidir and Artemis felt their kundalini awakenings were more gradual. However, none of the kundalini awakening experiences were a one-off binary enlightenment experience. All the co-researchers had multiple experiences within the kundalini journey. Elements of kundalini awakening were triggered by an array of life circumstances. Figures 19 to 26 below depict the kundalini awakening journey and possible catalysts/triggers for each of my co-researchers. The ascending arrow in each figure represents the ineffable cosmic factors in awakening that are beyond rational knowing. The descending arrows at the bottom of each figure illustrates the ongoing nature of the kundalini awakening journey. For more discussion on possible kundalini triggers, refer to Appendix J.

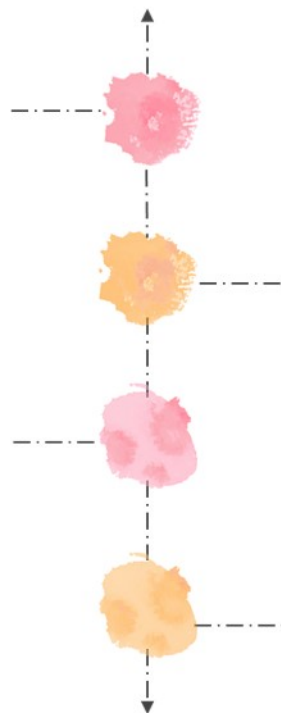
Vitus "Instantaneous; Shockingly sudden"

PIROUETTING TO THE RIGHT

"One of my favourite things and the main reasons why I love ballet is because I love pirouetting. I was always a right hand pirouetter"

BLISS IN MOVEMENT

"I don't know whether there's a correlation between pirouettes and spiralling energy of kundalini, but I personally think they're might be...because when you get really good at pirouettes it's really really blissful"



PIROUETTING TO THE LEFT

"But then something happened in the middle of my career and I ended up becoming a very good left hand turner.... So, there was huge amounts of pirouetting..."

MUSIC AS A CATALYST

"I also think the thing that radically triggered the kundalini was Bjork, she did an album called Homogenic and the homogenic album is just mind blowing. There's one track called Hunter...one track is so symphonic and so weird because the Icelandic energy in Bjork is transcendental in itself it's really head trippy"

Figure 19. Essence theme: Vitus, triggers and/or catalysts

Peregrine "I mean it seemed sudden"

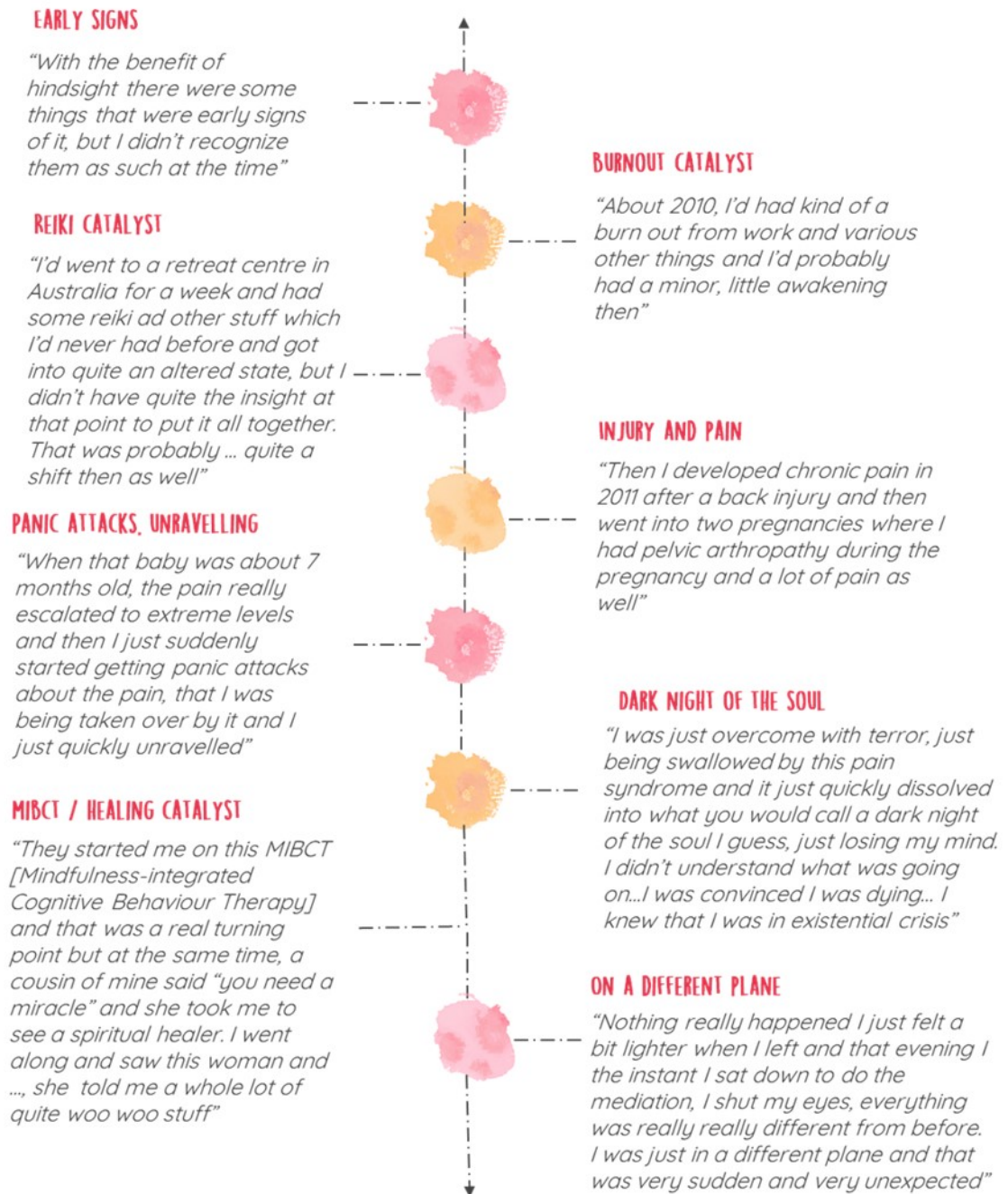


Figure 20. Essence theme: Peregrine, triggers and/or catalysts

Selene "It was scary as fuck"

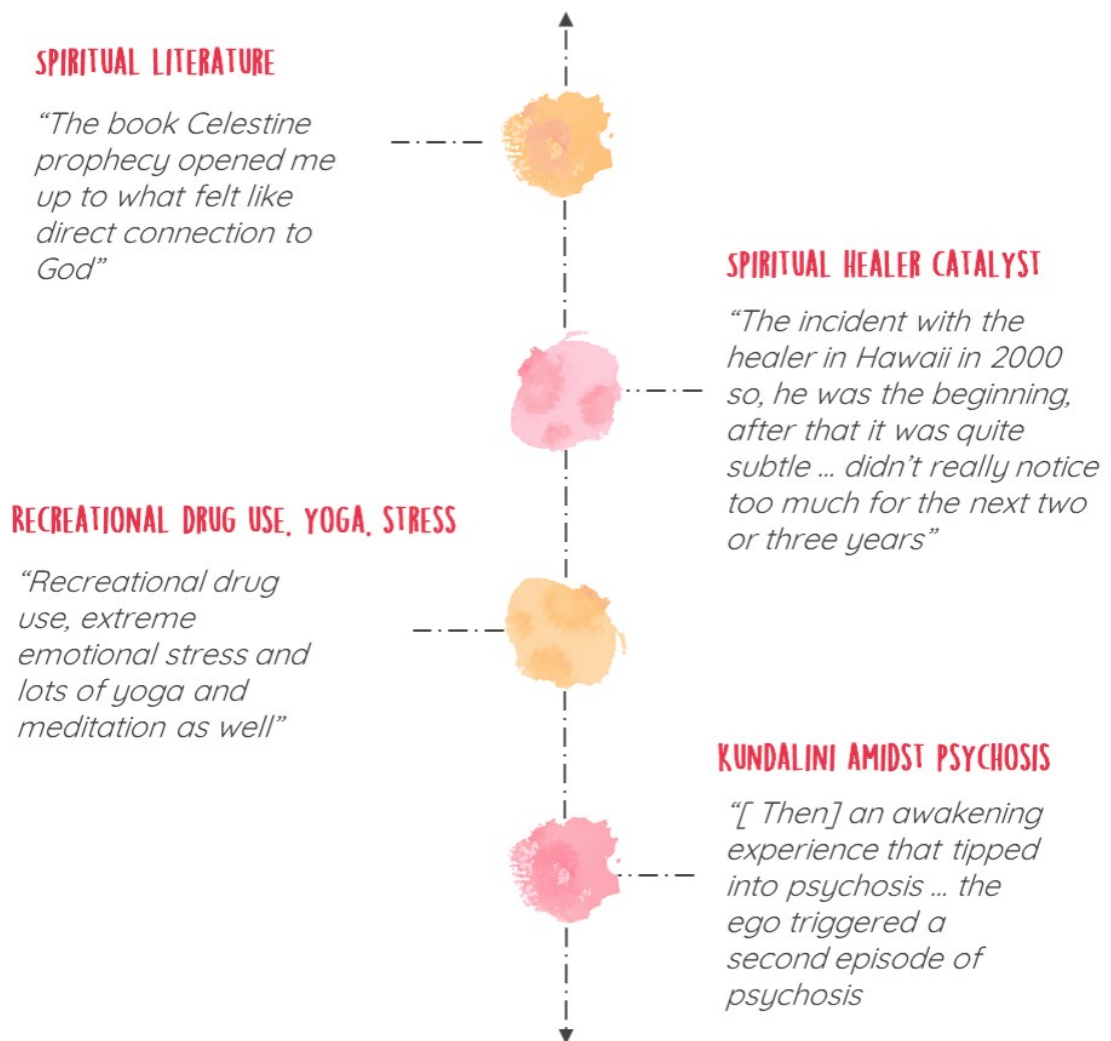


Figure 21. Essence theme: Selene, triggers and/or catalysts

Apollo "I've now clicked"

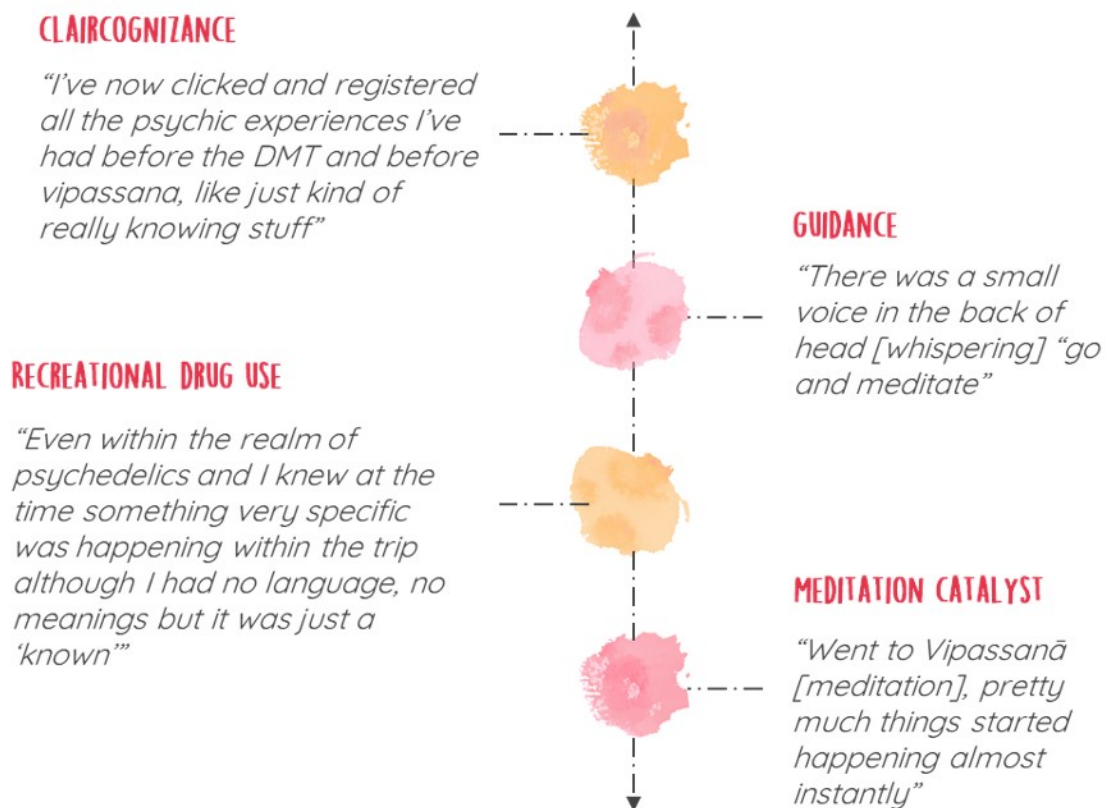


Figure 22. Essence theme: Apollo, triggers and/or catalysts

Sirona "I've been unfolding"

SPIRITUAL LITERATURE

"I think when I first started to look into Louise Hay's work I guess it was just reading Books. I don't really know, It just sort of unfolded"

KUNDALINI YOGA

"Well I think in relation to kundalini - yes because that's when I started kundalini [yoga]... I've just used Kundalini and it's had positive effects on me"

CONFUSION

"I want to say I actually don't know whether I've had a Kundalini awakening. It's definitely not like ... I've read about it and stuff"

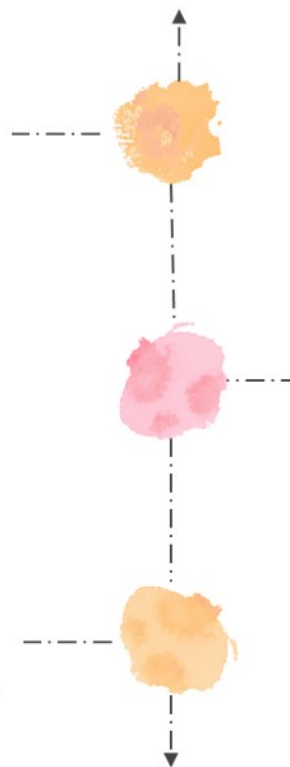


Figure 23. Essence theme: Sirona, triggers and/or catalysts

Laetitia "Mine has been gradual"

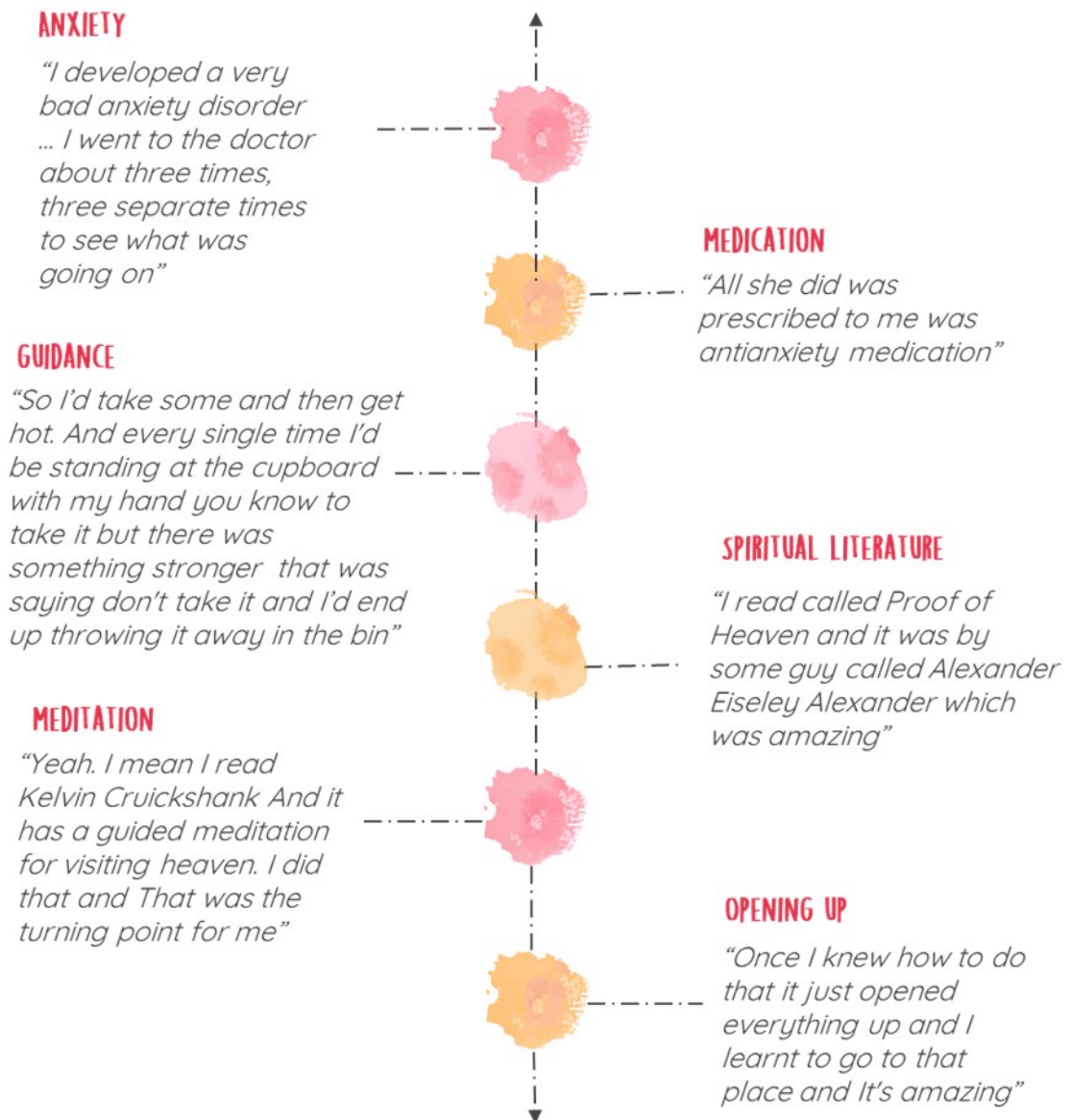


Figure 24. Essence theme: Laetitia, triggers and/or catalysts

Gaidir "I've had many different experiences"

ILLNESS

"I got really sick when I was 17 that was actually probably my big wakeup call ... that's actually where it started the big journey into natural medicine and healing and going to spiritual healers"



"I started experimenting with all sorts of styles of yoga and I came across Kundalini and from that first kundalini class I did, I was like "What is this?". I had like a massive awakening in that one class"

Figure 25. Essence theme: Gaidir, triggers and/or catalysts

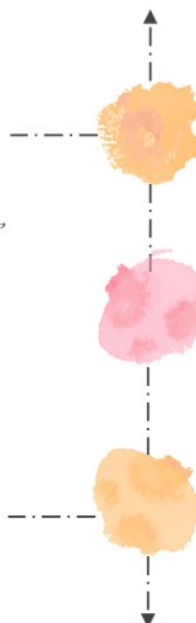
Artemis "Definitely gradual"

GRIEF AND LOSS

"My mum who raised me, so my adopted mother; she passed away when I was 15. So that was probably the opening to a lot of kundalini healing, spirituality all of that"

KUNDALINI YOGA

"It actually happened in a kundalini class and I remember going home after the class and literally my organs just like being on fire ... a profound experience."



SYNCHRONICITY

"I never was seeking kundalini yoga, it just kind of arrived and I just randomly went up to a class I thought "Wow what was that?". That was kind of how it all started with the kundalini yoga"

Figure 26. Essence theme: Artemis, triggers and/or catalysts

‘During’ Kundalini Awakening | Narrative Accounts

The ‘during’ section presents (a) a composite narrative of my co-researchers’ understanding of kundalini awakening, (b) one description of ergotropic, or gradual kundalini awakening from Sirona, and (c) one narrative that describes an explosive, or trophotropic awakening from Vitus. I add a caveat here. While I have broadly categorized kundalini experiences into gradual or volatile, most of my co-researcher’s experiences contained a spectrum of ergotropic and trophotropic elements. Appendix K contains further ergotropic and trophotropic narratives from Artemis, Laetitia, Gaidir, Selene, Apollo, and Peregrine.

Kundalini Awakening Composite Definition

The paragraph below is a composite narrative of my co-researchers’ definitions of kundalini awakening.

My sense is that... it’s almost as if when kundalini awakens, it’s like saying, “alright, now you just gotta wake the fuck up” ... To be honest, I think if anyone could really [explain kundalini], they’d have the keys to the universe, the more I go along with this experience now, the less I know. ... it’s a body experience ... I am the universe experiencing itself ... out of the ether ... my physical self is having some kind of turbo-charge or reboot ... it’s a shift from being purely physical to being more energetical and actually understanding and being aware of energy ... for me having an awakening is waking up to that realization that there’s more than just flesh and bone ... It happens in the body and with physicality. Kundalini shows you God’s not out there; the origin of God is that she comes from inside you, you discover ... To me, it’s more subtle, and it’s just an awakening of the energy that is within me ... Personally, I think that Kundalini awakening ... just represents like all of your energy system and energy centres and everything in the body that is related to the spiritual you ... it’s something to do with suddenly this latent energy activates and then manifests physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually within a person with varying effects ... [with kundalini] you just feel this love.

Gradual Kundalini Awakening | Sirona's Account

Sirona: I haven't had any earth-shattering, crazy effects. I think like anything, it's still unfolding. The first class, I walked out of that classroom room just feeling amazing, just absolutely amazing ... [I] just felt - I want to say on a high, but I don't mean wasted – everything was elevated, I just felt uplifted ... My body felt great, but Definitely energetically, I felt Lighter. So I feel more alive, awake, colours seem brighter. My bowels work better, it helps...maybe just helps your body kind of work better... sometimes that is - I see vibrant purples or blues ... sometimes when I'm sitting in meditation in class I feel like I go off to somewhere else and I have no idea where I go. It's like I'm more - I'm more aware of what is happening within my body ... I feel I'm more sensitive to stuff; yeah, I'm more sensitive to foods....It almost feels like ... it's like I'm witnessing it at times ... I know I'm very different than when I first started.

Explosive Kundalini Awakening | Vitus' Account

Vitus: [My kundalini awakening was] totally sudden, instantaneous; shockingly sudden ... I had the full kundalini experience just from meditating with other people in north London. I had lots of powerful visions during the meditation as well; some really freaky visions ... It could also have been the sheer energy of all the people in the room... After I was on the London underground going home, I just had lots of gentle peace - and I found this peace really lovely... The following day when I woke up, I had lots of really freaky experiences ... The clouds were full of love ... I was looking at the clouds, and I just started to cry in bliss. I'm dropping to my knees and just having these explosions like Cape Canaveral just launching their rocket ... inside my brain for about 25 seconds, just like shaking and exploding inside my head and getting bliss and feeling huge amounts of love ... My heart expanding...I didn't feel like God was external, I felt like love originated inside [and] I'd been communicating with Mother Mary ... After the kundalini ... I had some really weird animal experiences ... Immediately in my kundalini awakening, I was in Holland Park in London, and I was walking really slowly ... In front of me there was a rabbit, and there was a duck or a chicken following behind me, and on one side there

was a robin in the tree coming along with me, and over here there was a fox walking along with me. The Fox didn't want to attack the rabbit or the duck and they were all moving with me. For a few meters, all five of us were just walking together, and I was just blissed out. It was real, hand on heart ... like I'd see a ladybug and just feel the love or I'd sit looking at a hyacinth flower and watch it and then imagine that I'm sitting inside the cells being inside as the flower... and I'd look far away at the clouds on the treetops and just all this overwhelming love.

‘After’ Kundalini | Ongoing Phenomena, Implications, Support, Disclosure

My co-researchers described life after the acute phase of kundalini awakening in terms of (1) ongoing kundalini phenomena; (2) changes in self-orientation, self-substantiation, and self-realization; (3) the implications of kundalini awakening; (4) support and information; and (5) disclosure. All of the themes in this section were based on my final codebook, and I considered all of these themes fused because each theme was underpinned by codes that contained essential and incidental elements. Appendix L contains further exemplars related to ongoing phenomena, changes in self-orientation, and the interpersonal implications of awakening).

Ongoing Kundalini Phenomena

After kundalini awakening, all the co-researchers described ongoing kundalini phenomena. This included increased flow, further psychic opening, ongoing involuntary body movements and encounter experiences. Table. 4 on the following page summarizes these experiences.

Changes in Self-Orientation, Self-Substantiation, and Self-Realization

After the acute stages of kundalini awakening came integration, surrender and change. This manifested in paradigm shifts, the falling away of egoic patterns. My co-researchers talked of growing equanimity and compassion for themselves and others. As they self-substantiated, my co-researchers came to trust their own wisdom; and for some, this manifested as reframing mental illness.

Table 4: Ongoing kundalini phenomena		
Theme	Code	Exemplar
Jnana Yoga / Hinengaro	Genius, Flow, Beauty, Creativity	<p>Apollo: I've found kundalini has increased my creativity. I wouldn't say I've become more intelligent; I've become more stupid in some ways, but there's an easier flow of creativity; I don't have to try as hard to do anything now, stuff is just easier. Kind of like creative stuff and my DJing, my design, even going back to being a student; if I'm doing stuff that's good for me, I just seem to be better at it</p> <p>Vitus: After kundalini, you have this quiet ability to see everything clearly so you can see a situation ... like when I give a psychic reading, one of my abilities is I can see someone's life blueprint as a historical perspective. I don't know their future, but I see a general pattern of where their life is going. So, when someone comes to me...I sit quietly and say I hear what you're saying in your mind, but I'm looking, and I can see a totally different level of interpretation</p>
Kriya Yoga / Tinana	Twitches, Jerks, Vibrations, Prickling	<p>Peregrine: I don't get a good night sleep because my body's trying to process during the night, and it's wanting to writhe and move and unwind. That's kinda been happening ever since three years ... I still have pain, in fact, it's worse than ever</p>
Laya Yoga / Wairua	Encounter and Entity Experiences	<p>Vitus: After you have a kundalini experience, it could be 10 days or 21 days or whatever that you probably will get attacked by demons and almost go completely mad, so that's pretty dangerous. There's a lot of danger in kundalini, not while you're in it but after you come down</p>

Bhakti Yoga / Wairua | Change in World View

Seven co-researchers described kundalini awakening as profoundly changing their attitudes, beliefs and values. Peregrine's words exemplify this shift. She commented, "[Kundalini] changed everything; my whole world view was turned on its ear ... I do believe in a higher power now, but it's not a God in the sky with a white beard; it's more omnipresent. You can't explain it. The rational mind can't understand it; But I feel like I am embodied experience of it, and I can't unsee that or unfeel that".

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Transcendence of Egoic Patterns

All the co-researchers spoke about transcending egoic patterns. They spoke of unconscious beliefs dropping away, ego loss, becoming less judgemental and making peace with their fears and anxieties. Apollo's words summarise the positive, destructive, and confusing elements of transcending egoic patterns and beliefs:

It's a destructive kind of process; you're almost destroying yourself, which is pretty much what this process is in a way. It's a real deconstruction of your beliefs and values and everything you took for granted, and suddenly nothing's taken for granted, everything's open to multiple perspectives ... It's the ego that fucks things up; that's the biggest battle I've experienced with my experience is my ego; getting attached to things, having to un-attach myself. I've gone through so many personal conflicts because of kundalini, transpersonal, sexuality, some days feeling like a woman and then feeling like a man... all that energy coming into your brain, your ego's got a lot to grapple with there.

Bhakti Yoga / Wairua | Compassion, Equanimity, Moral Intuition

Four co-researchers described new compassion and empathy towards others. Artemis explained compassion by saying, "[Kundalini] actually gave me more tolerance towards [others] which was interesting. So, I was more at peace with the people who had raised me, I was more grateful, I was kind of a bit more mature in accepting the way that they are and the way that they love". Vitus' moral intuition and empathy for others made him mindful of how he dressed, as evidenced in his quote: "I wanted to dress only in boring grey cause when I'm meeting someone, I want them to see the love of my soul, but not to see me as being proud or being better than them".

Bhakti Yoga / Wairua | Integration and Surrender

Six co-researchers talked about integrating kundalini as a journey that required acceptance, new conceptual understandings, openness to learning and a commitment to hard work. Selene covered these elements saying, “The gateway to walk through is complete acceptance of the situation as it is ...

For a lot of people, they’re not ready to accept what has happened ... Now, I have experiences in my practice that are identical to what were going on in the psychosis, but I’m able to hold it and process it ... I’ve done the hard work on the psyche required to stabilize and integrate the awakening and evolution of the psyche”.

Jnana yoga / Hinengaro | Trusting Your Own Wisdom

With no roadmaps to follow, five co-researchers were explicit about learning to listen to their own inner wisdom. Apollo commented that “there’s been a certain amount of trust I’ve had to place in myself and my own decisions”. Vitus echoed this sentiment saying, “You seek to have your own understanding rather than have people have power over you”. In terms of wisdom, Sirona emphasized the embodied nature of knowledge, saying, “I see my body as a vehicle that houses my soul and that it sends me lots of messages that tell me things that I need to know when I’m out of alignment whether I’m in alignment”.

Jnana yoga / Hinengaro | Reframing Emotional Kriya

Selene, Peregrine and Laetitia were all diagnosed with varying mental health conditions within the biomedical system. Yet, upon reflection, none of these women framed their psychosis, post-natal depression, anxiety, or depression through the bi-medical lens. Instead, the inner wisdom and new understandings that kundalini facilitates led them to reframe their diagnoses, not as madness or deficit, but as embodied psycho-spiritual growth. For example, Selene said: “My sense is psychosis is the psyche doing what it needs to in order to heal and integrate. It’s like sometimes we have to disintegrate in order to reintegrate. But my sense was always that the medical model – health professionals did not have the scope of understanding. I had a scope of understanding ... I have had experiences of depression; I don’t see them through the clinical pathology perspective”. Similarly, Peregrine said, “I’d like to reframe what happened to me, rather than breaking down – waking up. I think the more psychotic

features that some people have, you'd really think you were going nuts. I already thought I was nuts, so it was actually really positive for me. Laetitia noted the spiritual significance of anxiety and depression was lacking in the bio-medical model and within individuals and commented, "people that are suffering anxiety and depression are just going to the doctor and wanting to be prescribed the medication ... they are blocking themselves from opening up".

The Interpersonal Implications of Kundalini Awakening

The implications of kundalini awakening for my co-researchers were multidimensional. My co-researchers talked of feeling isolated and struggling to contain energetic interpersonal interactions. Kundalini disrupted their professional spheres and influenced interpersonal relationships positively and negatively. Despite these difficulties, the co-researchers also described being called to service and new authenticity and connection feelings.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Isolation

Seven co-researchers described kundalini as an isolating experience. Apollo illustrated this feeling saying he felt "a sense of separateness, a sense of isolation. It doesn't strengthen relationships; if anything, it has you feeling like the odd one out and misunderstood and at times becoming resentful, wanting to isolate yourself". Selene, in her early days, felt "quite isolated and alone, like the only one, and no one understands". Learning about kundalini was also isolating, as evidenced by Laetitia, who said, "I've done all this on my own, learning ... and doing all this hard stuff". However, Sirona noted, "It can be isolating, but it can also be incredibly liberating".

Bhakti yoga / Whānau | Disruption to the Professional Sphere

Six co-researchers said kundalini changed the course of their professional spheres. Gaidir, for example, when talking about her former career as a professional athlete, said: "I just didn't want to be part of that life - that for me, just had no meaning - and I guess that was ... I guess one part of the awakening was the kundalini and then experiencing what my essence was truly. [After] I was like, "You know what? This is wasting my time; what am I doing?" It's not like anything to do with my life path, purpose or even my goals and ambitions; It had nothing to do with what I really wanted to aspire to do and be when I was in my late teens. That was part of that realization". Similarly, Apollo

felt an increasing misalignment with his career saying, “[Advertising is a] toxic kind of industry that’s just mean, it’s just about money, egos, there’s so much ego”.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Friends and Family

All of the co-researchers spoke of how kundalini awakening changed their interpersonal relationships positively and negatively. For example, Peregrine’s relationships improved, and others noticed the change. She commented, “I felt like my ego fell away and I could just see things for how they really were ... I guess I was more loving and compassionate and less reactive and slowed down and more insightful, not all the time; [but] they noticed a dramatic switch”. In contrast, Laetitia remarked, “My husband’s never been religious, and he doesn’t want to know about any of it; I think it scares him. Our marriage was really suffering ... How I see [my husband] has changed kind of. I don’t want to break up with him; it’s just this weird situation. We are struggling with it”.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Interpersonal Energetic Experiences

Gaidir and Laetitia both commented on how their increased sensitivity to energy affected their interpersonal interactions. For example, Gaidir said, “Because I see a lot of energy and auras, I don’t like to be around people who drink alcohol. It makes me feel really scared. And that’s got nothing to do with sitting in meditation because I see energy and spirits, I see a lot of dark energy and spirits, what they are I don’t know, it doesn’t make me feel very safe” Laetitia also spoke about her increasing energetic sensitivity. For example, her relationship with her in-laws increasingly became “intolerable” because their “negative bad energy... grates in my whole body”.

Bhakti Yoga / Hauora | Authenticity and Connection

Six co-researchers articulated an increasing need for personal and interpersonal authenticity and connection. Sirona exemplified this theme by saying, “[Kundalini] has just made me more connected to my true ME, not all this stuff that I would tell myself, I feel more well connected, and that’s allowed me to feel more connected with the people around me and things”.

Karma Yoga / Whānau | Call to Serve

Seven co-researchers spoke about feeling called towards service or meaningful work. As Artemis explains: “You’ve had your spiritual experience on an individual level within now you need to go out and - not tell people, not boss people around - but you

need to show up for other people in some sort of way. [Kundalini] made me want to act out of service, you know?” For Peregrine, this call manifested as “a rising urge, aspiration to be a change agent, to transform health care”.

Support

My co-researchers looked for support from spiritual teachers, yoga teachers, the biomedical model, and alternative healing practitioners. Some support providers were spiritually competent, while others were not. As a consequence, my co-researchers sought information on their own.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Spiritual and Psychological Support

Vitus struggled to find meaningful support from a variety of religious organizations, he said:

I went to a Catholic priest in a church in London. He just intellectualized it and gave me a book, and that was it. I went - I went to some Buddhist thing next, and the monk said to me, “Ah well, it's probably a bit dangerous what you've been through. The best thing I recommend just pretend it didn't happen and go on and has a normal life”. He told me just to shut it all down. Then I basically joined a Sufi order, and I got married into their order and became a Muslim. So, my entire spiritual path was just moving through organizations very quickly, just finding them empty and useless. And then I ended up doing nothing and just doing my own thing.

In contrast, Peregrine found ‘adequate’ support within the bio-medical system.

Well, I already was under maternal mental health services, so I didn't need to seek that out. And I did speak to my caseworker about stuff ... I would say if I hadn't had Catherine, who was the caseworker, I think I would have been really at sea. I think it was adequate because of her, which was just very random; I mean, she was acting outside of her capacity as a health care worker. She just happened to have that other hat on.

Apollo sought help from a spiritually competent therapist.

I kind of had to [seek help], particularly with Tara [Springette, a Buddhist teacher and therapist for kundalini syndrome] because it got to a point where I

was starting to experience other entities, you know, ghosts and spirits and whatnot. When you start really experiencing dark energies in the room and seeing and feeling them - I need to talk to someone again now, and it might be in time to come that I need to talk to someone again when something else happens that I haven't experienced yet and I can't really grapple with yet.

He also found varying degrees of support at times from spiritual practitioners, as did Laetitia. Apollo said, "I've found support at times in the spiritual world with some people who are some kind of healers and psychics who have been very respectful, very open-minded, very non-judgmental". However, as Apollo's quote below illustrates, he also encountered practitioners who lacked rigorous training and ethical competency.

What you'll notice within the spiritual world, from my experience, is, unfortunately - and this is important I think - one thing I found with the spiritual world and with spiritual practitioners is they're not the best people to give advice or to seek help from at times because they often come from a position where they haven't done any proper, rigorous training, so they don't have a code of ethics which I'm learning a lot about in counselling, how not to position someone within a relationship, so you're kind of privileging your own knowledge about theirs. That's something I've experienced a lot talking to spiritual people is they position you - completely unconsciously - but they'll position you, and you'll often walk away feeling like you're somehow spiritually inferior, unworthy, unclean

Kriya Yoga / Tinana | Stabilizing Kundalini

Artemis, Sirona, Peregrine and Selene all used yoga to help stabilise their awakenings. Also, Artemis and Peregrine sought out complementary modalities to help stabilise their awakenings. Selene "did go to yoga teachers trying to find [help] but none of them knew about kundalini". Later she found help from Swami Shanti Meti, who "was like OK, do these practices and that's going to help to stabilize you" However, Selene also noted help only came two years after awakening and said, "it's a long time, there could have been a better way". After kundalini awakening, Peregrine "started going to things like cranial sacral and osteopaths, reiki... but just gradually because I was still wary". Artemis "ended up going to acupuncture a lot just to try and understand what was left

and what I was using too much of”. For her, acupuncture was like “taking the training wheels off my energy, you know” and helped with her energetic “speed-wobbles”.

Jnana Yoga / Hinegaro | Finding Information about Kundalini Awakening

Although all my co-researchers talked about synchronistically finding books or teachers at various points in their awakening, seven co-researchers struggled to find helpful information about kundalini awakening, especially as some co-researchers were yet to fully comprehend their experiences. The primary sources of kundalini information were the internet, books and spiritual teachers.

Even with a research background, Peregrine said, “I wouldn’t say it was really easy at all. No, and I’m pretty good at researching. I’m quite dogged when I decide I want to find something out. I guess I would say to you that I’m still trying to understand it like I don’t feel like I have a good grasp on it even now” Vitus also had difficulty finding information, saying, “There was no research, no material; nothing ... I read a few books but nothing that was really that helpful”.

Apollo, like most co-researchers, used the internet saying, “You kind of jump online and have a look on YouTube and see who’s out there, you see who resonates for you and you try and be as discerning as you can” However, Apollo pointed out that even helpful resources could contain exploitative elements. For example, “Some kinds of gurus, they always seem to get in trouble about sexual things. There is a guy called Master Chrism over in The States, and he’s done lots of posts on YouTube about your awakening journey cause he’s obviously had one. I used to watch his YouTube videos, I found them hugely helpful ... he’s been through what I’m going through, he’s putting into words what I can’t” [the paradox with Master Chrism is he provides helpful information, yet there are numerous sexual misconduct allegations against him online].

In contrast, Gaidir’s knowledge came predominantly from teachers. She said, “It’s always been pretty easy ... I’ve probably done more ... seeking teachers ... I just crossed paths with this guy who was kind of like a spirit guide. He taught me a lot about you know, seeing energy seeing auras, and he taught me a whole lot of stuff that has kind of come into play a lot through my whole life”.

Disclosure

Disclosing kundalini experiences presented paradoxes for my co-researchers. On one hand, a growing urge to be authentic and anchored in the ‘I am’ meant they did not want to hide parts of themselves away. However, while some co-researchers found validation in disclosure, others encountered ignorance and were pathologized (see Appendix M for further co-researcher accounts of support and disclosure).

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Validating Kundalini Awakening

Five co-researchers talked about the importance of validating kundalini awakening. Dominantly, this validation came from others with lived experience. Selene, who had been pathologized in a bio-medical setting said, “When I did find Swami Shanti Meti who did know about it ... he was like come back and have a cup of tea tomorrow, let’s have a talk about what happened to you; he just listened to me, which was so healing”. Similarly, Artemis found validation from women with lived experience. She said, “I started to meet women who were going through the same thing. Support for me was conversations. I think meeting other people who were also trying to work it out helped. It didn’t make me feel so crazy. And it was also nice to compare notes to see how it was different for different people, you know; what worked for different people, how different people were trying to keep it in balance or using it or ignoring it”.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Ignorance of Kundalini

Six co-researchers commented that kundalini awakenings are still unfamiliar to New Zealander in yogic, biomedical and social settings. “There still really isn’t that much [understanding of] kundalini around New Zealand”, and Apollo echoed this sentiment saying, “You know, that’s a lot to hold, particularly with no support. In fact, people were being very unsupportive because they just don’t know ... It’s very rare to find someone - I’ve found – that really knows about kundalini”. Perhaps as a consequence of a general lack of awareness in the wider community, Sirona said, “I actually don’t know whether I’ve had a kundalini awakening. It’s definitely not like ... I’ve read about it and stuff”.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Disclosure Reluctance

Four co-researchers talked about being reluctant to disclose kundalini awakening in the biomedical setting. Selene said, “Naturally obedient to authority, I fast took stock of the

status quo and realised my best chance of getting out of the psych ward was to keep quiet about all the spiritual experiences I'd had and accept the diagnosis and medication I was offered". Also, cautious, Apollo commented, "I knew that that wouldn't be wise to tell a psychologist or my GP "Hey! I'm seeing ghosts" or "I'm hearing voices" or "I've got this crazy stuff going on at the moment, I'm, breaking out into spontaneous dance", [they would say] "Oh, here's some medication".

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Pathologizing Kundalini Phenomena

Selene, Peregrine and Laetitia all engaged with the bio-medical system at various stages during and after their kundalini awakenings. When seeking help for pain, Peregrine said, "Doctors had no idea! [They] thought I was loopy". Selene and Laetitia were pathologized.

Selene: Like when I read my patient notes from the hospital, they'd seen me through the perspective of the crazy person, and I can re-see that in the notes, you know? Like I remember going out and doing yoga on the lawn during my time there, and at some point, they noted, "patient did yoga on the lawn, a particularly manic form of yoga", and I'm like "It was ashtanga!". You know, ashtanga is a physically demanding and paced form of yoga, but they saw it through – I'm the manic patient – so they saw it in that framework".

Laetitia: For me, I felt like they [psychologists] weren't really listening and the easy option for them is to prescribe antidepressant anxiety stuff. Other ones [mental health care providers] that I've talked to in the past they push away from it. And If you kind of mentioned it, they were like, no, you know that's not a thing, and if you start going down that road, your mental state isn't going to be right. They kinda allude that going down the way is what's actually adding to the problems that you have. Like it's a delusion that you have, and you have to let go of that because it's not reality, [more a symptom of mental unwellness]. And I just realized that now that you've asked me, and I've said the answer like that - and it makes me angry because it's the opposite.

Summary of Findings

In part three of the chariot cycle, I presented my findings on the lived experience of kundalini awakening and arranged them in terms of ‘before’, ‘during’ and ‘after’. Although the co-researchers had no personal or cultural context for understanding kundalini, they all evidenced foreshadowing and triggers or catalysts. My co-researchers had a spectrum of kundalini experiences from gradual to explosive and described kundalini as a cosmic/God energy that manifested physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

After the initial awakening, my co-researchers’ continued embodied psycho-spiritual-transformation included ongoing kundalini phenomena and changes in self-orientation and self-substantiation, which had far-reaching implications in all life domains. They felt isolated, and finding accurate information was generally difficult for most co-researchers. The most effective support came from yogic and alternative healing modalities. However, practitioners in this field also misunderstood kundalini awakenings. Disclosure could result in validation and support. However, there was a reluctance to disclose in a bio-medical setting and a pathologizing orientation, as evidenced by Peregrine, Laetitia and Selene’s experiences.

I am aware the summary of findings provides a linear and reduced description of kundalini awakening. Consequently, I also summarize the findings in Figure. 26 on the following page. The words convey my co-researchers’ experiences of kundalini awakening and their cultural situatedness. The sun, moon and stars depict the cosmic elements of kundalini awakening, and the scrabble layout illustrates the “divine play or game” that underpins manifest creation and kundalini awakenings (Wallis, 2013, p. 53).

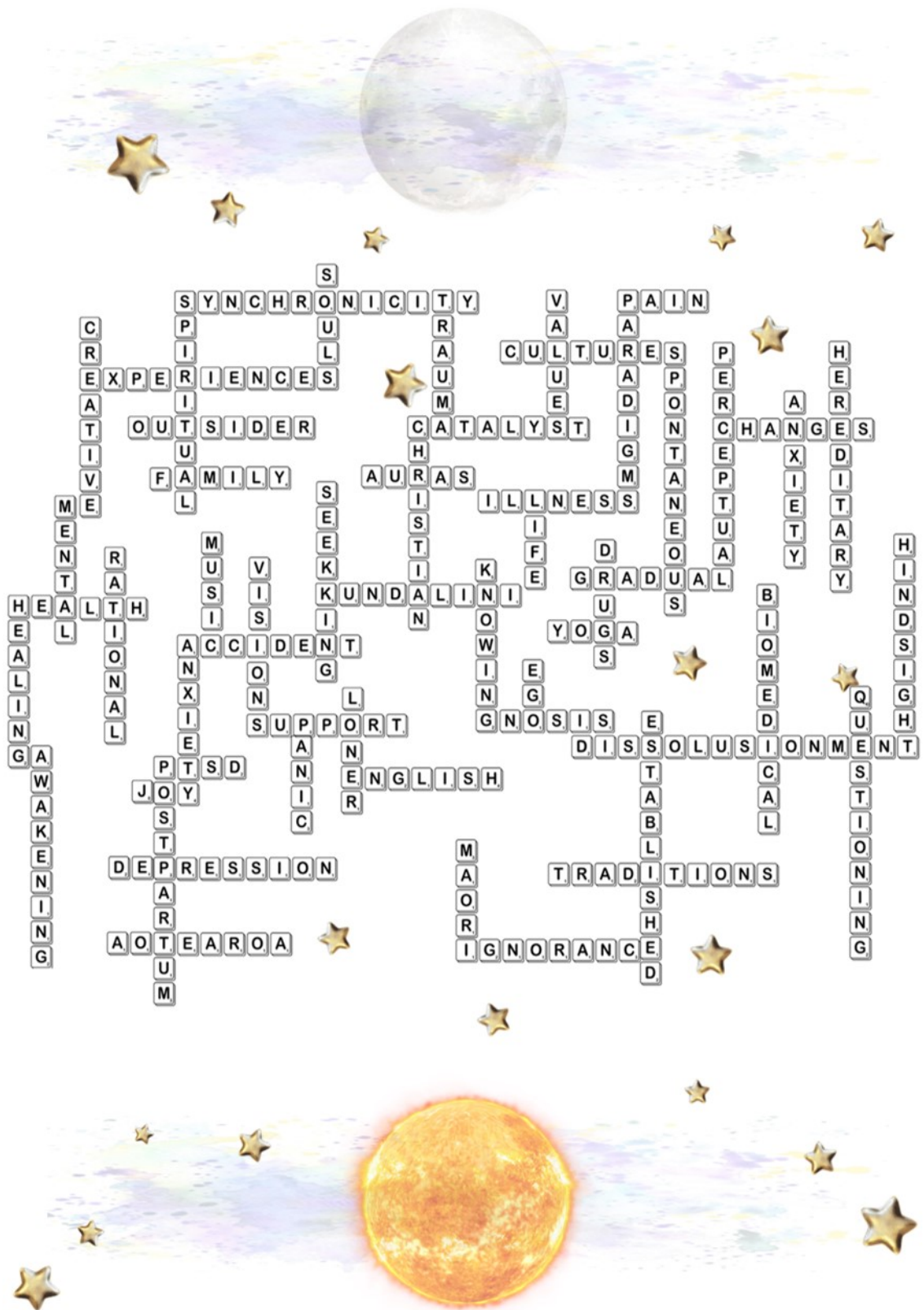


Figure 26. The interconnected, human, and cosmic nature of kundalini awakening

CYCLE 4 | THE HANGED MAN

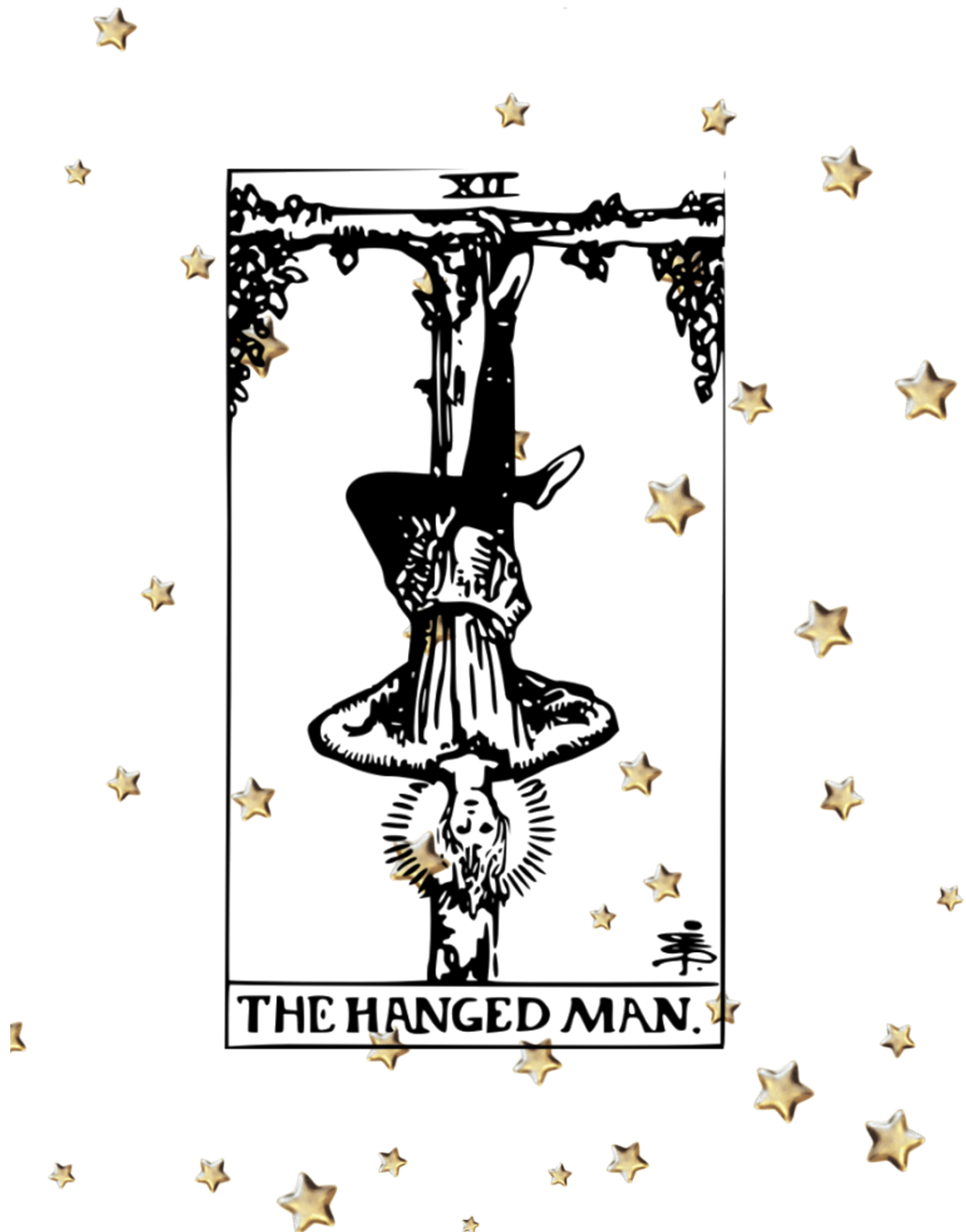


Figure 27. The Hanged Man archetype. Adapted from Waite (1999), The Original Rider Waite Tarot Deck.

Introduction

The hanged man archetype personifies ultimate surrender and exploring ideas from an entirely new perspective resulting in the transformation of perhaps outmoded beliefs, patterns, and understandings. The Hanged Man's unconventional view also conveys the idea of opening to previously unconscious insights (Sergel, 2018a). In the fool cycle, I further surrendered the 'isms' of research ontologies and paradigms in favour of focussing on the material at hand and uncovering new understandings (Beasley, 2013).

Transforming and Refining the Lenses.

Cycle 4 has two parts: reflecting on the findings and truth-telling. Part one involves revisiting the interpretative lenses of the fool cycle and the hanged man cycle, then based on the findings, expanding on the PILs and adding new lenses. The changes between the lenses of the fool cycle, the hierophant cycle and the hanged man cycle reflect the evolution of the researcher's understanding of the topic as research draws to a close (Anderson, 2011; Anderson & Braud, 2011). In part two, the truth-telling phase of the hanged man cycle, the researcher discloses "(a) mistakes made, (b) procedures and plans that did not work, (c) the researcher's apprehensions and puzzlements about the study and findings, (d) the style of intuitive interpretation used, and (e) what remains unresolved or problematic about the topic or the method" (Anderson, 2011, p. 59)

Part one | Reflecting on the Interpretative Lenses

The fool cycle generated one naïve lens while the hierophant cycle produced 20 PIL over four parts. The part one PILs related to the disciplinary lenses I was researching kundalini awakenings from within and my researcher positionality and voice. The part two PILs focused on my understandings of the academic research into kundalini awakenings. The part three PILs (a) grounded my understandings of the academic literature within tantric and yogic philosophies, (b) showed my emerging understanding of tantric Shaivism as a framework for understanding kundalini awakenings, (c) contrasted eastern and western understanding of kundalini and prana, and (d) articulated the commonalities I saw between Te Ao Māori and Tantric and Vedic ideas of a nondual God and subtle body anatomy. Finally, the part four PILs related to the cross-cultural autobiographical accounts, which I understood to include (a) synonymous cross-cultural experiences and (b) single or multiple 'bottom-up' or 'top-down' manifestations. Table. 5 below summarises my interpretative lenses thus far.

Table 5: Summary of naïve and preliminary interpretative lenses

The fool cycle: Naïve lense

- 1 I knew nothing about kundalini awakening and I did not know I was experiencing one

Part one: The disciplines I am situated within

- 2 SAP generates hypotheses that can be tested and verified using empirical means, and produces generalisable claims. However, this approach is not adequate for exploring the subtle realms
- 3 SAP are not value-free, they are based on generally unarticulated culturally constructed ideologies about the nature of reality which are embedded into their axiologies, ontologies and epistemologies
- 4 The discourse of knowledge is inherently male and I struggled to produce research in this framework

Part one: Researcher positionality and voice

- 5 Although my belief system has undergone a profound shift, I'm still conditioned by 'subtle Cartesianism' and 'intra-subjective reductionism'
- 6 My research orientation has gradually shifted towards a post-dualistic epistemological stance of no separate researcher and I have reclaimed my voice

Part two: The academic literature

- 7 The overlap between kundalini and an array of human experiences suggests western research lacks an overarching framework from which to explain kundalini awakening
- 8 Academic research has demystified kundalini awakening and added to our knowledge. However, constrained within SAP ideology it contains ethnocentric, reductionist and cognicentric elements
- 9 I am reluctant to disclose, and I have experienced spiritual incompetency with alternative and traditional
- 10 In the appropriate context of spiritual awakening, physical illness and psychosis are not necessarily evidence of pathologies or physiological dysfunction

Part three: Kundalini contextualized

- 11 SAP and Tantric/Vedic traditions experience the world differently. The difference in whether kundalini/prana/life energy can be validated lies in ontological assumptions about reality and which methods are considered valid for obtaining knowledge. Western science perceives prana and kundalini as unverifiable using empirical methods. In contrast, Tantric/Vedic traditions acknowledge both empirical knowledge and internal ways of knowing and suggest true knowledge is found within
- 12 There are two paths to awakening. The masculine Vedantic approach is renunciatory, while the feminine Tantric path is body and world embracing. Both paths lead to enlightenment
- 13 The evolving seven chakra model cross-pollinated by western psychological models and theories appears to provide a useful soma-spiritual model of spiritual development that westerners can use to understand spiritual awakening
- 14 Ideas of an embodied feminine seed power situated in the body endure across traditions. In contrast traditional SAP and medical disciplines tend to structurally reject the ontological validity of subtle body conceptualizations
- 15 The Vedic and tantric traditions have a sophisticated soma-spiritual framework for understanding kundalini that focuses on self and guru directed embodied psycho-spiritual growth and acknowledge God's role in the process. In contrast, the academic literature does not provide an umbrella framework to explain catalysts, it relies on yogic models
- 16 Western health care providers are often criticised for pathologizing, ignoring or misdiagnosing kundalini awakenings in the research. However, perhaps the literature also reflects that (a) being unprepared and having no conceptual framework, (b) being situated in a culture that does not validate kundalini awakenings, and (c) experiencing spontaneous, explosive awakenings does lead to psychosis, physical illness and mental
- 17 Researchers showed that kundalini and psychosis are distinct and separate. However, kundalini can co-occur in those with pre-existing psycho-physiological conditions, and the strain of awakening can disrupt psychological and physiological functioning
- 18 Te Ao Māori worldviews and holistic models of health can accommodate kundalini experiences
- 19 I understood kundalini-shakti and/or prana-shakti as a great mother energy that simultaneously is (a) embodied; (b) vivifies the body with life through prana; and (c) is inseparable from Shiva-Shakti, the cosmic consciousness that perfuses all of creation. My title reflects this understanding; kundalini is *Her* (Shakti-kundalini) *breath* (Shakti-prana) *in our holy* (Shiva-Shakti) *bones* (muladhara chakra / sacrum bone)

Part four: Autobiographical accounts

- 20 The cross-cultural autobiographical accounts of kundalini awakening or kundalini-like experiences share similarities with kundalini phenomenology
- 21 Individuals can experience one or multiple 'bottom-up' kundalini rising experiences and/or 'top-down', descent of

For me, the naïve lense of the fool cycle and the PILs of the hierophant cycle documented:

1. The falling away of conditioned ideas about knowledge and ways of knowing and my journey towards Goddess feminism
2. A rejection of the Cartesian bio medical idea of the fleshy body that can be reduced to its parts in favour of a multidimensional and interconnected body
3. The seed lense of an idea (that I expanded on in the chariot cycle) that within a New Zealand context, Te Ao Māori and te whare tapa whā worldviews could be a useful framework for understanding kundalini
4. A clear articulation of where I began through my naïve lense, and a record of how my understandings changed during the research
5. How I grew to understand my own kundalini experiences
6. A growing connection with my Māoriness, a part of me I had never nurtured or explored because my white skin, blond hair and Pākehā upbringing led me to believe I did not belong in Te Ao Māori.

Expanded Interpretative Lense | Patterns in the ‘During’ Data

The expanded lenses of the hanged man cycle provide a framework for interpreting patterns in the data (Anderson, 2011). Figure. 28 on the following page is a visual representation of the themes that occurred ‘during’ kundalini awakening at individual and collective levels. Expanding on the themes I presented in the chariot cycle, I added my own kundalini experiences to the data because (1) I now had a framework from which to understand the phenomena I experienced; and (2) I learnt that, like my co-researchers, I was experiencing embodied-psycho-spiritual transformation, not losing my mind.

Expanded Interpretative Lense | Patterns in the ‘After’ Data

As their kundalini awakenings stabilised for my co-researchers, and they integrated their awakenings, the quality of their kundalini experiences changed, and they changed. As with the ‘during’ stage, each experience was unique to the individuals, yet there were strong commonalities across experiences. Figure. 29 on page 124 presents a visual breakdown of the major themes related to life after kundalini awakening at an individual and collective level.

Figure 28. 'During' kundalini experiences at an individual and collective level

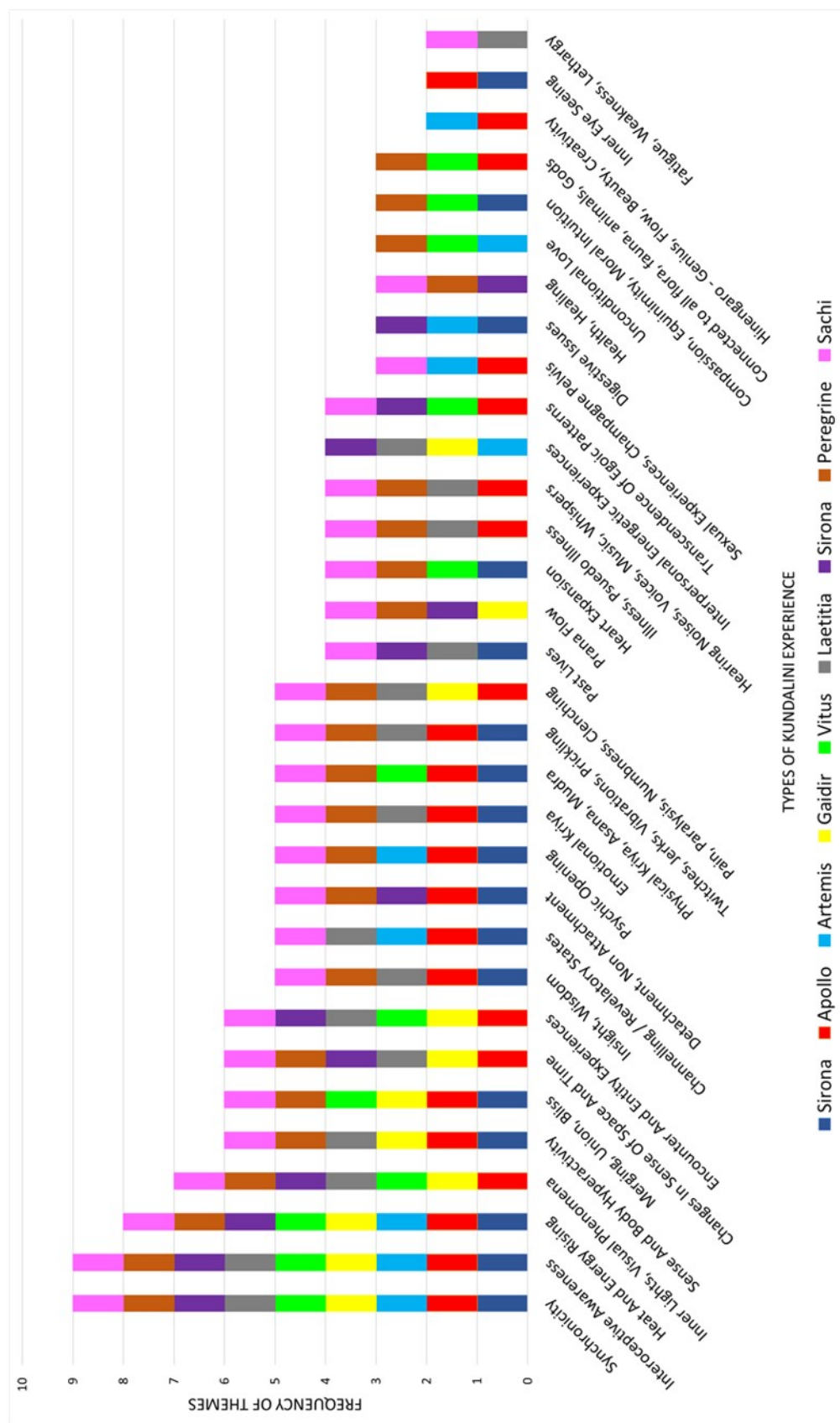
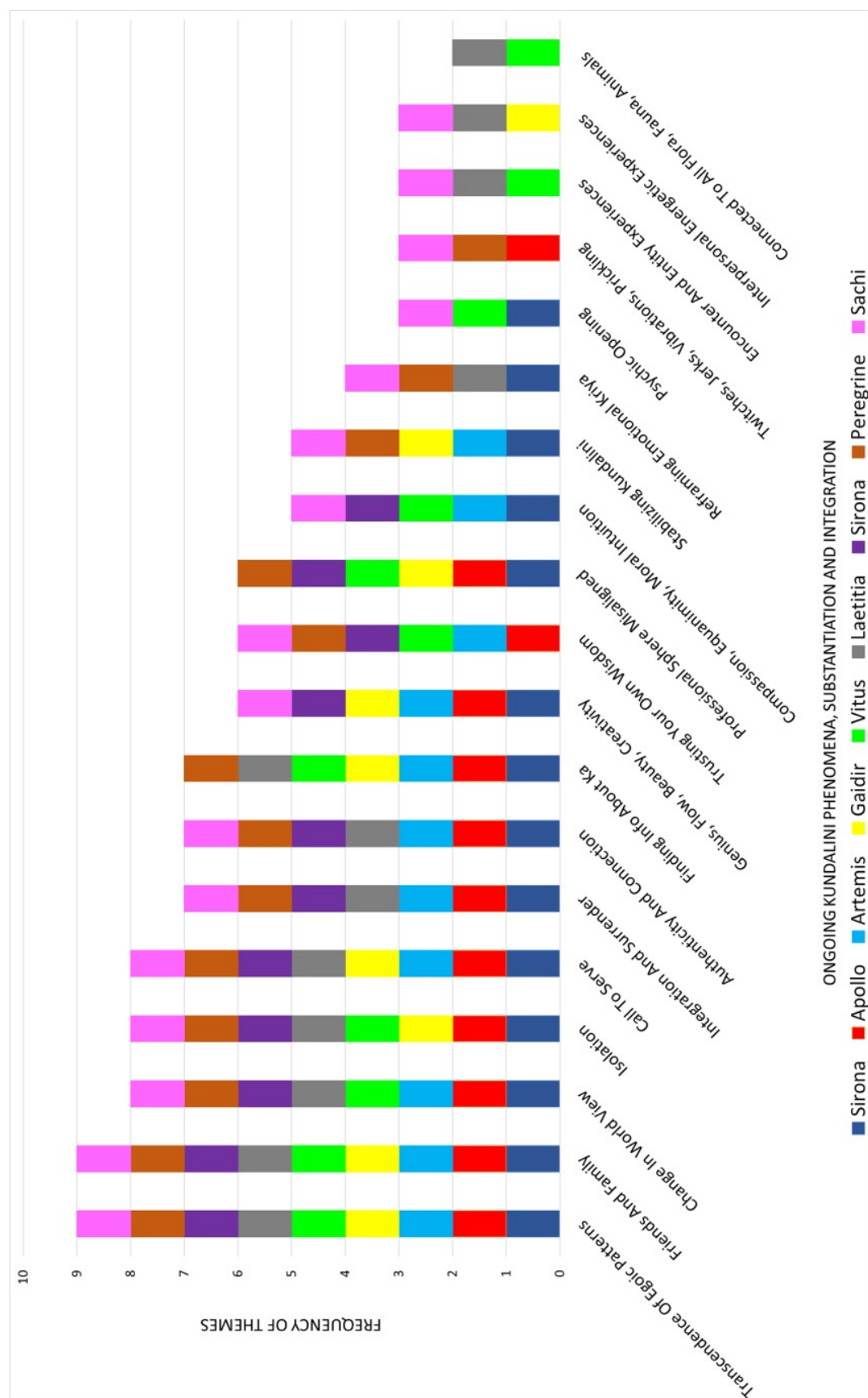


Figure 29. 'After' kundalini experiences at an individual and collective level



Towards Substantiation and Essence Nature

Like the ‘before’ and ‘during’ stages of kundalini awakening, each co-researcher had uniquely personal experiences. Yet, there were commonalities across experiences. Figure. 30 on the following page illustrates how the domains of kundalini experiences changed for my co-researchers as they moved from the ‘during’ stage of awakening to towards ‘after’ kundalini, substantiation and essence nature.

New Interpretative Lenses | Kundalini Understanding

When I began to unravel in the last quarter of 2016, I did not know I was in the early stages of kundalini awakening; I thought I was going mad, and I struggled in the three years that followed. When I interviewed my co-researchers in 2018, although their experiences were so similar to mine, I still did not recognize that I was having a kundalini awakening. It appears that my mental schema was so calcified that ‘cognitively’ I just could not - or would not - grasp the truth. Guided by the deductive template I created, the findings of the chariot cycle, and the patterns in the data, I can finally say, “I have been, and am, experiencing a kundalini awakening”. My story is presented in Appendix N. What a massive shift in understanding.

New Lense | Kundalini Understanding

I thought my expanded lenses which further explicated (a) the essence themes related to kundalini experiences and (b) the changes in beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions that occurred ‘after’ kundalini completed the hanged man cycle. However, my understandings of kundalini have further evolved. This evolution came from a transmission by a - to my human eyes and ears a European woman, dressed like you and me - who identifies as a *Jivanmukta* that resides in, and emanates from, the state of *jivanmukti* and (for our purposes) is situated within the Siddha Kundalini Yoga and Siddha Tantra traditions (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d). The *Advaita* (nondual) Vedanta term *Jivanmukta* describes someone who has gained, and assimilated infinite and divine knowledge borne of self while still living, or in other words, embodied liberation (Fort, 1998; Saraswati, 1984). *Jivanmukti* is the state of being anchored in the knowledge of true self (*atman*) and universal self. (Fort, 1998; Saraswati, 1984). These rare individuals radiate spacious nothingness and are connected to source through enlightened physical form. This state transcends all human conceptualizations of kundalini.

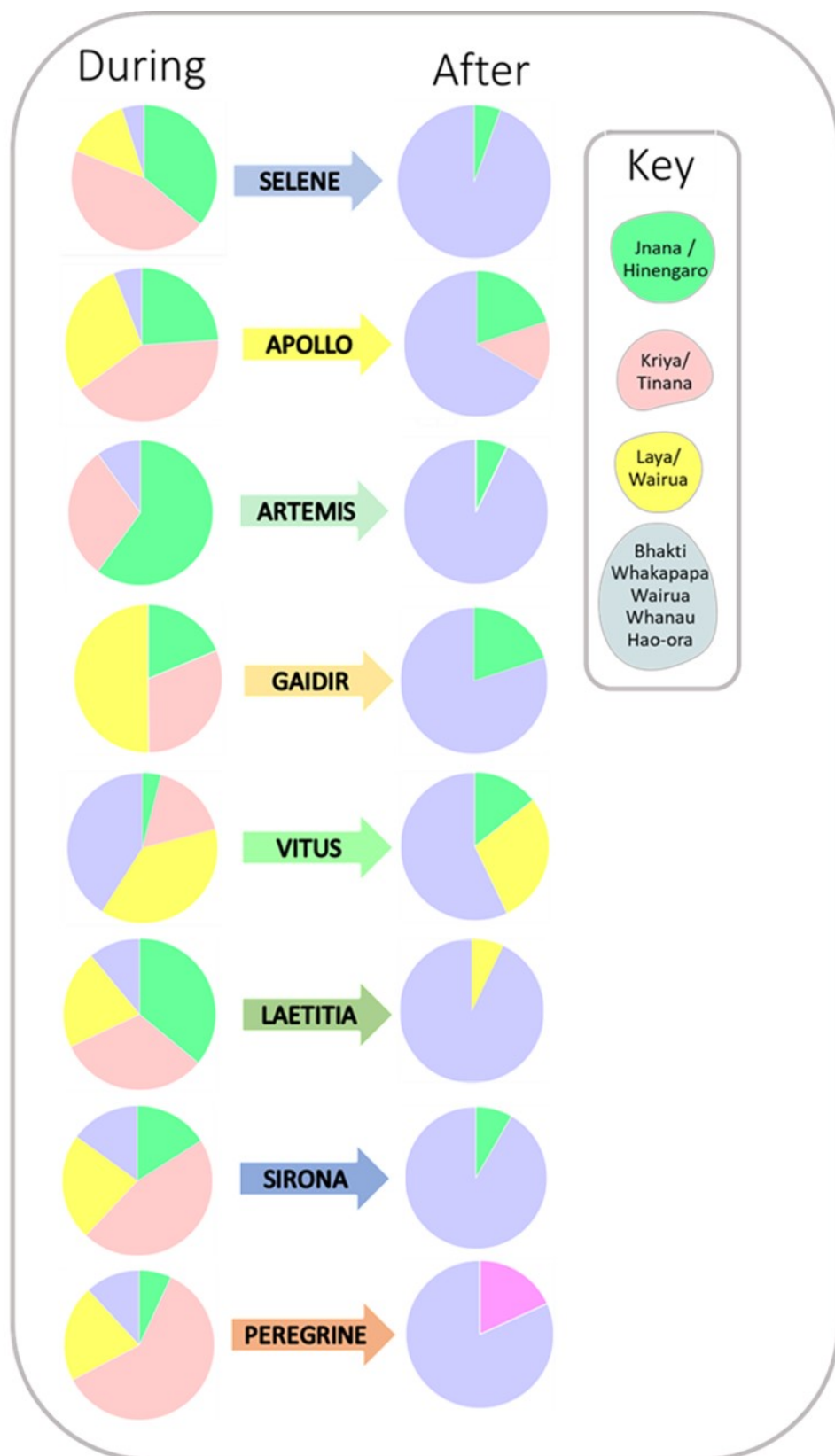


Figure 30. 'After' kundalini; moving towards substantiation and essence nature

Siddha, or “perfected” yoga, incorporates teachings from all traditional yogas (jnana yoga, karma yoga, *raja yoga*, and bhakti yoga). Over time, Siddha yoga supports individual efforts to attain self-realization and, like the Tantric traditions, is body and world-embracing, yet free of attachment or desire (Muktananda, 1979). During stages in our evolution and across cultures, fundamental truths were breathed into words, concepts and languages to facilitate the transmission of God gnosis to humanity. However, words, praxes, and concepts fall away when the real transmission and awakening to beingness is experienced and deeply understood through direct perception of self-borne knowledge, and from there unfolds naturally. There are no prayers to be recited in this place, postures to be performed, or rituals to engage in (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d).

For my co-researchers and I, our transitory Kundalini experiences were profound, and there can be many such moments before and after kundalini awakening. Although I have written in terms of before, during and after, awakening experiences, however remarkable they may seem, are just the beginning of individual refinement within a continuous, unconditional flow rooted in primordial consciousness. Over time, understanding the transitory nature of kundalini awakening can lead individuals to more profound spiritual and bodily transformations (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d). This state, unlike kundalini awakening phenomena, is not temporary. Neither is kundalini awakening an attainment; It is you beginning to establish yourself in your core-beingness and from there refining yourself further through blissful emptiness (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d). From this point, all you need to do is nothing but let go of all the false things you thought you were.

The whole person refinement and transformations that take place after kundalini awakening are not driven wholly by voluntary action. Instead, they are a gradual unfolding after awakening due to being immersed in one's true being. This allows for the release of patterns, concepts, beliefs, stories and traumas and then learning to orientate towards life in a different manner and from an ever more refined perspective (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d). This change in states appears effortful, yet the more one can remain anchored in equanimous being, the easier it is to keep recognising and acknowledging imbalance, falsehoods and corruption of the mind, ego and past experiences. Thus, kundalini awakening is not a guarantee or a sign of true spiritual

refinement or transformation because, for many, our unrefined minds view kundalini awakening through the limited self (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d).

Summary

My co-researchers and I had a spectrum of kundalini experiences of varying intensity because within each of us were different patterns, karmic and life experiences. The type of kundalini awakening one experiences and the unfoldment that follows reveals these patterns. As the refinement continues, each person, through their individual frame of conditioning and culturally informed perceptions, has the potential to reach a deep inner-knowing of ultimate reality. With this shift comes humility, simplicity and purity (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d). There are no proclamations that need to be spoken or identities to be presented to the world. One simply continues to fill oneself more with infinite spaciousness and empty themselves that which is illusory and temporary (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d). The journey is dotted with hardships and wholly does not allow for any kind of spiritual bypassing, inauthenticity or denial of past thoughts and actions. The fruits, though, are simple; you become a human-being anchored in purity and selflessness. From this place, the seeds of self-borne knowledge sprout and vibrate into the world (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d).

Part Two | Truth-telling

Successful intuitive inquiries require courageous researchers who are willing to let readers into their intuitive processes. This involves talking about how the intuitions manifested in the interpretative cycles and not shying away from the dead ends, blocks and rabbit holes encountered along the way (Anderson, 2011). The fool cycle is personal, truthful, and illuminating for both the reader and the researcher.

Mistakes Made

When I reflected on the mistakes made in this research project, it took me back to a somewhat naive question, I asked my co-researchers about kundalini awakening. The question was: Are there aspects of your K.A you would do differently? Selene said, “It’s a tricky question, it’s like that thing – when the butterfly’s in the cocoon, you can’t take the cocoon off too early because the wings are not properly formed”. Apollo said, “ You have no choice. ... I get the intention [of your question], but it kind of doesn’t matter because it’s happened, so if I did it differently, I wouldn’t know what kind of

effect that would have. That's a very brain/mind way of thinking". Gaidir said, "Kundalini [was] very much out of my control".

It was like this for me with this thesis. I know things now about myself, the research topic and the academic discipline I am situated within that I did not know when I began this project. If I was to articulate one 'mistake', it would be that I wish I had followed my intuition right from the get-go. I knew something was happening to me; I knew it was odd that I was offered a kundalini awakening thesis. I knew immediately that Te Ao Māori and health psychology would frame this work. Yet, even when these embodied knowings became explicit, I still resisted them because I was situated within a science/psychology paradigm, and I had no experience working as an intuitive researcher. But honestly, these are not mistakes; they are the "whatness" of where I was during different stages throughout the research project. I accept them.

Procedures and Plans that Did Not Work

One significant procedure did not make the cut for this thesis. That was my attempt at scoping the peer-reviewed kundalini literature using Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-step methodological framework for mapping the range and nature of research within a particular field. I thought the transparent and thorough steps underpinning scoping reviews, provided a pleasing balance for my research topic, kundalini awakenings, which I initially conceived of as intangible and amorphous. Additionally, I enjoy collecting and collating knowledge, so the method suited my analytical parts. For a time, scoping the data worked well. However, in the last stages of the technique, I became increasingly reluctant to engage with the empirical literature. This was mainly because (a) it did not reflect the lived experience of kundalini awakening, (b) it did not acknowledge the limitations of mainstream research paradigms and (c) it was dry. At this point, I let the scoping review go and focused on including literature and teachings that were contextually aligned with kundalini awakening (see Appendix O for findings from the abandoned scoping review).

The Researcher's Apprehensions and Puzzlements about the Study

I have no puzzlements about my findings; they appear ontologically coherent. They emerged organically and intuitively, and they align with the academic and traditional kundalini literature (I discuss this further in the world cycle to follow). Intuitive inquiry

requires the researcher to be truthful and bring all of herself to the research. I am apprehensive about having outed my authentic self in this thesis.

This self includes human damage in the form of cancer and trauma responses manifesting as mental dysfunction and embodied experiences of divinity (which could also be viewed as dysfunction!). Like my co-researchers, I am anchored more and more in an equanimous space, and I desire authenticity and connection. However, while I no longer feel the need to hide parts of myself from view, I am cognizant that this research has personal consequences for me.

The Style of Intuitive Interpretation Used

My intuitive style that underpinned this thesis was less about ritual and practice and more about letting go and opening to whatever appeared in my conscious and embodied awareness. In this context, my intuitive interpretive style incorporated elements of (a) unconscious, symbolic, and imaginal processes, (b) psychic and parapsychological experiences, (c) sensory modes of intuition, (d) empathic identification, and, as I have articulated previously, (e) through-our-wounds intuition.

For many nights at different stages in the research process, my dreamscape looked like a Yahtzee board with words and letters jumbling in my brain while I slept. These dreams formed the basis of my artwork. Although it took me a long time to be brave enough to frame kundalini awakening from a Te Ao Māori perspective, this idea was sneezed into me by a profound dream which I wrote down in my journal and present below.

Uncannily the timing was in the summer holiday between being offered kundalini awakening as a research topic and beginning the research.

New Year's Eve 2018/2019

I saw tehei mauri ora! It sneezed into me! I saw the universe as scattered stars in the sky. They came together to form an androgynous face covered in *moko* tattoos, the face came towards me in 3D, and then it sneezed! I had the sensation of the stuff of stars permeating every cell in my body; it was a profound experience. It was a face yet not a face. I think my mind chose a face because it didn't have the scaffolding to understand what I really was seeing. It felt like I was witnessing the big bang, the expanse of space, contracting into a face and expanding into the sneeze of life...

Empathic identification led me intuitively to frame kundalini awakenings from a Shaivism tantra perspective. Sensory modes of intuition, or interoceptive awareness, informed how the literature and my interpretations of the data were appropriate. My interoceptive understanding was, at times, involuntary and distracting. For example, when I was framing the interview data within Te Ao Māori, my body would tingle, vibrate, expand and sometimes diffuse to the point I had to leave my desk and go for a walk or lie in the back yard. This was frustrating when all I wanted to do was push through. However, while I deferred to theme frequency and phenomenological meaning units during inductive coding, Peregrine's interoceptive awareness technique provided an extra layer of validation to the inductive themes I had created. I also see intuitive hermeneutical processes in my articulation of how the knowledge was generated and the transformations that occurred during this engagement (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2011a). Additionally, traces of Gendlin's intuitive and embodied methodology, or "thinking beyond patterns", dissolved my distinction between subject/object and brought me into an embodied epistemology and a virtuous circle of reflexive understanding (Harris, 2008)

What Remains Unresolved or Problematic about the Topic or the Method

The most glaring issue regarding kundalini awakening is the lack of feminine voice, even within Tantric Shaivism with its roots in Goddess worship. What remains problematic to me is structural. Just imagine if, in my undergraduate and postgraduate years, I had been offered psychology courses in alternative ontological and epistemological frameworks. I am a novice at engaging with literature and interview data in this manner, and until recently, I would have discounted these ways of knowing. Methodologically, I had to shift from a mono-method orientation and become multilingual in various methodological frameworks. While methodological pluralism was hinted at in my earlier university studies, it was not explicitly encouraged. Within the academic framework, grades matter, so you stick to what you know; this does not encourage creative, multilingual future researchers; it reinforces the status quo.

Summary

The expanded lenses of the hanged man cycle illustrated the essential themes related to 'during' or 'after' kundalini awakening and the marked changes in the domains of experience as kundalini as my co-researchers integrated their experiences.

The new lens ‘kundalini understanding’ further evolved my understanding of kundalini phenomena. To varying degrees, my co-researchers and I were penetrated by some degree and caught glimpses of this pervading spaciousness and recognised both our true selves and our illusory selves within it. Perhaps now we live the paradox of being pulled towards essence nature while being situated in the manifest. After awakening, the further refinement of body, mind and spirit can be named Siddha Kundalini Yoga, but in truth, it is nameless, nothingness and ineffable; it is “Isness” (Siddha Kundalini Yoga, n.d), and it speaks to what we are not.

Integral to the principles of intuitive inquiry is truth-telling about the lived experience of the research project. I spoke truthfully about the research process and my changed understandings of my kundalini experience. Now, I leave you, the reader, to evaluate for yourselves my transformation and perhaps engage in your own shifts in understanding (Anderson, 2011). As for me, after writing this final hanged man cycle, I can let go of the need to define kundalini awakening.

CYCLE 5 | THE WORLD



Figure 31. The World archetype. Adapted from Waite (1999), The Original Rider Waite Tarot Deck.

Introduction

The journey that began with The Fool ends with The World, the last major arcana card of the Rider-Waite tarot deck. This archetype's symbolism represents a state of wholeness and completion as depicted by the female figure who represents the microcosmic “self-knowing spirit” and the macrocosmic perfection of the cosmos (Truth Seeker, 2018). Intrinsic to successful conclusions, The World alludes to being comfortable with paradoxes and complexities, seeing the bigger picture and then sharing your worldview with others (Sergel, 2018b). For me, the world archetype represents the completion of a journey that began with my naïve lens and ends with a deep understanding of the kundalini journey.

The world cycle draws another hermeneutic circle around the hermeneutic forward-and-return-arcs of the entire research process and evaluates the research results in light of the literature and the intuitive inquiry process. In part one of the world cycle, I integrate my findings with the literature and ground these findings with some advice to healthcare providers from my co-researchers. In part two, I present the strengths and weakness of this study and conclude the thesis by asking you some questions about this study. If answered affirmatively, your answers confirm the resonance, efficacy, and validity of this research (Anderson, 2004).

Part One | Integrating the Findings with the Literature

Before Kundalini

My research found that all the co-researchers, regardless of their backgrounds, showed possible foreshadowing to their later kundalini awakenings that I interpreted as (a) early spiritual experiences, (b) seeking or questioning natures, and (c) possible genetic predispositions. Like my co-researchers and I, Kufayev (n.d-b) was spiritually inclined and had many foreshadowing experiences in his youth before his kundalini awakening. However, ‘Foreshadowing’ was not a well-articulated theme in the academic literature. The eastern and grey literature addressed foreshadowing in terms of karma (actions, work, and subconscious imprints from earlier lifetimes), predisposing a kundalini awakening in this lifetime and in terms of ‘favourable heredity’ (Dixon, 2008; Krishna, 1970; Seeman, 2002; White, 1979). The ideas of karma, favourable genetics and an innate spiritual orientation are difficult to comprehend rationally. Also, they indicate that many elements of kundalini awakening are outside of our personal volition.

Perhaps, as best articulated by Apollo, who said, “I’m not a religious person, I wouldn’t even call myself a spiritual person; [kundalini awakening] was always gonna happen”; for some, kundalini is predestined.

During Kundalini

I created my own culturally and situationally resonant framework from which to contextualise kundalini awakenings in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Using this framework, I found my coresearchers’ (a) catalyst and/or triggers, (b) gradual and spontaneous awakening narratives, (c) experiences of kundalini phenomena, (d) integration and (e) paradigmatic shifts towards non-dual beingness were synonymous with the traditional and academic kundalini literature and overlapped with elements of embodied psycho-spiritual transformation in other spiritual and religious traditions (Bentov, 1977; Grof & Grof, 2017; Krishna, 1970; Mookerjee, 1982; Ring & Rosing, 1990; Sannella, 1987; Saraswati, 1984; South, 2000; St. Romain, 2010). Based on my findings, I suggest the term ‘kundalini awakening,’ although culturally bound, describes a core human potentiality and experience that transcends culture.

Woollacott et al. (2020) found kundalini experiencers were more aware of synchronistic events in their lives. However, synchronicity, the most dominant essence and latent theme in my findings, was not well addressed in the literature. Jung suggests synchronicity is an ‘acausal principle’ that underpins experiences like telepathy and clairvoyance and that individuals connect synchronistic events through meaning rather than cause and effect (Seeman, 2002). Perhaps the literature does not address synchronicity because it is implicitly assumed valid from a non-dual ontological perspective and overlooked by western literature because synchronicity is outside the bounds of time and space.

The next most prominent theme in the ‘during’ data was interoceptive awareness. This concept was also not well articulated in the kundalini literature. I would suggest that eastern soma-spiritual traditions assume interoceptive awareness naturally develops through introspective and body-based practices and therefore does not explicitly address this state. While the academic literature presented aspects of interoceptive awareness such as inner eye seeing, and new awareness of heightened sensitivity, this theme was not well articulated. I suggest ‘interoceptive awareness’ was such a strong theme in this

research because, for westerners, kundalini awakening facilitates a paradigmatic shift in how we relate to and experience our bodies.

After Kundalini

From a non-dual perspective, the ‘after’ phase of kundalini awakening comprises unfolding, learning to see the world again through spirit centred ego and resting. The urge to remain in control dissipates, *chitta vritti* (mental chatter) becomes less consuming, and the conditioned desires for “need, greed and things” dissolve (Shanti, 2019). In the ‘after’ stage, we learn love and gratitude towards ourselves and others and let go of fear. There is still much work to be done, but it happens in a more matter of fact manner. One is always aware of the energy in and around them, and further unfolding, deeper understandings and more direct experiences of unity consciousness continue to develop throughout the lifetime (Shutan, 2015).

Drawing from Heideggerian, Buddhist and Taoist senses of the word, “being” in this thesis relates to a feeling of *flowing wakefulness* (Kufayev, 2013). This state of being is also characterized as being immersed within the material word yet not emotionally or materially attached to it (Beasley, 2013). From the tantric perspective, *ānava-samāveśa*, or beginning to orientate from one's essential nature, also describes the ‘after’ stage of kundalini awakening (Wallis, 2019). So, while the term ‘kundalini awakening’ implies a dichotomous change between sleep and wakefulness, my research findings suggest a kundalini awakening does not stop. Instead, it continues to underpin the following stages of embodied psycho-spiritual transformation.

Apart from Woollacott et al. (2020), whose research showed an increase in positive behaviours and improved relationships over time, and Sanches and Daniels (2008), who suggested their KAS could be used longitudinally, there is little academic research into the long term effects of kundalini awakening. Using the ‘whānau’ dimension of TWTW, I was able to clearly articulate that kundalini awakenings (even those with destabilizing elements) resulted in long term positive changes including (a) feeling called to service, (b) increased feelings of compassion towards others, (c) arguably positive changes in worldview, and (d) an increased desire for connection and authenticity. The ‘whānau’ domain also illustrated the negative interpersonal implications of kundalini awakening, including challenges related to interpersonal relationships, which was not well addressed in the academic literature. Finally, my

findings supported research that suggests kundalini experiencers (a) have difficulty finding spiritually competent support (Holden et al., 2014; Scott et al., 2003), (b) are frequently pathologized or dismissed (O'Connor & Vandenberg, 2005; Roxburgh & Evenden, 2016; Woollacott et al., 2020), and consequently, (c) are reluctant to disclose their experiences in traditional health care settings (Davis et al., 1991; Roxburgh & Evenden, 2016).

Support and Disclosure | Advice from my Co-Researchers

I close part one of the world cycle by grounding the findings and literature related to support and disclosure with some advice from my co-researchers. Apollo commented that “There’s lots of people out there that kind of need more support, and that can only happen with more understanding”, and Laetitia said, “[health care providers] don't really know what [kundalini] is; so that's the problem”. But what kind of support do kundalini experiencers need, and how do we make disclosing kundalini safer? Speaking from lived experience, my co-researchers simply wanted (a) validating support networks integrated with knowledge of kundalini awakening and (b) educated health care professionals. Table. 6 on the following page presents their suggestions on how to better support kundalini experiencers.

Part Two | Future Directions, Strengths, and Weaknesses

Part two of the world cycle concludes this research by suggesting future trajectories for research, stating the strengths, challenges, and limitations of intuitive inquiry as a research approach and a discussion on the validity of intuitive inquiry findings. I conclude the thesis with a poem from the book *Spiritual Enlightenment, the Damnedest Thing* by Jed McKenna (2011). This poem lies in stark contrast to the first poem, *The Unbroken* by Rashani Réa (1991) because, during this research-as-spiritual-work, I changed.

Trajectories | Future Research

Kundalini researchers suggest kundalini awakenings require further investigation to investigate the prevalence of kundalini awakening globally and support increased spiritual competency education for health care staff across disciplines (Benning, Harris, & Rominger, 2018). Additionally, researchers suggest future studies could (a) expand the scientific paradigm to include a broader range of systems of knowledge

Table 6: Suggestions for supporting kundalini awakening

Validation

Peregrine: It would be awesome if there was like a support network like there is in western medicine. But in an ideal world a knowledge of this would be integrated into our conventional medical system and people would be supported. If you read that book [In Case of Spiritual Emergency, (Lucas, 2011)], there are case studies in the UK, they had centres where people presenting with the first psychotic episode have just been supported not given antipsychotics and just kind of held in a safe place to let it unfold and reassured that they're not going loony, and most of them have come through it

Artemis: I think even if you don't understand it or believe in [kundalini awakening], that doesn't mean it can't help someone and if you want to call it a placebo; by all means ... If it's going to empower and release and help someone get through life, then who are you to say? And I think being able to step into the coach or the cheerleader role rather than the preacher or the dictator is important and it's kinda what I'd expect from anyone in the western world observing any spiritual evolution ... in that sense if they are the teacher or the counsellor or the therapist it kinda is their business; so walk the line!

Laetitia: These two women that I'm working with now are way better ... so this is actually back in the public health system again which I was surprised about ... They are really really good and quite open to spiritual stuff which is helping me a lot because I don't feel as uncomfortable to talk about some stuff. I haven't really gone into it much with them but we've touched on the subject which is really a relief for me.

Education

Selene: I would say first educate yourself on spiritual emergency, so you have an understanding of that particular construct. And assuming the health professional then takes it on board, "OK this is a valid way to perceive these situations" . That would be a massive step forward, if all health professionals understood what a spiritual emergency or emergence was

Apollo: I'd say they need to inform themselves about it by talking to others who have already had it at different stages. It isn't that hard to find people around the world – actually quite well known and very well respected like doctors, very high up there like the kundalini institute in America – all kinds of very well-known people - have either had them or are working with people who have had them ... Say it's a psychologist, right? Someone that really lives in their head, How can they help that person? They may try to with their best intentions, but they may become more unhelpful. And if you are giving advice and you haven't [had a kundalini experience] I think you are being a fucking idiot

(Kaselionyte & Gumley, 2019), (b) research the contribution of personality in the expression of spiritual emergence/y , (c) create multidisciplinary research paradigms into to investigate the biology and psychology of kundalini awakenings,

and (d) harness the therapeutic effect of kundalini energy and higher states of consciousness in a clinical setting (Parker, 2018). I further expand on their recommendations by suggesting robust future research should explicitly identify the researchers' theoretical position, be epistemologically coherent with the research topic, research the longitudinal nature of the kundalini journey, and explore the implications of kundalini awakening for the families of kundalini experiencers.

Explicit Theoretical Positions

We must appreciate that methodologies are founded on theoretical assumptions. Too much of the academic research I encountered failed entirely to explicitly state their theoretical positions concerning kundalini awakening. Without critical investigation and articulation of the theoretical and historical assumptions that frame research and research methods, it is challenging to produce research that can be used as a coherent springboard for future research directions (Yanchar, Gantt, & Clay, 2005). I suggest that every kundalini researcher begins their investigation by examining the assumptions underpinning their situated disciplines.

Epistemological Coherence

Woollacott et al. (2020) suggest that Kundalini awakenings do not sit well within our current materialist scientific paradigms. However, Sanches and Daniels (2008) KAS showed that many aspects of kundalini phenomena are very amenable to traditional scientific methods and measurement. These differing opinions reflect the paradox of studying spiritual experiences within the scientific domain. Western science uses the sense organs or proxies to investigate the external world, while Eastern sciences search the inner world utilising the body to explore subtle experiences. I suggest any researcher who truly wants to understand kundalini awakening employs both eastern and western methods of inquiry. This could include learning body-based and intuitive ways of knowing and engaging in activities that facilitate direct experiences of core beingness and the non-dual nature of reality.

Longitudinal Research

I have shown that kundalini awakening is a journey characterised by changes in attitudes and behaviours over time. I suggest future research, rather than focusing on the intense, often misunderstood phenomena that accompany the 'during', or acute, stage of

awakening, concentrates instead on the whole kundalini journey. Longitudinal research could (a) provide a roadmap of understanding for others experiencing kundalini awakening, (b) reframe some of the intense kundalini experiences as transitory manifestations of psychospiritual development instead of pathologies, (c) provide more clarity on the stages of kundalini awakening in a western context, and (d) elucidate the long term individual and collective benefits of kundalini awakening.

The Interpersonal Consequences of Kundalini Awakening

Kundalini awakening affected my co-researchers' relationships, and it affected my interpersonal relationships. This leads me to ask, "What is it like to live with someone experiencing kundalini awakening?". Future research into the interpersonal implications of kundalini awakening for family members could provide a roadmap for family members to understand the kundalini process, how best to support the kundalini experiencer, and shed light on what support they may need themselves.

Strengths

Intuitive inquiry creates a space for researchers to explore relevant topics to society (Anderson, 2011a). Furthermore, by being open and authentic about their personal relationship to the issue and the research process, intuitive inquirers bring the reader deep into the experience with them. This kind of reader engagement (and possibly resonant transformation) is challenging to achieve using conventional research paradigms.

Challenges and Limitations

Intuitive inquiry is difficult to do well and is emotionally, intellectually and spiritually demanding (Anderson, 2004, 2011). Furthermore, intuitive inquiry is situated within academia, a space that is still dominantly positivistic (Anderson, 2004; Beasley, 2013; Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Crotty, 1998; Harris, 2008). Intuitive inquiry is not suitable for all researchers and necessitates right-brain, left-brain agility. The right brain processes include cyclical imaginal, artistic and intuitive processes, while the left brain processes involve using more linear intellectual reasoning and analysis to integrate literature and data. However, Anderson (2011) suggests intuitive researchers may find integrating the intuitive with the intellectual can improve psycho-spiritual maturity.

The strengths and characteristics of intuitive inquiry are also its limitations (Anderson, 2004, pp. 324-330).

They are:

1. Being rigorously subjective
2. Telling the truth, no matter what
3. Avoiding circularity
4. Auspicious bewilderment
5. Maintaining a process-orientated and inclusive perspective
6. Writing in your own voice
7. Favouring the particular and the personal
8. Imagining the possible
9. Risking personal change and transformation

Validating Findings

Anderson (2004) suggests the validity of intuitive inquiry lies in it (a) being rigorously subjective, (b) telling the truth no matter what, (c) avoiding circularity, and (d) writing in your own voice. The high levels of detail inherent to intuitive inquiry, allow the reader to decide if the intuitive inquirer has made reasonable conclusions based on the data and literature. After all, the researcher brings the reader into every aspect of these processes. If the researcher has followed the intuitive inquiry framework adequately, and the conclusions are appropriate, the research has internal validity (Anderson, 2004)

The external value of intuitive inquiry is based on the research project's value and whether the findings can be generalised or not. Intended audiences may include (a) other researchers, (b) client populations, (c) the general public, (d) unique ethnic or minority groups, or (e) professional groups aligned with the human sciences such as nurses, physicians, therapists, and social workers. Traditionally, research findings are externally valid if they increase understanding of a particular topic or theory. Successful Intuitive inquiry does this; however, its real strength lies in its capacity to help readers question their own lived experiences. Based on these aspects of external validity, Anderson (2004) suggests two further criteria for determining external validity: resonance validity and efficacy validity.

Resonance validity describes the capacity of the research and its outcomes to evoke sympathetic resonance in its readers. Anderson (2004) uses the analogy of two cellos in a room; If the string of one cello is plucked, the string on the other cello will also vibrate or resonate. Similarly, striking a tuning fork vibrates other tuning forks that may be quite some distance away. Resonance between humans needs no instruments, except for the conduits of space and air. Sympathetic resonance principles suggest that research can function like prose in its capacity to create resonance. Intuitive inquiry invites the reader to immediately apprehend and recognise experiences in the research that are true for themselves (Anderson, 2004).

Efficacy validity refers to the ability of the research to add value to life. Traditional research is considered both efficacious and ethical if it is replicable. However, Anderson (2004) suggests that researchers and readers place a higher value on research that resonates with them. After all, the audience is multidimensional, they may be research peers or supervisors, but they are human at their core. If an intuitive inquiry has personal and professional value to its readers, Anderson (2004) considers it effective research. Finally, efficacy validity supports the idea that readers, the researcher and co-researchers transform because they have engaged with the research (Anderson, 2004). Below are seven questions regarding efficacy validity. If answered affirmatively, they confirm this thesis's efficacy validity (Anderson, 2004, pp. 333-334). I leave you, the reader, to answer these questions and make this decision for yourself.

1. Was I (the writer) transformed during the research, and were you, as you read?
2. Did I become more compassionate and gain deeper understandings during the study?
3. While reading the research, did you gain compassion and deeper understandings of yourself, the topic and the world?
4. Did I write this research clearly and authentically, so you felt like you knew me?
5. Did I offer new visions for the future?
6. Are my findings and visions inspiring?
7. Did my research make you think about your own action and service in the world?

Concluding Remarks

Intuitive inquiry as a research framework and orientation provided the permission and scaffolding to write a critical, feminist, embodied, and authentic thesis focused on the lived experience of kundalini awakening.

I hope the naïve and preliminary interpretative lenses have provided you with clarity about my research journey and provided insight into how I understood the research and framed the findings. Researching kundalini awakening using intuitive inquiry has left me with one simple understanding; kundalini is simply spiritual energy emanating from source and enduringly understood through different cultural and religious lenses. While some rare individuals experience a binary shift between normal and enlightened modes of being, for most, kundalini awakening is a non-binary journey that starts with ego-centred consciousness and moves the individual towards spirit centred consciousness. This shift includes a multitude of unitive, relational and embodied experiences. Now, I conceive spiritual energy as part of our core beingness and universal. It is not transpersonal or separate from us, but perfusing us always. Our core being, atman or soul is inseparable from Shiva-Shakti, Ionui, God, Yahweh, Allah or any other names for God; she is simply The Breath in our Holy Bones who guides the transformation of our consciousness through the power of our own consciousness. I close this thesis with a poem from Jed McKenna (2011).

Spiritual Enlightenment, the Damnedest Thing

Spiritual enlightenment sits next to an empty milk carton
On an orange lunch tray in a grade school cafeteria
It's lying in the grass in a ditch beside a rusting hubcap
It's on the button holding closed the left cuff of a somewhat important man's shirt
Enlightenment can be found next to the elevator

On the fourth level of the airport parking garage
You can ask your dog for it, but he may not give it to you
Look for it next to the pen in the pocket of the checkout girl's red vest

But only on Wednesdays
Enlightenment is in the trunk, behind the jack
You can hear it in the squeak of a hinge at the local library

It's in the breeze blowing unheard through an unseen tree
It's in the space after the exhale and before the inhale
You can find enlightenment in church

In that scratch on the back of the pew in front of you
You can find it in the desert, just before the wind picks up again
Enlightenment is nothing
Delusion is the greatest wonder
Enlightenment was in your coffee cup before you poured in the coffee.
Now it's in your coffee cup
Two-point two billion years before your coffee cup was created,

Enlightenment was in your coffee cup
An hour and fifteen minutes after time swallows the universe

Enlightenment will be in your coffee cup
You've always known where it is because it's exactly where you left it
How can you not return to a place you never left?
You are dreaming that you are unenlightened
You are dreaming that you are awake
The question is: Why?
The answer is: Why not?

REFERENCES

- Abram, D. (1996). *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York. *Pantheon*, 131.
- Allison, E. (2019). Deity Citadels: Sacred Sites of Bio-Cultural Resistance and Resilience in Bhutan. *Religions*, 10(4), 268.
- American Psychological Association. (2020). Psychology. *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. Retrieved 23 October, 2020
- Anderson, A. H. (2013). *An introduction to Pentecostalism: global charismatic Christianity*: Cambridge University Press.
- Anderson, R. (1998). Intuitive inquiry: A transpersonal approach. *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience*, 69-94.
- Anderson, R. (2000). Intuitive inquiry: Interpreting objective and subjective data. *ReVision*, 22(4), 31-31.
- Anderson, R. (2001). Embodied writing and reflections on embodiment. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 33(2), 83-98.
- Anderson, R. (2002). Embodied writing: Presencing the body in somatic research, Part I, What is embodied writing. *Somatics: Magazine/journal of the Mind/body Arts and Sciences*, 13(4), 40-44.
- Anderson, R. (2004). Intuitive Inquiry: An Epistemology of the Heart for Scientific Inquiry. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 32(4), 307-341. doi: 10.1080/08873267.2004.9961758
- Anderson, R. (2007). Thematic content analysis (TCA). *Descriptive presentation of qualitative data*.
- Anderson, R. (2011). Intuitive inquiry. R., Anderson, W. Braud,(Eds.), *Transforming self and other through research*, 15-70.
- Anderson, R., & Braud, W. (2011). *Transforming self and others through research: Transpersonal research methods and skills for the human sciences and humanities*: SUNY Press.
- Andresen, J. (2000). Vajrayāna art and iconography. *Zygon®*, 35(2), 357-370.
- Avalon, A., & John Woodroffe, S. (1974). *THE SERPENT POWER*. Mineola, NY: Dover Books.

- Baker, J., Rayner, A. & Wolowic, J. (2011). A Primer for Science Teachers. Retrieved 23 March, 2020, from <http://ctabobandung.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/ns-primer.pdf>
- Baring, A. (2002). Rebalancing the Psyche: Integrating the Feminine Principle, Body, Soul and Spirit. Retrieved 17 December, 2019, from https://www.annebaring.com/anbar12_lect12_balancing.htm
- Batalha, C. (2018). *Yoga Psychotherapy: Which Yoga postures can be used to balance which emotions, in the context of psychotherapeutic treatment*. Auckland University of Technology.
- Beasley, K. (2013). *Transcendent Experience, Process, and Praxis Within the 'Transcendence Movement'*. Bangor University.
- Beavis, M. A. (2016). Christian Goddess Spirituality and Theology. *Feminist Theology*, 24(2), 125-138.
- Beck, & Taylor. (2015). Thoughts, and visions. Retrieved from http://visions419.rssing.com/chan-24754465/all_p12.html
- Benning, T. B., Harris, K. P., & Rominger, R. (2018). Delayed diagnosis of the physio-kundalini syndrome: Case report and literature review. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*. doi: 10.1037/scp0000186
- Benson, H., Lehmann, J. W., Malhotra, M., Goldman, R. F., Hopkins, J., & Epstein, M. D. (1982). Body temperature changes during the practice of g Tum-mo yoga. *Nature*, 295(5846), 234-236.
- Bentov, I. (1977). *Stalking the wild pendulum: On the mechanics of consciousness*: Simon and Schuster.
- Berman, H. J. (2009). *Law and Revolution, II: The Impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition*: Harvard University Press.
- Bharati, J. (2015). *The Process of Kundalini Awakening*: Lulu.com.
- Bishop, G. D. (1994). *Health psychology: Integrating mind and body*: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bjonnes, R. (2011). The dawn of enlightenment. *I Dance of Macrocosm*, 125.
- Blake, D. (2013). *Wade in the water: storying adoptees' experiences through the Adoption Act 1955: a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology at Massey University, Manawatu, Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Massey University.
- Bowman, M. (2005). Ancient avalon, New Jerusalem, heart chakra of planet earth: The local and the global in Glastonbury. *Numen*, 52(2), 157-190.

- Bradie, M. (1999). *The Philosophy of Biology* by David L. Hull and Michael Ruse.
- Bragdon, E. (2006). A sourcebook for helping people in spiritual emergency.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis.
- Breen, L. J., & Darlaston-Jones, D. (2010). Moving beyond the enduring dominance of positivism in psychological research: Implications for psychology in Australia. *Australian Psychologist*, 45(1), 67-76.
- Brennan, B. A. (1988). *Hands of light: A guide to healing through the human energy field*: Random House.
- Brod, K. (2013). *Kriya yoga and pranayama*.
- Bronn, G., & McIlwain, D. (2015). Assessing spiritual crises: Peeling off another layer of a seemingly endless onion. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 55(3), 346-382.
- Brook, M. G. (2018). *Recovering balance after the big leap: Overcoming challenges in integrating spiritually transformative experiences (stes)*. (78), ProQuest Information & Learning, US. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,url,uid&db=psyh&AN=2017-43826-203&site=ehost-live&scope=site> Available from EBSCOhost psyh database.
- Brook, M. G. (2019). Struggles Reported Integrating Intense Spiritual Experiences: Results From a Survey Using the Integration of Spiritually Transformative Experiences Inventory. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. doi: 10.1037/rel0000258
- Brown, J. (2005). *Inquiry into the understanding and applications of DSM-IV category Religious or Spiritual Problem, V-Code 62.89 by American Psychological Association (APA) psychologists*. Institute of Transpersonal Psychology.
- Browne, S. (2009). *Mother God: The Feminine Principle to Our Creator*: ReadHowYouWant. com.
- Brüssow, H. (2013). What is health? *Microbial biotechnology*, 6(4), 341-348.
- Burgess, S. M., & Van der Maas, E. M. (2010). *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements: Revised and Expanded Edition*: Zondervan.

- Capra, F. (1975). *The Tao of physics: An exploration of the parallels between modern physics and eastern mysticism*: Shambhala Publications.
- Ch'en, K. (1957). Transformations in Buddhism in Tibet. *Philosophy East and West*, 117-125.
- Chamberlain, K. (2000). Methodolatry and qualitative health research. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 5(3), 285-296.
- Chamberlain, K. (2009). On the triviality of psychological research: What we do, how we do it, and how we might change.
- Chamberlain, K. (2011). Troubling methodology. *Health psychology review*, 5(1), 48-54.
- Chamberlain, K., & Murray, M. (2009). Critical health psychology. *Critical psychology: An introduction*, 2, 144-158.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*: sage.
- Cheals, K. (2002). *Voices from the edges: tellings of women's spirituality narratives: a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University*. Massey University.
- Choudhury, R. (Producer). (2018). Kundalini 01: The Esoteric Essence of Shakti Energy. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElgxLbuUYC0&t=2s>
- Clegg, B. (2004). *The first scientist: a life of Roger Bacon*: Da Capo Press.
- Collie, E. (2000a). Kundalini signs and symptoms.
- Collie, E. (2000b). Zone of Fire. Retrieved 21 December, 2019, from <https://www.bodytalkandbeyond.com/kundalini.html>
- Connelly, C. (2009). *Brigid: Bridge between Worlds. A Feminist Examination of the Significance of Brigid (an Irish Saint and Goddess) in Contemporary Australian Women's Spirituality*.
- Cook, C. C., Powell, A., & Sims, A. (2009). *Spirituality and psychiatry*: RCPsych Publications.
- Cooper, E. J., Harris, K. P., & Clark, G. I. (2015). The Factor Analytic Structure And Personality Correlates Of Spiritual Emergency. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 47(2), 242.
- Corning, C. (2006). *The Celtic and Roman traditions: conflict and consensus in the early medieval church*: Springer.

- Costian, D. (2018). *Bible Enlightened* (Vol. 1). America: Publish America.
- Coward, H., G. (1985). Jung and kundalini. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 30(4), 379-392.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed ed.): SAGE Publications.
- Crossley, M. (2008). Critical health psychology: Developing and refining the approach. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(1), 21-33.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*: Sage.
- Cunningham, P. (2011). Bridging psychological science and transpersonal spirit: A primer of transpersonal psychology. *Nashua, NH: Rivier University*.
- Das, T. (2020). Kashmir Shaivism, Tantra and Advaita Vedanta – Ramana Maharshi's view. Retrieved 11 November 2020, 2020, from <https://tomdas.com/2020/02/03/kashmir-shaivism-tantra-and-advaita-vedanta-ramana-maharshis-view/>
- Davis-Floyd, R., & Arvidson, P. S. (2016). *Intuition: the inside story: interdisciplinary perspectives*: Routledge.
- Davis, J., Lockwood, L., & Wright, C. (1991). Reasons for not reporting peak experiences. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 31(1), 86-94.
- Dawson, C. G. O. (1961). *Crisis in Western Education* (reprint ed.). doi: ISBN 9780813216836.
- De Gracia, D. J. (1997). Psychedelic Drugs and the Awakening of Kundalini.
- Deacon, B. J. (2013). The biomedical model of mental disorder: A critical analysis of its validity, utility, and effects on psychotherapy research. *Clinical psychology review*, 33(7), 846-861.
- Dick, B. (2007). Action research as an enhancement of natural problem solving. *International Journal of Action Research*, 3(1+ 2), 149-167.
- Dixon, J. (2008). *Biology of kundalini, exploring the fire of life*: Lulu. com.
- Doyle, J. S., & Saying, W. P. A. (2015). Resilience, Growth & Kintsukuroi. *Psychology Today*. October, 3.
- Durie, M. (2001). *Mauri ora : the dynamics of Māori health*: Oxford University Press.
- Eatough, V., & Smith, J. A. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 179, 194.

- Edwards, L. (2014). *Awakening Kundalini: The Path to Radical Freedom*: Jaico Publishing House.
- Eisler, R. T. (1998). *The chalice and the blade*: Thorsons.
- Elshakry, M. (2010). When science became Western: Historiographical reflections. *Isis*, 101(1), 98-109.
- Ergene, E. (2008). Basic Characteristics of the Western Science and Thought *An Analysis of the Gülen Movement*: Blue Dome Press.
- Eyre, H. A., Siddarth, P., Acevedo, B., Van Dyk, K., Paholpak, P., Ercoli, L., . . . Lavretsky, H. (2017). A randomized controlled trial of Kundalini yoga in mild cognitive impairment. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 29(4), 557-567.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 5(1), 80-92.
- Fielden, J. M. (2003). Grief as a transformative experience: Weaving through different lifeworlds after a loved one has completed suicide. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 12(1), 74-85.
- Fleischman, S. (1998). Gender, the personal, and the voice of scholarship: A viewpoint. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 23(4), 975-1016.
- Fontejn, W. A. (2019). Integrating the Process of Kundalini Awakening in Personal Life and Psychotherapeutic Practice. *International Journal of Psychiatry Research*, 2(5), 1-3.
- Fort, A. O. (1998). *Jivanmukti in transformation: embodied liberation in Advaita and Neo-Vedanta*: SUNY Press.
- Fox, M. (2010). *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine*: New World Library.
- Freinkel, P. D. (2014). *Transpersonal implications of singing : an intuitive inquiry*: SAGE.
- Frey, B. B. (2018). *The Sage encyclopedia of educational research, measurement, and evaluation*: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Friedman, H., Krippner, S., Riebel, L., & Johnson, C. (2010). Transpersonal and other models of spiritual development. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 29(1), 9.
- Gardiner, P. (2006). *Gnosis: The Secrets of Solomon's Temple Revealed*: Red Wheel/Weiser.

- Garstin, E. L. (1932). *The Secret Fire: An Alchemical Study*: Penguin.
- Gilberti, T. C. (2004). Reiki: The re-emergence of an ancient healing art in modern times. *Home Health Care Management & Practice*, 16(6), 480-486.
- Goretzki, M. (2008). *The differentiation of psychosis and spiritual emergency*.
- Goretzki, M., Thalbourne, M. A., & Storm, L. (2013). Development of a Spiritual Emergency Scale. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 45(2), 105-117.
- Gosselin, P. (2006). The Judaeo-Christian cosmology and the origins of science. *Creation Social Sciences and Humanities Quarterly*, 9, 9-18.
- Granberg-Michaelson, W. (2015). Think Christianity is dying? No, Christianity is shifting dramatically. *Washington Post*, 20.
- Greenwell, B. (2002). *Energies of transformation: A guide to the kundalini process*: Motilal Banarsidass Publishe.
- Greyson, B. (1993a). Near-Death Experiences and the Physio-Kundalini Syndrome. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 32(4), 277-290.
- Greyson, B. (1993b). The physio-kundalini syndrome and mental disease. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 25(1), 43-58.
- Greyson, B. (2000). Some neuropsychological correlates of the physio-kundalini syndrome. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 32(2), 123-134.
- Grimes, J. A. (1996). *A concise dictionary of Indian philosophy: Sanskrit terms defined in English*: Suny Press.
- Grof, C., & Grof, S. (2017). Spiritual emergency: The understanding and treatment of transpersonal crises. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 36(2), 5.
- Grof, S. (1972). Varieties of transpersonal experiences: Observations from LSD psychotherapy. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 4(1), 45.
- Grof, S. (1988). New perspectives in psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy.
- Grof, S., & Grof, C. (1989). *Spiritual emergency: When personal transformation becomes a crisis*: TarcherPerigee.
- Haas, J. (2005). *Om, Baby!: A Pilgrimage to the Eternal Self*. United States: Iconoclast Press; null edition.
- Halpern, J. (1993). *NTC's new Japanese-English character dictionary*=: National Textbook Company.
- Harris, A. (2008). The wisdom of the body: Embodied knowing in eco-paganism.
- Harris, B. (1994). Kundalini and healing in the west. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 13(2), 75-79.

- Heilbrun, C. (1989). G.(1988). *Writing a Woman's Life*: New York: WW Norton.
- Holden, J. M., Kinsey, L., & Moore, T. R. (2014). Disclosing near-death experiences to professional healthcare providers and nonprofessionals. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice, 1*(4), 278.
- Holden, J. M., Vanpelt-Tess, P., & Warren, S. (1999). Spiritual emergency: An introduction and case example. *Counseling & Values, 43*(3), 163.
- Jaki, S. L. (1990). *Science and Creation: From Eternal Cycles to an Oscillating Universe*: University Press of America.
- Jindani, F. A. K., G. F. S. (2015a). A yoga intervention program for patients suffering from symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder: A qualitative descriptive study. *Journal Of Alternative And Complementary Medicine (New York, N.Y.), 21*(7), 401-408. doi: 10.1089/acm.2014.0262
- Jindani, F. T., Nigel; Khalsa, Sat Bir S. (2015b). A yoga intervention for posttraumatic stress: A preliminary randomized control trial. *Evidence-based complementary and alternative medicine : eCAM, 2015*, 351746-351746. doi: 10.1155/2015/351746
- Johnstone, L., & Boyle, M. (2018). The power threat meaning framework: An alternative nondiagnostic conceptual system. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 0022167818793289*.
- Joyce, J. M. (2015). *Human Spirituality and Coming Together in Peace, Looking Through Two Lenses (Māori and Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga)*. University of Otago.
- Judith, A. (2004). *Eastern body, western mind: Psychology and the chakra system as a path to the self*. Random House Digital, Inc.
- Kaselionyte, J., & Gumley, A. (2018). "It's like a charge—either fuses you or burns you out": An interpretative phenomenological analysis of extreme mental states in meditation context. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 1*-16.
- Kason, Y. (1994). Near-death experiences and kundalini awakening: Exploring the link. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*.
- Kason, Y. (2008). *Farther shores: Exploring how near-death, kundalini and mystical experiences can transform ordinary lives*: iUniverse.
- Khalsa, S. B. K., G. S.; Khalsa, H. K.; Khalsa, M. K. (2008). Evaluation of a residential kundalini yoga lifestyle pilot program for addiction in India. *Journal Of Ethnicity In Substance Abuse, 7*(1), 67-79. doi: 10.1080/15332640802081968

- Kozhevnikov, M., Elliott, J., Shephard, J., & Gramann, K. (2013). Neurocognitive and somatic components of temperature increases during g-Tummo meditation: legend and reality. *PloS one*, 8(3), e58244.
- Krishna, G. (1970). *Kundalini: The evolutionary energy in man*: Shambhala Publications.
- Krishna, G. (1975). *The awakening of kundalini*: Dutton.
- Krishna, G. (1979). *Kundalini in Time and Space*: Kundalini Research and Publication Trust, Books Division.
- Kufayev, I. (2013). The World Is as You See It. Retrieved from <https://igorkufayev.blog/category/from-igor/>
- Kufayev, I. (2020). Shiva and Shakti's embrace. Retrieved from <https://igorkufayev.blog/2020/02/21/shiva-shaktis-embrace/>
- Kufayev, I. (n.d-a). Gnosis. Retrieved 21 October, 2020, from <https://www.igorkufayev.com/gnosis>
- Kufayev, I. (n.d-b). Igor Kufayev. Retrieved 31 March, 2021, from <https://www.igorkufayev.com/teacher>
- Kumar, R. (2002). How Shakti-Kundalini Conquers Death Anxiety and Achieves Liberation. *Journal of Religion & Psychological Research*, 25(2).
- Leatherdale, W. H. (1974). The role of analogy, model, and metaphor in science.
- Lee, M. S., Pittler, M. H., & Ernst, E. (2008). Effects of reiki in clinical practice: a systematic review of randomised clinical trials. *International journal of clinical practice*, 62(6), 947-954.
- Lim, J. (2013). Exploration into the cause of Kundalini awakening. *The Journal for Spiritual and Consciousness Studies*, 36(3), 135-144.
- Lim, J. (2017). *Kundalini from the edge of science*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayana Buddhism, Bhutan.
- Linders, E. H., & Lancaster, B. L. (2013). Sacred illness: Exploring transpersonal aspects in physical affliction and the role of the body in spiritual development. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 16(10), 991-1008.
- Lockley, M. (2013). Kundalini Awakening, kundalini awareness.
- Lomas, T. C., Tina; Edginton, Trudi; Ridge, Damien. (2015). A qualitative analysis of experiential challenges associated with meditation practice. *Mindfulness*, 6(4), 848-860.

- Louchakova, O., & Warner, A. (2003). Via Kundalini: Psychosomatic excursions in transpersonal psychology. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 31(2-3), 115.
- Love, C. (2004). Extensions on Te Wheke.
- Lucas, C. (2011). *In Case of Spiritual Emergency*: Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press.
- MacLean, L. M., Meyer, M., & Estable, A. (2004). Improving accuracy of transcripts in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, 14(1), 113-123.
- Mark, G., & Lyons, A. (2014). Conceptualizing mind, body, spirit interconnections through, and beyond, spiritual healing practices. *Explore*, 10(5), 294-299.
- Mark, G. T. (2008). *Conceptualising mind, body, spirit interconnections : perspectives of Māori and non-Māori healers : a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Health Psychology*. (Master of Arts (M.A.) Masters), Massey University. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10179/6501>
- Marsden, M. (2003). *The woven universe: selected writings of Rev. Māori Marsden*: Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden.
- Masters, R. E. (1988). *The Goddess Sekhmet: The Way of the Five Bodies*: Amity House.
- Mazzocchi, F. (2006). Western science and traditional knowledge. *EMBO reports*, 7(5), 463-466.
- McCloud, S. (2015). *American possessions: Fighting demons in the contemporary United States*: Oxford University Press, USA.
- McKee, D. D., & Chappel, J. N. (1992). Spirituality and medical practice. *J fam Pract*, 35(2), 201-205.
- McKenna, J. (2011). Spiritual Enlightenment the Damnedest Thing Retrieved 10 October, 2020, from <http://nomindsland.blogspot.com/2019/11/jed-mckenna-spiritual-enlightenment.html>
- Mehta, N. (2011). Mind-body dualism: A critique from a health perspective. *Mens sana monographs*, 9(1), 202.
- Mehta, R. (1970). *The call of the Upanishads*. . Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Mookerjee, A. (1982). *Kundalini: The arousal of the inner energy*: Destiny Books.
- Moon, K., & Blackman, D. (2014). A guide to understanding social science research for natural scientists. *Conservation Biology*, 28(5), 1167-1177.
- Moorfield, J. C. (Ed.) (2005) Te Whanake. Pearson Longman.

- Morison, T., Lyons, A., & Chamberlain, K. (2019). Critical health psychology: Applications for social action. *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Psychology*, 215.
- Muktananda, S. (1979). *Kundalini: The secret of life*: Syda Foundation.
- Mumford, J. (2005). *Chakra and kundalini workbook*: Delhi: Pustak Mahal.
- Murphy, N. (2013). Science and Theology: Mapping the Relationship. *Theology, News & Notes, Spring 2013*. Retrieved 22 march, 2020, from <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/science-theology-mapping-relationship/>
- Myrick, M. (2015). *Yoga of The Holy Bible*: Martin Myrick.
- Myss, C. (2013). *Anatomy of the spirit: The seven stages of power and healing*: Harmony.
- Neville, R. C. (1987). New metaphysics for eternal experience. *Journal of Chinese philosophy*, 14(3), 357-370.
- New Zealand Psychologists' Board. (2018). Core Competencies For the Practice of Psychology in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Nichols, S. (1980). *Jung and Tarot: An archetypal journey*: Weiser Books.
- Nouwen, H. J. (1990). *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (1st Image ed.): New York: Image Books.
- O'Connor, S., & Vandenberg, B. (2005). Psychosis or faith? Clinicians' assessment of religious beliefs. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(4), 610.
- Ogden, J. (2012). *Health Psychology: A Textbook: A textbook*: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Osborn, G. (2012). Gate of God: The Kundalini Shakti Goddess. Retrieved from <http://garyosborn.moonfruit.com/shakti-goddess/4572780610>
- Osborne, J. W. (1990). Some basic existential-phenomenological research methodology for counsellors. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 24(2).
- Ossoff, J. (1993). Reflections of shaktipat - psychosis or the rise of kundalini: A case-study. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 25(1), 29-42.
- Palmer, G., & Braud, W. (2002). Exceptional human experiences, disclosure, and a more inclusive view of physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 34(1), 29-59.
- Panameno, R. (Producer). (2013, 25 December 2019). Gnosis - Secrets of the Kabbalah. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/ppT8JK1IoSg>

- Parker, K. R. (2018). *Kundalini Awakening: Integration of Higher States of Consciousness Into Psychotherapy*. Pacifica Graduate Institute.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*: SAGE Publications, inc.
- Paulson, G. L. (2002). *Kundalini and the Chakras: A Practical Manual--evolution in this Lifetime*: Llewellyn Worldwide.
- Pavlik, S. (2007). Power and Place: Toward Developing and Implementing Native-Based Science Education.
- Peddie, J. (2014). *Understanding experience and constructing identity in spiritually transformative accounts of psychosis*.
- Pere, R., & Nicholson, N. (1991). *Te wheke : a celebration of infinite wisdom*: Ao Ako Global Learning New Zealand.
- Pere, R. T. A. R. (2018). The Eight Dimensions: Rangimarie Turuki Arikirangi Rose Pere' - Maori Tohuna Spiritual Assessment: YouTube.
- Pettersson, J. (2018). From Rome to Ireland: a comparative analysis of two pagan goddesses and a Christian saint.
- Pihama, L. (2001). Tihei mauri ora: Honouring our voices. *Mana wahine as a kaupapa Māori theoretical framework*.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1984). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*: Suny Press.
- Prosnick, K. P., & Evans, W. J. (2003). Validity and Reliability of the Near-Death Experience Scale-6 (NDE-6). *Journal of Near-Death Studies*.
- Psychology. (Ed.) (n.d) Oxford English Dictionary. 2020 Lexico.com.
- Rand, W. L. (2013). History of Reiki. *An evidence based history of Reiki: a selection of articles from Reiki New Magazine. Southfield: International Center for Reiki Training*, 16-31.
- Raphael, M. (1996). *Thealogy and embodiment: The post-patriarchal reconstruction of female sacrality*: A&C Black.
- Raphael, M. (1998). *Introducing thealogy: Discourse on the goddess* (Vol. 3): A&C Black.
- Réa, R. (1991). The Unbroken. Retrieved 01 March, 2018, from <https://rashani.com/arts/poems/poems-by-rashani>
- Regner, V. A. (1999). *Reexamining Christian conversion experiences: Considering Kundalini awakenings and spiritual emergencies*. (60), ProQuest Information &

- Learning. Retrieved from
<http://ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,url,uid&db=psyh&AN=1999-95021-188&site=ehost-live&scope=site> Available from EBSCOhost psych database.
- Rehman, A. A., & Alharthi, K. (2016). An introduction to research paradigms. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(8), 51-59.
- Rele, V. (1950). The Mysterious Kundalini.
- Ring, K., & Rosing, C. J. (1990). The Omega Project: An empirical study of the NDE-prone personality. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 8(4), 211-239. doi: 10.1007/BF01074276
- Robbins, J. (2004). The globalization of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.*, 33, 117-143.
- Rochford, T. (2004). Whare Tapa Wha: A Māori model of a unified theory of health. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 25(1), 41-57.
- Rock, A. J., & Clark, G. I. (2015). Spiritual emergency, psychosis and personality: A quantitative investigation. *Association for Transpersonal Psychology*, 47(2), 263.
- Romanoff, K. (2005). Sophia: Goddess of Wisdom & God's Wife. Retrieved 19 December 2019, from <https://northernway.org/sophia.html>
- Romanyshyn, R. D., & Anderson, R. (2007). *The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind*: Spring Journal Books New Orleans.
- Rose. (2019). Prana: Demystifying Life Force Energy. Retrieved 07 December, 2019, from <https://www.yogiapproved.com/om/prana-life-force-energy/>
- Roxburgh, E. C., & Evenden, R. E. (2016). 'Most people think you're a fruit loop': Clients' experiences of seeking support for anomalous experiences. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 16(3), 211-221.
- Rozin, P. (2007). Exploring the landscape of modern academic psychology: Finding and filling the holes. *American psychologist*, 62(8), 754.
- Samuel, G. (2013). The subtle body in India and beyond. *Religion and the subtle body in Asia and the West*, 33-47.
- Sanches, L., & Daniels, M. (2008). Kundalini and transpersonal development: Development of a Kundalini Awakening Scale and a comparison between groups. *Transpersonal Psychology Review*, 12(1), 73-83.

- Sanford, E. C. (1903). Psychology and physics. *Psychological review*, 10(2), 105-119.
doi: 10.1037/h0071541
- Sannella, L. (1987). *The kundalini experience: psychosis or transcendence?* : Integral Pub.
- Saraswati, S. (1982). Taming the Kundalini: Bihar School of Yoga.
- Saraswati, S., Swami. (1984). Kundalini tantra. *Yoga publication trust, meunger, bihar, india, 2007*.
- Scott, S., Garver, S., Richards, J., & Hathaway, W. L. (2003). Religious issues in diagnosis: The V-Code and beyond. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 6(2), 161-173.
- Seeman, G. (2002). Individuation and subtle body: A commentary on Jung's Kundalini seminar (Carl G. Jung).
- Sergel, M. (Producer). (2017a, 15 May 2020). Contemporary Tarot, The Chariot in 5 Minutes. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwXFOoQMOFg>
- Sergel, M. (Producer). (2017b, 15 May 2020). Contemporary Tarot, The Fool in 5 Minutes. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccLSTzanugw>
- Sergel, M. (Producer). (2017c, 15 May 2020). Contemporary Tarot, The Hierophant in 6 Minutes. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5WOHNIAYa4>
- Sergel, M. (Producer). (2018a, 15 May 2020). Contemporary Tarot, The Hanged Man in 4 Minutes Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXCvyKZ_3Po
- Sergel, M. (Producer). (2018b, 15 May 2020). Contemporary Tarot, The World in 5 Minutes. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivCtkHcF4Is>
- Shannahoff-Khalsa, D., Fernandes, R. Y., Pereira, C. A. d. B., March, J. S., Leckman, J. F., Golshan, S., . . . Shavitt, R. G. (2019). Kundalini yoga meditation versus the relaxation response meditation for treating adults with obsessive-compulsive disorder: A randomized clinical trial. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 10, 793.
- Shannahoff-Khalsa, D. S. (2005). Patient perspectives: Kundalini yoga meditation techniques for psycho-oncology and as potential therapies for cancer. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*, 4(1), 87-100. doi: 10.1177/1534735404273841
- Shanti, K. (Producer). (2019, 10 October 2019). How Do I Become Great? - Be Divine and Free - Divine Kundalini Awakening. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bG5EwDsAex8>
- Sheridan, J., & Pineault, A. (1997). Sacred Land-Sacred stories: The territorial dimensions of intuition. *Intuition: The inside story*, 57-80.

- Shumsky, S. G. (2003). *Exploring Chakras: Awaken Your Untapped Energy*: Career Press.
- Shutan, M. (2015). The Three Phases of Kundalini. Retrieved from <http://maryshutan.com/the-three-phases-of-kundalini/>
- Siddha Kundalini Yoga. (n.d). Spiritual Awakening: Undoing The Non-Duality & Kundalini Delusion. Retrieved from <https://siddhakundaliniyoga.com/2020/11/12/spiritual-awakening-undoing-the-non-duality-kundalini-delusion/>
- Sinha, S. (2017). Prajna-Paramita-Hridaya/The Heart Sutra Bhagavati, the Heart of Transcendental Knowledge. *The Heart Sutra Bhagavati, the Heart of Transcendental Knowledge* (October 25, 2017).
- Sivananda, S. S. (2006). *Kundalini yoga*: Editorial Kier.
- Smith, J. A., Jarman, M., & Osborn, M. (1999). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative health psychology: Theories and methods*, 218-240.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2004). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Doing social psychology research*, 229-254.
- Sommer, A. (2019). Edmund Gurney: Psi Encyclopedia. London. Retrieved 31 July, 2019, from https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/edmund-gurney#Psychology_and_Psychical_Research
- South, M. (2000). *The mystic fire of Teresa of Avila : a comparative study of mysticism and the Kundalini phenomenon*.
- St. Romain, P. (2010). *Kundalini Energy and Christian Spirituality*: Lulu. com.
- Statistics NZ. (2019). *Losing our religion*. New Zealand Government Retrieved from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/losing-our-religion>.
- Stross, B. (2007). *The Mesoamerican sacrum bone: Doorway to the otherworld*: University of Texas at Austin.
- Sugar, O. (1987). How the sacrum got its name. *JAMA*, 257(15), 2061-2063.
- Taylor, S. (2015). Energy and awakening: A psycho-sexual interpretation of kundalini awakening. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 47(2).
- Te Ahukaramū, C. R. (2005). First peoples in Māori tradition - Tāne, Hineahuone and Hine' Te Ara - *the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*.
- Thalbourne, M. A., & Fox, B. (1999). Paranormal and mystical experience: The role of panic attacks and Kundalini. . *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 93(1), 99-115.

. Tibetan Art.

Tirtha, S. V. (1962). Devatma shakti. *Rishikesh: Swami Shivom Tirth*.

Tompkins, C. (2008). The Origins of Kuṇḍalinī: A Review of Current Scholarship: PhD Field Statement.

Tompkins, C. (Producer). (2017). 'OM RISING' - Kundalinī defined in Source Texts. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hs6Kb2-PEBk>

Truth Seeker. (2018). 22. Greater Arcana – The World. Retrieved from <https://waitetarot96591540.wordpress.com/2018/12/31/22-greater-arcana-the-world/>

Tzu, G., Bannerman, B., & Griffith, S. (2015). Losing My Self in Non-Dual Awakening: A Transpersonal Phenomenological Investigation. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 13(6), 758-775. doi: 10.1007/s11469-015-9564-z

Valanciute, A., & Thampy, L. A. (2011). Physio kundalini syndrome and mental health. *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, 14(8), 839-842. doi: 10.1080/13674676.2010.530648

Van Manen, M. (1997). Phenomenological pedagogy and the question of meaning. *Phenomenology & education discourse*, 41-68.

Van Meter, K. (1990). Methodological and design issues: techniques for assessing the representatives of snowball samples. *NIDA Research Monograph*, 98(51.40), 31-43.

Wallis, C. (Producer). (2018, 11 November 2020). What is Kundalini? Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zwzt9XtSq5Q>

Wallis, C. (2019). The Three Phases of Awakening. YouTube.

Wallis, C. D. (2013). *Tantra illuminated: The philosophy, history, and practice of a timeless tradition*: Mattamayura Press.

Ward, K. (2005). Religion in a postaquarian age. *Stimulus* 9, 1, 12-21.

White, J. W. (1979). *Kundalini, Evolution, and Enlightenment*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Press.

White, R. (1993). Working classification of EHEs. *Exceptional Human Experience: Background Papers: I*, 11, 149-150.

Wilber, K. (1999). *The marriage of sense and soul: Integrating science and religion*: Harmony.

- Wilbraham, L. (1995). *Thematic content analysis: Panacea for the ills of ‘intentioned opacity’ of discourse analysis*. Paper presented at the First Annual Qualitative Methods Conference. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Unpublished paper retrieved from <http://www.criticalmethods.org/wil.htm>.
- Willig, C. (2007). Reflections on the use of a phenomenological method. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 4(3), 209-225.
- Witt, J. D. (2006). *Celtic Christianity and the Future of Religious Production*. University of Florida.
- Wolff, M., Sundquist, K., Lönn, S. L., & Midlöv, P. (2013). Impact of yoga on blood pressure and quality of life in patients with hypertension—a controlled trial in primary care, matched for systolic blood pressure. *BMC cardiovascular disorders*, 13(1), 1-9.
- Wong, V. (2020). Kundalini Activation Process. Retrieved 20 November, 2020, from <https://www.venantwong.com/>
- Woollacott, M. H., Kason, Y., & Park, R. D. (2020). Investigation of the phenomenology, physiology and impact of spiritually transformative experiences—kundalini awakening. *Explore*.
- Yanchar, S. C., Gantt, E. E., & Clay, S. L. (2005). On the nature of a critical methodology. *Theory & Psychology*, 15(1), 27-50.

APPENDICES

Appendix A | Intuition as a Research Method

Unconscious, symbolic, or imaginal processes are characterized by individuals who have active symbolic lives which are often complemented by archetypal experiences, numinous dreams, and active imaginations (Anderson, 2011). Conceptualizations unconscious, symbolic and imaginal processes Westerners experience tend to be characterised as part of the collective psyche. In contrast indigenous peoples who live close to land experience these intuitions directly in the natural environment, with animals and plants, in essence they live intuitively with their surroundings and intuition is an everyday sense (Anderson, 2011).

Psychic or parapsychological experiences are a common part of the human experience, however within the context of scientific research these types of intuition are unacknowledged or rejected entirely (Anderson, 2011). Psychic and parapsychological types of intuition include clairvoyance, telepathy, and non-local precognitive experiences. White (1997) includes these kinds of intuitions among over 500 types “exceptional human experiences”, (EHEs). These kinds of experiences can often arise when the researcher has a personal connection to the phenomena under investigation, and to the participants she is engaging with (Anderson, 2011).

Sensory modes of intuition include the traditional five senses of smell, taste, touch, hearing, and sight. Additionally, sensory intuition includes proprioception (the sense of orientation in space) kinaesthesia (sense of movement in space), and the visceral senses of body organs and tissues that communicate subliminal kinds of information that are not usually accessible to the rational mind (Anderson, 2011).

Our sensory modes of intuition can convey awe, beauty and danger and provide deep yet subconscious perceptions of how things are (Abram, 1996; Sheridan & Pineault, 1997).

Empathic identification describes the activity of empathic resonance, or compassionate knowing. This is the intuition of being able to walk in someone else’s shoes; or lived

world (Anderson, 2011). We see this in an actor who makes us forget them as they are and for a period of time see them as the character they are portraying (Anderson, 2011). Anderson (2011, p. 25) suggests that empathic identification facilitates an interplay between the researcher and the work they are engaged with “where what is observed yields itself to our knowing”. There is no object, subject or penetration, empathic identification yields the essential qualities of other people’s lived experiences which come to life and merge with the researchers own experience (Anderson, 2011). Empathic identification arouses compassion (Anderson, 2011), or the feeling of having one heart.

Through-our-wounds is an intuitive style that tend to emanate from the wounds or ‘fault lines’ belonging to the researcher (Anderson, 2011). Through our wounds intuition shares commonalities with the wounded healer archetype first described by Henri Nouwen (1990), a catholic priest. Nouwen (1990) saw our human wounds as fault lines of both suffering, and openings to divine experience. As a research technique, Anderson (2011a, p. 26) suggests these wound can open doors to the world by facilitating personal growth and research discoveries which may ultimately “transform these wounds as sources of inspiration for others”. Anderson (2011) writes that, for many of her students, the subjects they choose to research relate to aspects of themselves or society at large in need of healing, or of being brought into the light. The research outcomes produced by wounded healers often shed light on aspects of human struggle many people can identify with. These insights can relate to the researcher personally, or to the topic at hand; but often the researcher and their topic are innately intertwined and wounded intuitive inquiry relates to both (Anderson, 2011).

Romanyshyn and Anderson (2007) in their book *The Wounded Researcher* suggest the wounding that drives some research projects stakes a claim on the researcher. However, over time the researcher must relinquish her claim upon the work so that it may speak for itself (Romanyshyn & Anderson, 2007). Alchemical hermeneutics addresses this experience by encouraging the researcher to engage with her unconscious processes. To illustrate, the wounded observer only includes subjective dimensions she is aware of, the wounded intuitive researcher dives into her unconscious, pulls up the underwater vegetation, and lays it out for conscious awareness to pick up and examine (Romanyshyn & Anderson, 2007). Hence, research that emerges from a wounded intuitive inquiry becomes spiritual work

Appendix B | Imaginal Dialoguing

Anderson (2011, pp. 32-33) provides basic instructions for the two components of experiential engagement which are preparation followed by concentration as follows:

Preparation:

1. Select a time and place that is free from distractions.
2. Record your thoughts in a notebook or journal. Use art supplies to express symbols or images that occur during the experiential exercises.
3. Prepare an orderly space for quiet reflection.
4. Before beginning each experiential exercise, read through the instructions for concentration. You may also like to read the instructions in your own voice, shut your eyes and start each session of the concentration with your eyes closed, listening to the instructions.

Concentration:

1. In a comfortable position with your eyes closed and back straight, close your eyes and allow your body to relax. Become aware of the natural pattern of your breathing, let your muscles relax, and invite your mind to become still.
2. Let go of tensions in the body and mind with each exhalation. With each inhalation, breath in well-being, the ability to accomplish the task at hand, and visualize your desired outcomes.
3. Consider a gentle unforced smile, to remind yourself that the process of quieting the mind and relaxing are about delight as well as accomplishment.
4. When your body has become relaxed, and the mental noise dies down, allow your awareness to expand. Sometimes, this will feel like a vast internal space is opening. Sometimes you may feel alignment with all the elements of space merging with everything on the planet. Sometimes you will just feel quiet and still. Spend some time in this expanded state of awareness.

Appendix C | The Ascent of Kundalini Through the Subtle Body Anatomy

The foundation of "subtle anatomy" is the idea that human anatomy is made up of many levels from the gross or physical to the subtle. Subtle layers of the human anatomy cannot be perceived with the physical senses (De Gracia, 1997). As kundalini ascends the subtle body anatomy of the nadis, chakras, and granthi knots, corresponding changes in mental, physical, and emotional consciousness occur. Below is a brief outline of how tantric and yogic traditions understand kundalini as it ascends up the subtle body anatomy.

The Nadis

The ida nadi begins at the right ovary or testicle and snakes its way through the chakras and up the spine terminating at the right nostril. The pingala nadi starts at the left testicle or ovary twisting through the chakras and ends at the right nostril. The ida and pingala nadis correspond to the brain's left and right hemispheres, respectively (Mumford, 2005; South, 2000). Individually, the cooling effect of the ida nadi and the pingala nadi's warming effect assist in regulating body temperature. Cosmically the ida is associated with feminine, lunar energies and the pingala with masculine solar energies (Brod, 2013).

The Granthi Knots

Three granthis link the gross, subtle, and causal bodies together and are interspersed between the chakras. As with kundalini moving through the chakras, the dissolution of the granthis corresponds with changes in consciousness, a process which Greenwell (2002) likens to Jung's process of individuation. These changes in consciousness manifest as false selves and outdated personas falling away to reveal a more unified personality centred around one's true self (Greenwell, 2002) and a sense of the collective self. This journey of discovery that sees false selves and outdated personas fall away to uncover a more unified personality centred around one's true self and a sense of the collective self (Greenwell, 2002).

Muladhara Chakra (Root Chakra)

The Muladhara chakra is the first chakra and located at the base of the spine in or around the sacrum bone and represents embodied spirituality. It is associated with the colour red, a four petaled lotus and the solid, dense elemental properties of earth

(Saraswati, 1982). The Muladhara chakra interacts with and influences the adrenal glands and the reproductive, sexual, urinary, and excretory organs and is associated with the sacrococcygeal plexus (Brennan, 1988; Judith, 2004; Paulson, 2002; Saraswati, 1982). Psychological correlates of the Muladhara chakra include feelings of security, grounding, and survival. Jung's psychological interpretation of the chakras identifies the muladhara chakra with having an awake ego involved in worldly pursuits while the true self and Shiva-Shakti sleep (Seeman, 2002). Myss (2013) relates the Christian sacrament of baptism (the receiving of grace into one's physical body), Shekinah, and the Goddess Sephirah who represents Gaia and creation with the muladhara chakra. Greenwell (2002) associates kundalini activity related to the muladhara chakra as intense involuntary body movements, shaking, vibrations, jerking, sensations of electricity, tingling, and rushes of energy flooding the body.

Brahma Granthi (Brahma Knot) | I am Not My Body

The Brahma granthi (Brahma knot), located between Muladhara Chakra (root chakra) and swadhisthana chakra (sacral chakra), represents the first level of consciousness that is pierced by ascending kundalini. The Brahma granthi is related to false identification with the body and its physical and emotional sensations. As this knot is pierced false identification with the body/mind drops away. This is often accompanied by chaotic emotional and physical experiences as repressed emotions are purged and is an early sign of kundalini activity (Greenwell, 2002; Saraswati, 1982).

Swadhisthana Chakra (Sacral Chakra)

The Swadhisthana chakra is the second chakra and is located at the base of the reproductive organs (Saraswati, 1982). It is associated with the colour orange, a six petaled lotus and the element water which represents formlessness and fluidity. The Muladhara interacts with and influences the prostate, sacral plexus, and utero-vaginal nerve plexus (Brennan, 1988; Judith, 2004; Paulson, 2002; Saraswati, 1982). Humanity's collective unconscious is stored in this chakra including past lives, mental impressions, archetypal symbols, cyclical birth and death events and instinctual unconscious drives (Saraswati, 1982). Accordingly, Jung related the Swadhisthana chakra to the collective unconscious (Seeman, 2002). Kundalini awakening experiences that relate to death and rebirth, archetypes, have sexual or erotic characteristics, or involve karmic or past lives impressions relate to the Swadhisthana chakra (Saraswati,

1982). Greenwell lists latent illness or pseudo illness, gastro-intestinal disorders, apparent heart problems, eating disorders and pain in the body especially the spine and head which are difficult to diagnose with this chakra (Greenwell, 2002).

Manipura Chakra (Solar Plexus Chakra)

Manipura chakra is the third chakra. It is located in the naval region near the solar plexus, associated with the colour yellow, represented by a 10 petaled lotus and is associated with the radiating and transformational characteristics of fire. It influences the pancreas, adrenals, and spleen (Brennan, 1988; Judith, 2004; Paulson, 2002; Saraswati, 1982). Psychologically, the Manipura chakra represents personal power, strength of will, purpose and self-esteem (Judith, 2004). Jung considered the Manipura chakra represented the centre of our emotions and identification God and worldly passions (Seeman, 2002). When kundalini energy ascends to Manipura chakra, kundalini awakening is confirmed, and the kundalini energy will not revert to its dormant state. Kundalini energy in Manipura chakra is associated with creative and destructive forces, spontaneous healing, knowledge, embodied self-knowledge and ill health, depression, and lethargy (Saraswati, 1982). In the Manipura chakra, kundalini manifests as spontaneous and involuntary yogic postures and hand movements, symbolic images produced by the psyche, chants, words, and vocalisations (Greenwell, 2002).

Vishnu Granthi (Mental Knot) | I am Not My Mind

The second knot to be pierced is the vishnu granthi (the mental knot) which is located between the manipura chakra in the abdomen and the anahata chakra at the heart. The vishnu granthi is associated with the causal body and emotional attachment to things and people. When the vishnu granthi is penetrated by kundalini, the individual releases mental desires and conflicts as identification with the mind drops away (Greenwell, 2002). The vishnu granthi also purges archetypal worlds and psychic and visual materials.

Anahata Chakra (Heart Chakra)

The fourth chakra, Anahata is located in the vertebral column at the back of the heart, associated with the colour green, represented by a 12 petaled lotus and is characterised by the soft and spacious aspects of the element air.

Physiologically anahata is linked to the cardiac plexus, thymus gland, heart, lungs arms and hands (Brennan, 1988; Judith, 2004; Paulson, 2002; Saraswati, 1982). Jung suggests the process of individuation begins at the heart chakra. This process is characterised by the beginnings of self-reflection, early appearances of the true self and the beginnings of less identification with worldly passions (Seeman, 2002). Saraswati (1982) describes kundalini energy manifestations in anahata chakra as feelings of oneness, universal love for all things, compassion, non-attachment to worldly possessions, pain in the chest, insomnia, inspired creativity, genius, and shifts in world view. While Greenwell (2002) associates kundalini activity in anahata chakra with the intensification of unresolved psychological issues, fear of death or insanity, overwhelming waves of positive and negative emotions, and heightened empathic resonance with others.

Vishuddhi Chakra (Throat Chakra)

The Vishuddhi chakra is the fourth chakra and is located in the throat pit of the vertebral column. It is associated with the colour blue, a 16 petaled lotus and the rhythmic, pulsating element of sound. Vishuddhi chakra interacts with and influences the throat, mouth ears, arms, hands, cervical spine, and the pharyngeal plexus (Brennan, 1988; Judith, 2004; Paulson, 2002; Saraswati, 1982). Western psychological correlates of the Vishuddhi chakra include self-compassion and healthy interpersonal relationships, loving and being loved, equanimity, and the understanding that good and bad are simply manifestations of the dualities and polarities of existence (Judith, 2004; Saraswati, 1982). Jung equates the Vishuddhi chakra with abstract thought, and gnostic experiential understandings of the reality of self. (Seeman, 2002).

Kundalini energy in the Vishuddhi chakra is linked to the acquisition of true knowledge, overcoming attachment and fear, frequent experiences of *samadhi* and the void, spontaneous physical rejuvenation, and increased longevity (Saraswati, 1982). Greenwell (2002) links kundalini activity in Vishuddhi chakra with extrasensory experiences such as seeing lights, symbols, images of deities, saints, and other entities, reviewing past lives, hearing music, sounds or voices, and for some, olfactory sensations like smelling perfumes.

Anja Chakra (Third Eye Chakra)

Anja chakra is the fifth chakra and is located between the eyebrows. It is linked to the Cartoid plexus or Cavernous plexus, Pituitary and pineal glands, the eyes, gall bladder, brain ears and nose (Brennan, 1988; Judith, 2004; Paulson, 2002; Saraswati, 1982).

Ajna chakra is represented by the colour blue or indigo, a two petaled lotus and the illuminating quality of the element light (Brennan, 1988; Judith, 2004; Paulson, 2002; Saraswati, 1982). The psychological correlates of ajna chakra are detachment and witness consciousness, self-reflection, heightened intuition, and all sense psychic perception (Judith, 2004; Saraswati, 1982). Jung described the ego as falling asleep at this stage while the psyche takes wing and Shiva-Shakti unite. Although he does note, at this stage, there is still separation between the self and the not-self (Seeman, 2002). When kundalini energy reaches ajna chakra transcendence begins and ego death, or the dark night of the soul begins (Saraswati, 1982). Parapsychological experiences, healing abilities, psychic awareness and unusual synchronicities are the most commonly reported awakened ajna chakra phenomena (Greenwell, 2002).

Rudra Granthi (Knot of Ignorance) | Self-Realization

The final rudra granthi (knot of ignorance) is located in the region of the sahasrara chakra (crown of the head) and ajna chakra (between the eyebrows) and is associated with psychic phenomena and our individual self-concept. When this blockage is dissolved, the true self is revealed which brings about permanent bliss (Greenwell, 2002).

Sahasrara Chakra (Crown Chakra)

The seventh chakra is the sahasrara chakra. It is located at the top of the head (some authors locate sahasrara just above the physical body) symbolised by the colour violet and a thousand petaled lotus which represents vastness and magnitude and infinity. Physiologically, the ajna chakra is related to the pineal and pituitary glands, the brain stem, the cerebral cortex, the central nervous system and nerves of the face (Brennan, 1988; Judith, 2004; Paulson, 2002; Saraswati, 1982). The psychological correlates of ajna chakra are self-knowledge, awareness and spiritual connection (Judith, 2004; Saraswati, 1982). The sahasrara chakra represents the apex of the chakra system, or “beyond the beyond”. When the feminine, dynamic kundalini energy reaches the sahasrara chakra and merges with the static masculine consciousness

Shiva, the ego is completely transcended (Saraswati, 1982). At the sahasrara chakra samadi (self-realization) begins and individual awareness dies. The experiencer merges into the unified whole and individual ego is simply eradicated (Saraswati, 1982). At this stage Jung says, there is only oneness (Seeman, 2002). Samadhi or satori experiences, light, joy, tranquillity and waves of bliss that spontaneously occur characterise kundalini in the sahasrara chakra (Greenwell, 2002). This is the experiences of saints, God intoxicated Sufi masters, gurus, and the enlightened mystics of Judeo-Christian and Islam. These states are also referred to as Christ consciousness or Buddha consciousness.

Bindu Visarga

Less commonly discussed among western authors and in Tantric texts, the Bindu Visarga means “the falling of the drop” (Saraswati, 1984, p. 111). The Bindu Visarga is a minute point at the back of the head and considered the font of creation in humans. The karmas of past lives are stored at this point. Tantric texts believe the ten paired cranial nerves and the auditory, gustatory, olfactory and visual systems originate at this point. In relation to kundalini experiences Bindu Visarga is associated with the apex of the kundalini experience. Kundalini experiences related to Bindu Visarga include the taste of nectar in the back of the throat, the ability to maintain the physical body without food, states of hibernation or suspended animation, and the suspension of breathing for an extended period of time while in a state of undifferentiated and absolute consciousness (Saraswati, 1984).

Appendix D | Information sheet and Consent Form



A Qualitative Study on the Experience of Kundalini Awakening

INFORMATION SHEET



Who is the researcher?

My name is Sachi Willson. I'm a masters student in the School of Health Psychology at Massey University. My academic supervisor is Dr Heather Kempton. She is a senior lecturer at Massey University School of Psychology with research experience in cognitive psychology.



What is the purpose of the study?

You are invited to take part in a study which seeks to understand through semi-structured interviews how individuals in a New Zealand setting experience their kundalini awakenings. The research aims to fill gaps in the literature regarding eastern spiritually transformative experiences that take place in a western context.



What are the benefits of the research?

Psychological research into the journey towards kundalini awakening, the awakening experience, and life after a kundalini awakening is limited. This research seeks a better understanding of kundalini awakenings from a psychological perspective in order to better equip the field of psychology to assist individuals seeking support for transpersonal experiences.



What would I have to do?

You would be asked to take part in an interview which would last around 60 - 90 minutes and be conducted at a suitable location we agree on. The interview would be recorded so that I have an accurate copy of your comments for analysis. You are free to ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time and to decline to talk about any issues. The information you give me will be kept completely confidential, and your name and comments will not be known to anyone else but myself. I may use some quotes from your interview in my master's thesis, but you will only be identified by a pseudonym and no identifying information about you will be disclosed. Findings from the research may also be presented at conferences or written up in journal articles.

A Qualitative Study on the Experience of Kundalini Awakening



What are my rights?

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any time up to two weeks after the interview
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- Provide information on the understanding that your name and answers will be kept confidential
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.



Privacy and confidentiality

Your privacy will be maintained throughout this study. Your answers will be stored in the researcher's password-protected computer only for data recording purposes and you do not need to give your name or contact details. Your involvement in this study is confidential.



Low-Risk notification







This project (4000019213) has been evaluated by peer review and the Massey University Human Ethics Committee and judged to be low risk. The researcher(s) named below are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Prof Craig Johnson, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz

If you have questions or concerns about this study, you can contact either the researcher or their Supervisor

Researcher	Academic supervisor
Sachi Willson	Dr. Heather Kempton
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
Massey University	Massey University
Albany Campus	Albany Campus
Ph: 0224327708	Ph: (09) 414 0800 ext. 43103
Email: slyn011@aucklanduni.ac.nz	Email: H.Buttle@massey.ac.nz

A Qualitative Study on the Experience of Kundalini Awakening

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

-  I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions
-  have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
-  I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any
-  particular question in the study. I agree to provide information to the researcher understanding that it
-  is completely confidential. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the
-  Information Sheet.

Signature: **Date:**.....

Full Name – printed:

Appendix E | Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Kundalini Awakening (K.A) | Semi structured interview schedule. Themes, topics, prompts

Theme	Topics
Grand tour question	1. Could you walk me through a typical day in your life? Establishing rapport 2. Tell me a bit about your current situation (work, family, health and spiritual practices, hobbies)
Life before the kundalini awakening	3. Family background 4. Spiritual and / or religious orientation before the K.A 5. Spiritual / religious and / or yoga / meditation practices? 6. Previous mental health issues or mood disorders? 7. What did you know about K.A before your experience? 8. Previous significant illnesses or life event? 9. Previous mental health issues or mood disorders? 10. Professional background
Defining and contextualizing: Participant perceptions of a K.A	11. What is your definition of kundalini energy? 12. How do you understand the term kundalini awakening? 13. Are you aware of other frameworks that could explain your kundalini awakening experience?
The kundalini awakening: Experiences / phenomena	14. Was the kundalini awakening sudden or gradual? 15. If sudden, what was the catalyst? (near death experience, traumatic injury, spinal injury) 16. If gradual, what was the process and how long did it take? (yoga / meditation / diet / pranayama / prayer) 17. Were there physical symptoms associated with K.A? 18. Were there psychological symptoms associated with the K.A? 19. Were there energetic symptoms associated with the K.A? 20. Were there transpersonal symptoms associated with the K.A? 21. Were there other positive or negative symptoms not already discussed?
Kundalini awakenings: Support	22. Did you seek out spiritual or psychological help for your K.A 23. Were you satisfied with the support you received? 24. Was it easy to find either professional or informal support? 25. Was it easy to find accurate and helpful information about kundalini awakenings?
Implications of a kundalini awakening: How is life different now?	26. Did the K.A change your relationship with friends & family? 27. Did the K.A influence or disrupt your professional sphere 28. Did the K.A change your spiritual beliefs (if any) or practices? 29. Did the K.A change how you see yourself? 30. Were there other changes not already discussed?
Post Kundalini awakening: Advice for others	31. How long has it been since your kundalini awakening? 32. Are there aspects of your K.A you would do differently? 33. Do you have advice for people going through a K.A? 34. Do you have advice for spiritual and health care providers on how to support people experiencing a K.A?

Kundalini Awakening (K.A) | Semi structured interview schedule. Themes, topics, prompts

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Topics</i>
Demographic information:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Age 2. Gender 3. Nationality/ Ethnicity 4. Religious affiliation 5. Highest educational attainment
Possible prompts, probes, and encouragement:	<p>How did you feel?</p> <p>Were there other people involved?</p> <p>Where were you?</p> <p>What happened?</p> <p>Could you elaborate on that point?</p> <p>Could you say more about that?</p> <p>I'm beginning to understand, more examples could help</p> <p>Can you tell me about that in more detail?</p> <p>Can you remember a particular example?</p>

:

Appendix F | Inductive Coding Auditable Decision trail

Table F1. 'Before' Kundalini: Inductive codes master list




<i>Before Kundalini: Inductive codes</i>			
1	Catalyst to spiritual unfolding/kundalini	28	Contact with spirit
2	Current work / career	29	Early interest in spirituality
3	Early life accident	30	Early life
4	Mental health	31	Health care practitioners
5	Exposure to Christian values	32	Hereditary
6	Previous knowledge of kundalini	33	Kundalini yoga
7	Family culture / upbringing	34	Outsider
8	Paradigm shift	35	Spiritually supportive family
9	Typical day	36	Pharmaceutical drugs
10	Curiosity / seeking / questioning	37	Empowered self healing
11	Current status	38	CAM healing modalities
12	Daily practice	39	Being in therapy
13	Synchronicity	40	Creativity
14	Work before KA	41	Dark night of the soul
15	Disillusionment with established traditions	42	Depression
16	Family Trauma	43	Recreational drug use
17	Self concept	44	Spiritual vision colours, auras
18	Early spiritual experiences	45	In nature
19	Heightened sensory perception	46	Consciousness
20	Interpersonal relationships	47	Therapy
21	Knowing	48	Age at awakening
22	Empowered self healing	49	Healing
23	Epiphany	50	Illness
24	Hindsight	51	Music
25	Interaction with biomedical model	52	Pain
26	Personal trauma	53	Yoga
27	Lifelong learner	54	Dance
		55	Netball




Table. F2, to follow, outlines the four steps I followed for inductive coding




1. Step 1: Inductive coding, exemplars and code prevalence
 - Identify and name inductive codes
 - Validate codes with exemplars from the data
 - Record prevalence in the data
2. Steps 2 and 3: Phenomenological meaning units and identifying themes
 - Step 2: Identify whether meaning units are essence, fused or incidental
 - Step 3: Group similar codes into themes
3. Step 4: Verify codes via somatic resonance
 - (essence, fused and incidental codes only)




Table F2. The four steps of inductive coding

Step 1: Inductive coding, exemplars and code prevalence			Steps 2 and 3: Phenomenological meaning units and identifying themes		Step 4: Verification via somatic resonance
Inductive coding	Code validation: exemplars from the data	Prevalence in the data	Step 2 Phenomenological meaning units	Step 3: Grouping codes into themes	Somatic resonance (essence, fused and incidental codes only)
15. Disillusionment with established traditions	<i>I looked at what the church leaders were saying, it didn't line up with what I perceive as connection to God</i>	6	Fused	Being before kundalini	Mudra, deep inhale
17. Self concept	<i>Like I had no emotional literacy</i>	6	Fused	Being before kundalini	Mudra, deep inhale
20. Interpersonal relationships	<i>Abandonment is something that is constantly triggered, rejection [so] ... I constantly want to surround myself with strong, powerful, nurturing women</i>	5	Incidental	Being before kundalini	Mudra, deep inhale
30. Early life	<i>I didn't particularly like myself when I was younger</i>	3	Incidental	Being before kundalini	Head nods in affirmation, mudra
5. Exposure to Christian values	<i>I got bought up Catholic but very...I wouldn't say practicing going to church</i>	9	Fused	Family background	Constricted in breath
7. Family culture / upbringing	<i>Had a pretty standard kind of upbringing</i>	8	Fused	Family background	Mudra, deep inhale
16. Family Trauma	<i>Had a massive crisis in the family, my sister died, my dad became disabled of the back of that</i>	6	Fused	Family background	Constricted breath, involuntary pranayama, some tearing in the eye, distress, choking coughing, fear
32. Hereditary	<i>My mum's very psychic she actually sees a lot of spirit which I do but we see quite different stuff</i>	3	Fused	Family background	Not much of a reaction at all
35. Spiritually supportive family	<i>My mum was really into a lot of that kind of healing work anyway</i>	3	Fused	Family background	Inhale, mudra
10. Curiosity / seeking / questioning	<i>I suppose you could just call me a searcher, but I was a searcher intellectually</i>	7	Essence	Foreshadowing	Mudra, deep inhale, tingling, smile
18. Early spiritual experiences	<i>As a child Mum reckons I had a spirit friend I spoke to a lot</i>	5	Essence	Foreshadowing	Deep inhale, mudra, facial contortions
21. Knowing	<i>I always knew and felt I'd end up living somewhere on the other side of the world</i>	5	Essence	Foreshadowing	Mudra, deep inhale, hand to heart
28. Contact with spirit	<i>When I was 9 am one of my grandfathers passed away and I was in the supermarket and I completely freaked out because I'd wandered off on my own to go and look at the magazine and he was walking towards me down the aisle</i>	3	Fused	Foreshadowing	Expansive body movement

Step 1: Inductive coding, exemplars and code prevalence				Steps 2 and 3: Phenomenological meaning units and identifying themes		Step 4: Verification via somatic resonance
						
Inductive coding	Code validation: exemplars from the data	Prevalence in the data	Step 2 Phenomenological meaning units	Step 3: Grouping codes into themes	Somatic resonance (essence, fused and incidental codes only)	
29. Early interest in spirituality	<i>My room was like Pollyanna I had all the crystals hanging up in front of the windows to make the prisms; that's the kind of kid I was</i>	3	Essence	Foreshadowing	Inhale	
44. Spiritual vision colours Auras	<i>It's always been a constant with me, seeing shapes and colours [inaudible].</i>	2	Essence	Foreshadowing	Inhale, mudra	
4. Mental health	<i>So really high anxiety, just generally overwhelmed with life and ended up going on antidepressants</i>	11	Fused	Mental health and wellbeing	Constricted in breath	
39. Being in therapy	<i>Obviously, I've done quite a lot of therapy, ongoing now</i>	2	Incidental	Mental health and wellbeing	Inhale, mudra	
42. Depression	<i>I was a bit depressed after reading his stuff for a while</i>	2	Incidental	Mental health and wellbeing	Constricted breath, mudra, involuntary pranayama, some tearing in the eye, distress, choking coughing, fear, wanting to avoid this reaction, resistance	
6. Previous knowledge of kundalini	<i>No, I'd never heard of it [laughter]</i>	9	Essence	Previous knowledge of kundalini	Mudra, deep inhale	
36. Pharmaceutical drugs	<i>I quite quickly got into conventional western treatment for post-natal depression because that's ostentatiously what you would call it in a western sense: post-natal depression, anxiety with sertraline, lorazepam...very quickly became dependent on that</i>	4	Fused	Recreational / Pharmaceutical drug use	Constricted breath, body recoils, strong a version	
43. Recreational drug use	<i>I'm no stranger to psychedelic drugs in fact I really like them</i>	2	Fused	Recreational / Pharmaceutical drug use	Mantra, mudra, deep inhale	
3. Early life illness / accident	<i>I broke my pelvis and that was in my late 20s</i>	11	Fused	Significant illness or injuries	Mudra, deep inhale	
26. Personal trauma	<i>I had six years of very violent abuse in this foster home</i>	4	Fused	Significant illness or injuries	Constricted breath, involuntary pranayama, some tearing in the eye, distress, choking coughing, fear	
50. Illness	<i>I got really sick when I was 17</i>	1	Fused	Significant illness or injuries	Involuntary pranayama, facial contortions, resistance	
1. Catalyst to spiritual unfolding/kundalini	<i>Well it was Osho Bhagwan Rajneesh</i>	13	Essence	Triggers or catalysts	Mudra, deep inhale	

Step 1: Inductive coding, exemplars and code prevalence				Steps 2 and 3: Phenomenological meaning units and identifying themes		Step 4: Verification via somatic resonance
						
Inductive coding	Code validation: exemplars from the data	Prevalence in the data	Step 2 Phenomenological meaning units	Step 3: Grouping codes into themes	Somatic resonance (essence, fused and incidental codes only)	
24. Hindsight	<i>It's always in hindsight kundalini that you look back and realise there's something kind of magical going on with life</i>	4	Fused	Triggers or catalysts	Neutral	
33. Kundalini yoga	<i>I thought "Wow what was that?": That was kind of how it all started with the kundalini yoga</i>	3	Essence	Triggers or catalysts	Body expansion	
48. Age at awakening	<i>I must have been 41 or 40</i>	1	Essence	Triggers or catalysts	Neutral	
8. Paradigm shift	<i>I went from being a cold rational scientist to getting into spirituality; so, science kind of led me to spirituality.</i>	8	Essence	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
13. Synchronicity	<i>It's always in hindsight kundalini that you look back and realise there's something kind of magical going on with life where things happen in a set of synchronized ways that push you in a direction</i>	7	Essence	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
19. Heightened sensory perception	<i>One of the main symptoms of PTSD that I have is I'm super sensitive to noises</i>	5	Essence	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
22. Empowered self healing	<i>I've experienced less and less and less depression over time because my ability to tune in and attend to it increased</i>	4	Fused	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
23. Epiphany	<i>Went on a holiday to South Africa, had an epiphany on the beach in the second week and just realised that was exactly where I needed to be in my life</i>	4	Essence	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
25. Interaction with biomedical model	<i>I was told by the doctors there physically I was completely fine and healthy and it was in my head</i>	4	Incidental	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
31. Health care practitioners	<i>The first woman I saw, she was patronizing ... My construct compared to their construct were too different, so I was like no I'll go it alone</i>	3	Incidental	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	

Step 1: Inductive coding, exemplars and code prevalence				Steps 2 and 3: Phenomenological meaning units and identifying themes		Step 4: Verification via somatic resonance
						
Inductive coding	Code validation: exemplars from the data	Prevalence in the data	Step 2 Phenomenological meaning units	Step 3: Grouping codes into themes	Somatic resonance (essence, fused and incidental codes only)	
34. Outsider	<i>I was always very much the black sheep</i>	3	Fused	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
37. Empowered self healing	<i>I've experienced less and less and less and less depression over time because my ability to tune in and attend to it increased</i>	3	Essence	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
38. CAM healing modalities	<i>I started studying and studied kinesiology and life coaching, art, flowers all sorts; whatever I could get my hands on</i>	3	Fused	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
40. Creativity	<i>I love art ... always been into art All through school and everything</i>	2	Essence	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
41. Dark night of the soul	<i>Just being swallowed by this pain syndrome and it just quickly dissolved into what you would call a dark night of the soul I guess</i>	2	Essence	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
51. Music	<i>I kind of feel that my interests were inspiring me to listen to the radio ... the song came on and he lyrics spoke to me</i>	1	Fused	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
52. Pain	<i>No issues until I developed chronic pain in 2011 after a back injury</i>	1	Incidental	Deductive (addressed in the during/after stage of findings)	N/A	
2. Current work / career	<i>I'm a public doctor, public health physician. But I'm working outside the system I guess you could say</i>	11	Fused	Contextual	N/A	
9. Typical day	<i>And I work with clients and then sometimes in the evening I might teach or lead something. No typical day</i>	8	Incidental	Contextual	N/A	
11. Current status	<i>I've got two young daughters 3 and 5, and a partner</i>	7	Incidental	Contextual	N/A	

Step 1: Inductive coding, exemplars and code prevalence			Steps 2 and 3: Phenomenological meaning units and identifying themes		Step 4: Verification via somatic resonance
					
Inductive coding	Code validation: exemplars from the data	Prevalence in the data	Step 2 Phenomenological meaning units	Step 3: Grouping codes into themes	Somatic resonance (essence, fused and incidental codes only)
12. Daily practice	<i>I kneel down, I put both hands over my heart and I listen to very beautiful music ... like; have you heard of Hayley Westernia?</i>	7	Fused	Contextual	N/A
14. Work before KA	<i>Yeah, I was waitressing, in après ski bars and I was a journalist</i>	7	Incidental	Contextual	N/A
27. Lifelong learner	<i>I'm a real learner, podcasts I love it.</i>	4	Incidental	Contextual	N/A
45. In nature	<i>I also love to get out in nature, just walking</i>	2	Incidental	Contextual	N/A
46. Consciousness	<i>Consciousness is the thing that animates</i>	2	Incidental	Contextual	N/A
47. Therapy	<i>I've done quite a lot of therapy, ongoing now</i>	2	Incidental	Contextual	N/A
49. Healing	<i>When I did all that [education] my eczema also cleared up, changed my diet, got healthy</i>	1	Fused	Contextual	N/A
53. Yoga	<i>I do the odd bit of yoga</i>	1	Fused	Contextual	N/A
54. Dance	<i>Ballet was something that I'd always always dreamed of doing</i>	1	Incidental	Contextual	N/A
55. Netball	<i>I love netball, I'm competitive</i>	1	Incidental	Contextual	N/A

Appendix G | Deductive Coding Auditable Decision Trail

Table G1. Phase One (1a/b): Developing the Code Template

Author and Date	Title	Organizing idea / Kundalini phenomenological meaning units (KPMU) extracted from texts	Categories of experience	Exemplar: Kundalini phenomenology meaning unit from each author
Krishna (1970)	Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man	Autobiographical first-person account of the kundalini awakening experience. (KPMU = 184)	Not aligned to any spiritual lineage.	<i>A stream of lustre was still pouring in my head</i>
Mookerjee (1982)	Kundalini: The Arousal of the Inner Energy	Kundalini as a core experience of Tantra rising through the chakras. (KPMU = 66)	Classical and clinical sign of top-down (Shakti) and bottom-up (Shakti) kundalini awakening	<i>Dream-scenes of all kinds may appear, from the heavenly to the demonic</i>
Swami Satyananda Saraswati (1984)	Kundalini Tantra	Kundalini experiences for eight chakras (KPMU = 155)	Mooladhara (root), Swadhisthana (sacral), Manipura (solar plexus), Anahata (heart), Vishuddhi (throat), Bindu Visarga (a point at the crown where finite and infinite meet), Ajna chakra (third eye), Sahasrara (crown)	<i>Vishuddhi: Spontaneous physical rejuvenation begins to take place</i>
Sannella (1987)	The Kundalini Experience	Clinical observations of four physio-kundalini: signs (objective indications) and symptoms (subjective descriptions). (KPMU = 40)	Motor (Bodily symptoms which can be measured and independently observed), interpretive (unusual or extreme emotion, distortions of the thought process, detachment, Dissociation), non-physiological phenomena (OOBE, distortions in space and time, psychic perception), Sensory (Internal experiences, lights and sounds)	<i>Motor: Abnormal breathing patterns</i>
Ring and Rosen (1990)	The Omega Project: An empirical study of the NDE-prone personality	Nine Item Psychophysical Changes Inventory. Two categories of experience (KPMU = 9)	Psychological and physiological signs	<i>Physiological: Body shakes, vibrates, or trembles for no apparent reason, awareness of energy currents flowing in the body</i>
Greyson (1993)	The Physio-Kundalini Syndrome and Mental Disease	19 item physio-kundalini Index. Four categories of experience (KPMU = 19)	Motor, somatosensory, audio-visual, mental	<i>Audio-visual: Inner noises such as hissing, chirping, whistling, roaring, and flute-like music</i>

Author and Date	Title	Organizing idea / Kundalini phenomenological meaning units (KPMU) extracted from texts	Categories of experience	Exemplar: Kundalini phenomenology meaning unit from each author
Bentov (1977)	Stalking the wild pendulum	Neurophysiological (physio-kundalini) model of progressive sensory-motor cortex syndrome. Two categories of experience. (KPMU = 18)	Bodily symptoms, psychological symptoms	<i>Psychological symptoms: Mimic schizophrenia</i>
De Gracia (1997)	Psychedelic Drugs and the Awakening of Kundalini.	Summary of effects of awakened kundalini, three categories of experience. (KPMU = 28)	Physiological (efferent - somatic motor, efferent-autonomic, afferent-sensory), emotional, cognitive/spiritual	<i>Cognitive/spiritual: Enhanced intuition and psychic powers (siddhis)</i>
Greenwell (2002)	Energies of Transformation: A guide to the Kundalini Process	Experiences across the spectrum of kundalini awakening broadly defined over three categories and in relation to the seven chakra model. (KPMU = 103)	Psychological, physiological, yogic phenomena (also present in preceding categories)	<i>Physiological: Latent illness / pseudo illness</i>
Dixon (2008)	Biology of kundalini: Exploring the Fire of Life	Arranges the spontaneous symptoms of kundalini awakening roughly into the four practices of yoga (changes in self-orientation can be included in karma yoga). (KPMU = 59)	Bhakti yoga (spiritual action, devotion, surrender), Jnana yoga (the mind or intellect), Laya yoga (dissolution of self, merging with supreme consciousness), Kriya yoga (action, embodied spiritual development)	<i>Karma yoga: A call to service of compulsion to do meaningful work</i>
Fontein (2019)	Integrating the Process of Kundalini Awakening in Personal Life and Psychotherapeutic Practice	Major symptoms of the kundalini awakening process. For categories of experience. (KPMU = 19)	Body, emotion, cognitive, spiritual	<i>Spiritual: Dissolution of ego mind equanimity, oneness, bliss experiences</i>

Table G2. Phase one (2a): Synthesize categories into codes

Dixon's (2018) four yogas framework	Deductive themes synthesized from 11 authors
Bhakti yoga (Changes in self-orientation substantiation - self realization)	1. Nectar / amrita / bliss / ecstasy
	2. Devotion and faith
	3. Sexual experiences / champagne pelvis
	4. Unconditional love
	5. Desire for solitude / self care
	6. Changes in eating habits
	7. Profound compassion, equanimity empathy and moral intuition
	8. Transcendence of egoic habits, cultural conditioning and reactive patterns
	9. Change in world view
Kriya yoga (Embodied spiritual development)	10. Paralysis / freezing / numbness
	11. (Pain) sensations in the body / paralysis / freezing / numbness
	12. Illness / pseudo illness
	13. Changes in body temperature
	14. Kriyas / asana / mudras / mantra
	15. Fatigue / weakness / lethargy
	16. Body pressure clenching (constriction)
	17. False pregnancy
	18. Prana flow (energetic)
	19. Digestive issues
	20. Healing / health
	21. Changes in breathing
	22. Great thirst
	23. Hyperactivity
	24. Emotional kriyas
	25. Twitches / jerks / pulsations / popping / shaking / trembling / limpness / vibrating / body sensations / perception / tingling / itching / prickling
	26. Heart
	27. Facial contortions including tongue and eyes
	28. Out of body experience / levitation (changes in spatial perception)
	29. Negative emotional kriyas (mimic schizophrenia / psychosis / madness)
Laya yoga (Dissolution of self, merging with supreme consciousness)	30. Non duality, void samadhi
	31. Speaking in tongues
	32. Encounter / visions of entities
	33. Anima / animus experiences
	34. Hearing sounds / voices / singing / noises / instruments
	35. Dreams
	36. Inner lights / visual phenomena
	37. Psychological
	38. Changes In sense of space And time
Jnana yoga (mind / intellect)	39. Changes in mental capacity
	40. Increased creativity, inspired genius, flow, expanded senses and appreciation of beauty
	41. Insight and wisdom knowledge
	42. Inner eye seeing (can see everything)
	43. Observed synchronicity
	44. Revelatory states (revealing something hitherto unknown, automatic writing)
	45. Compelled to write
	46. Past lives
	47. Psychic and paranormal activity
	48. Detachment / non-attachment

Table G3. A snapshot of the two most prevalent KPMU underpinning deductive yogic codes.

Deductive Theme: Kriya yoga (embodied spiritual development)	
Kundalini Phenomenology Meaning Units Underpinning Deductive Codes	Deductive Code: Emotional kriyas
	Kriya yoga Dixon (2008) Yoga of Action, embodied spiritual development Involuntary laughing or crying, deep sighs
	Sannella (1987) Interpretive: become impulsive
	Sannella (1987) Interpretive: feel alienated
	Satyananda (1984) Swadhisthana: angry
	Greyson (1993) Mental: sudden intense fear, anxiety, depression, hatred, confusion for no apparent reason
	Sannella (1987) Interpretive: sudden intense fear, anxiety, depression, hatred, confusion for no apparent reason
	Bentov (1977) Psychological: anxiety
	Dixon (2018) Changes in self-orientation (Dissolution): Unprovoked episodes of rage
	Greenwell (2002) emotional upheavals
	Mookerjee (1982) Body: automatic and involuntary laughing or crying
	Greenwell (2002) Psychological: upheaval waves of anger
	Satyananda (1984) Mooladhara: Irritable, unstable
	Dixon (2008) Changes in self-orientation (Dissolution): Rapid mood swings, Unprovoked episodes of fear and/or grief
	Greenwell (2002) Psychological: upheaval waves of guilt, fear of death, fear of insanity, mood swings
	Krishna (1970) Fear gripping my heart / cloud of fear / gripping fear / terror-stricken stranger in my own flesh / fear of the supernatural / sense of elation and power impossible to describe
	Satyananda (1984) Swadhisthana: afraid
	Satyananda (1984) Mooladhara: intense psychic and emotional upheaval
	Krishna (1970) A mind flooded with emotion, unbearable terror
	Satyananda (1984) Swadhisthana: karma is being thrown out and all the negative samskaras express themselves and are expelled
	Satyananda (1984) Swadhisthana: mental impressions or samskaras are expelled
	Greenwell (2002) Psychological: upheaval intensification of existing psychological issues.
	De Gracia (1997) Physiological / Efferent - Autonomic / Spontaneous laughter, tears of joy, automatic and/or involuntary laughing or crying.
	De Gracia (1997) Emotional: extreme feelings of fear
	Fontein (2019) Emotion: Variety of emotional states: ecstasy, bliss, peace, love, devotion, extreme fear, anxiety, depression, hatred and confusion, cathartic release of repressed feelings
	Kriya yoga Dixon (2008) Yoga of Action, Embodied spiritual development: Involuntary laughing or crying, deep sighs.
	Deductive code: Twitches / Jerks / Pulsations / Popping / Shaking / Trembling / Limpness / Vibrating / Rigidity / Tingling / Itching
	Kriya yoga Dixon (2008) Yoga of Action, embodied spiritual development Muscle twitching, vibrating, shaking, trembling, limpness, rigidity, contraction, itching, prickling
	Greenwell (2002) physiological shaking, vibrations jerking
	Ring and Rosen (1990) Physiological: Body shakes, vibrates, or trembles for no apparent reason.
	Kriya yoga Dixon (2008) Yoga of Action, embodied spiritual development Repetitive popping sensation in the sinus above the palette
	Greenwell (2002) Kriyas Shaking, vibration, jerking

Deductive Theme: Kriya yoga (embodied spiritual development)	
Kundalini Phenomenology Meaning Units Underpinning Deductive Codes	<i>Deductive code: Twitches / Jerks / Pulsations / Popping / Shaking / Trembling / Limpness / Vibrating / Rigidity / Tingling / Itching</i>
	Mookerjee (1982) Body trembling of the body, shake and tremble, slight tremors, Body become limp, Body turn as rigid as stone
	Greyson (1993) Somatosensory Tingling, vibrations, itching or tickling on the skin (ants crawling)
	Dixon (2018) Tingles are felt especially on the left side of the body from the base of the
	Kriya yoga Dixon (2008) Yoga of Action, embodied spiritual development Tingling/throbbing in left foot and leg
	Greyson (1993) Somatosensory Progression of physical sensations starting at the feet, up legs and back and over the head
	Greenwell (2002) Internal physical sensations pain or electrical sensations on the left toe, toenail darkens and falls off.
	Krishna (1970) Rocking sensation
	Ring and Rosen (1990) Physiological I would occasionally experience sensations of tickling, itching, or tingling on or underneath my skin.
	Greenwell (2002) Kriyas: tingling / Internal physical sensations: Feeling energy buzzing in the head, bugs crawling on the scalp, tingling, itching, vibration and energy coming out the ears, blissful sensations
	Sannella (1987) Sensory skin or inside body tickles itches, vibrates, tingles
	Mookerjee (1982) Body tingling sensations all over the body
	Kriya yoga Dixon (2008) Yoga of Action, embodied spiritual development effervescent bubbles of bliss
	Ring & Rosing (1990) Physiological deep ecstatic sensation, something like an orgasm, for no reason.
	Greyson (1993) Soma sensory Ecstatic tickle or orgasmic feeling
	Sannella (1987) Sensory Deep ecstatic tickle, orgasmic sensation
	De Gracia (1997) Physiological / Efferent - Somatic Motor trembling of the body
	De Gracia (1997) Physiological / Afferent (Sensory) Creeping sensations in the spine, tingling sensations through the body, Itching or crawling sensations under the skin
	Fonteijs (2019) Body Sensations of some form of energy circulating along the spine or the arms and hands or, sometimes the genitals
	Fonteijs (2019) Body shaking and vibrating of the body, tingling

Deductive Theme: Jnana yoga (mind / intellect, the refinement of perception)	
Kundalini Phenomenology Meaning Units Underpinning Deductive Codes	Deductive Code: Deductive code: Psychic and paranormal activity
	Sannella (1987) Interpretive Psychic abilities and experiences
	Satyananda (1984) Mooladhara / Anahata: clairaudience
	Satyananda (1984) Mooladhara / Anahata: clairvoyance
	Satyananda (1984) Mooladhara / Anahata: clairvoyance
	Dixon (2018) Increased psychic and subtle abilities
	Greenwell (2002) Psychic and paranormal phenomena
	Dixon (2018) Revelatory states / theta states remote viewing / clairvoyance
	Satyananda (1984) Anahata: psychokinetic ability
	Greenwell (2002) Parapsychological: experiences, psychokinesis
	Satyananda (1984) Vishuddhi: receiving thought vibrations from other people's minds, tuning into the thoughts and feelings of people both close by and far away (Telepathy)
	Dixon (2018) Brainwaves: Theta states telepathy
	Greenwell (2002) Parapsychological experiences: reading the minds of others
	Satyananda (1984) Anahata: the ability to communicate externally as well as internally
	Greenwell (2002) Parapsychological experiences: electrical sensitivity
	Greenwell (2002) Psychokinetic experiences: disturbing electrical appliances
	Greenwell (2002) Parapsychological experiences: precognition
	Satyananda (1984) Vishuddhi: knowledge of the past, present and future
	Satyananda (1984) Manipura: the acquisition of hidden treasures
	De Gracia (1997) Cognitive / Spiritual: enhanced intuition and psychic powers (siddhis)
	Fonteiijn (2019) Spiritual: extra sensory perception
	Deductive code: Detachment / non-attachment
	Krishna (1970) I had no interest in any person or in any subject in the world
	Krishna (1970) Lost all feeling of love for my wife and children
	Satyananda (1984) Anahata / Ajna: develops non-attachment to worldly things
	Sannella (1987) Interpretive: Witness consciousness / states of detachment
	Krishna (1970) Sense of detachment and indifference to my surroundings
	Krishna (1970) Gradually a feeling of detachment from the world began to take hold of me,
	Greenwell (2002) Internal physical sensations feeling detached, slightly out of body
	Satyananda (1984) Anahata pleasures of dualistic life become meaningless
	Dixon (2018) Non-attachment to experience
	Dixon (2008) Distance from symbols, myths, stories and superstitions (detachment)
	Dixon (2008) Lack of desire to "fit in" (detachment)
	De Gracia De Gracia (1997) Cognitive / Spiritual: there is an experience of being a witness in the body
	Fonteiijn (2019) Cognitive: moments of no thoughts at all

Deductive Theme: Deductive Theme: Laya yoga (Dissolution of self, merging with supreme consciousness)	
Kundalini Phenomenology Meaning Units Underpinning Deductive Codes	Deductive Code: Hearing sounds / voices / singing / noises / instruments
	Laya yoga Dixon (2008) Dissolution of self, merging with Supreme Consciousness: buzzing or humming in the ears
	Satyananda (1984) (1984)Anahata: Buzzing or humming sounds
	Laya yoga Dixon (2008) Dissolution of self, merging with Supreme Consciousness: inner sounds, celestial music, bird sounds, animal sounds
	Satyananda (1984) Anahata: the music of a flute may be experienced
	Greyson (1993) Audio-visual: internal noises, such as whistling, hissing, chirping, roaring, or flutelike sounds
	Sannella (1987) Sensory :inner noises whistling, hissing, chirping, flute music, roaring
	Krishna (1970) Unearthly sounds in the ears
	Greenwell (2002) Yogic phenomena / extra sensory phenomen: a yogic tones and sounds, hearing a voice, music
	Krishna (1970) Buzzing in the ears louder than usual
	Dixon (2018) Celestial music playing in my head
	Laya yoga Dixon (2008) Dissolution of self, merging with Supreme Consciousness: inner voices
	Mookerjee (1982) Auditory hallucinations inner sounds are heard resembling a waterfall, the humming of bees, the sound of a bell, a flute, the tinkling of ornaments
	Satyananda (1984) Anahata: voices or sounds coming from other realms may be heard
	Greyson (1993) Audio-visual: internal voices
	Sannella (1987) Sensory: inner voices
	Greenwell (2002) Internal: physical sensations hearing and feeling deep inner sounds
	Mookerjee (1982) Auditory: hallucinations hearing unusual noises
	Mookerjee (1982) the 'unstruck' sound (Anahata)
	Laya yoga Dixon (2008) Dissolution of self, merging with Supreme Consciousness: occasional popping in the joints of the skull bones
	Laya yoga Dixon (2008) Dissolution of self, merging with Supreme Consciousness: rhythmic clicks/pops inside the neck moving up into head
	De Gracia (1997) Physiological / Afferent (Sensory)/ Audio hallucinations: humming, rushing water, tinkling, bell sounds, etc
	Deductive code: Inner lights / visual phenomena
	Greenwell (2002) Samadhi or satori experiences, experiences of light
	Krishna (1970) Stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord / cascading shower of brilliant vital energy into my brain
	Dixon (2008) Dissolution of self, merging with Supreme Consciousness: inner lights, inner visions, inner geometric shapes, visions of deities, or saints, temporary loss of eyesight
	Ring and Rosen (1990) Psychological: becoming aware of internal lights or colors.
	Greyson (1993) Audio-visual: internal lights or colours illuminating parts of the body
	Sannella (1987) Sensory: inner lights and sound
	Greenwell (2002) Yogic phenomena /extra sensory phenomena: Geometrical images
	Mookerjee (1982) Visions, a variety of forms, dots of light, flames, geometrical shapes,
	Krishna (1970) Effulgent light entered my brain / resembled a fireworks display / head was still filled with the glowing radiance
	Greenwell (2002) Extra sensory experiences lights, symbols, entities
	Sannella (1987) Sensory: inner visions
	Bentov (1977) Psychological: hallucinations
	Krishna (1970) I found myself looking with dread at horribly disfigured faces and distorted forms bending and twisting into shapes
	Greenwell (2002) Extra sensory experiences: seeing entities, visions
	Mookerjee (1982) Seeing visions of deities or saints
	Greenwell (2002) Visual problems / acute vision, every thing is clearer
	De Gracia (1997) Physiological / Afferent (Sensory): sensory hallucinations: audio, visual, gustatory and olfactory
	Fonteinj (2019) Inner sounds and lights

Deductive Theme: Laya yoga (Dissolution of self, merging with supreme consciousness)	
Kundalini Phenomenology Meaning Units Underpinning Deductive Codes	Deductive Code: Transcendence of egoic habits, cultural conditioning and reactive patterns
	Bhakti yoga Dixon (2008) The path to self-realization, transcendence of reactive patterns, social conditioning and egoic habits
	Dixon (2018) Changes in sense of self: greater range and depth of emotion and feeling
	Satyananda (1984) Anahata: controlled and ruled by unselfishness
	Satyananda (1984) Ajna chakra / Sahasrara: ego is exploded into a million fragments and the ensuing death experience occurs, death of the mundane awareness or individual awareness, unified whole, single awareness
	Dixon (2008) Changes in self-orientation substantiation: merging of left and right-brain consciousness
	Dixon (2008) Changes in self-orientation Dissolution: loss of egoic self-continuity and focus.
	Dixon (2018) Changes in self-orientation substantiation: loss of cyclic reactive mental patterns
	Satyananda (1984) Vishuddhi: (transmutation) At this state of awareness the poisonous aspects and experiences of life are absorbed and transformed into a state of bliss
	Krishna (1970) As if my own intangible mental stuff had been metamorphosed into a radiant substance and this metamorphosis of the mind substance was responsible for radiancy in the thought images.
	Jnana yoga Dixon (2008) Less ego investment in campaigning and righteous trail blazing as ones true art comes to the fore.
	Krishna (1970) An inexplicable alteration in the very depths of my personality
	Dixon (2008) Sense of self: loss of the sense of sure identity
	Dixon (2008) Sense of self: loss of routine habits
	Dixon (2008) Changes in self-orientation-Dissolution: Sense of fading, of not really being here
	Bhakti yoga Dixon (2008) The path to self-realization Tolerance and patience for "What Is."
	Greenwell (2002) Psychological: upheaval, compelling need to recognise and resolve emotional problems
	Satyananda (1984) Anahata: one obtains complete emotional balance
	Satyananda (1984) Vishuddhi: overcomes all fear
	Dixon (2008) Changes in self-orientation substantiation mind becomes more silent
	Deductive code: Nectar / Amrita / Bliss / Ecstasy
	Bhakti yoga Dixon (2008) The path to self-realization: an aura of nectar
	Satyananda (1984) Vishuddhi: Nectar and poison
	Bhakti yoga Dixon (2008) The path to self-realization: Sensations of blissful honey moving through brain, spine and connecting heart to other parts of the body
	Satyananda (1984) Vishuddhi: Amrit can be felt as a cold fluid flowing into the chakra
	Krishna (1970) Stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord / cascading shower of brilliant vital energy into my brain
	Satyananda (1984) Bindu Visarga: producing nectar
	Krishna (1970) Exquisitely pleasant feeling to pour into the upper region of the brain a rapturous and exhilarating stream of a rare radiating nerve secretion.
	Satyananda (1984) Bindu Visarga: the moon, produces a very intoxicating secretion. Yogis can live on this ambrosial fluid
	Greenwell (2002) Internal: physical sensations a sweet nectar coming down the throat (called amrita by the yogis)
	Bhakti yoga Dixon (2008) The path to self-realization Feeling of radiating ambrosial bliss, ecstasy
	Krishna (1970) Acting like a poison on the brain
	Satyananda (1984) Bindu Visarga: states of hibernation / suspended animation
	Mookerjee (1982) Rising from the dead
	De Gracia (1997) emotional: Extreme feelings of ecstasy and divine bliss
	De Gracia (1997) Cognitive / Spiritual: mystical experience

Appendix H | Final Doubled Lensed Codebook

Table H1. Five double lense themes with 30 deductive codes and 25 inductive codes

Yogic / Te whare tapa whā themes	Codes
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	* Genius, Flow, Beauty, Creativity
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	* Psychic Opening
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	* Synchronicity
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	* Insight, Wisdom
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	* Channelling / Revelatory States
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	* Detachment, Non Attachment
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	* Past Lives
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	*** Deep Questioning
*Jnana Yoga / **Hinengaro	* Inner Eye Seeing
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Twitches, Jerks, Vibrations, Prickling
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	*** Interoceptive Awareness
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Heat And Energy Rising
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Sense And Body Hyperactivity
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Emotional Kriya
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Physical Kriya, Asana, Mudra
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Pain, Paralysis, Numbness, Clenching
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Prana Flow
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Heart Expansion
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Illness, Pseudo Illness
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Sexual Experiences, Champagne Pelvis
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Digestive Issues
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Health, Healing
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	* Fatigue, Weakness, Lethargy
*Laya Yoga / **Wairua	* Encounter And Entity Experiences
*Laya Yoga / **Wairua	* Inner Lights, Visual Phenomena
*Laya Yoga / **Wairua	* Merging, Union, Bliss
*Laya Yoga / **Wairua	*** Changes In Sense Of Space And Time
*Laya Yoga / **Wairua	* Hearing Noises, Voices, Music, Whispers

Yogic / Te whare tapa whā themes	Codes
*Bhakti Yoga / **Whānau	* Transcendence Of Egoic Patterns
*Bhakti Yoga / **Whānau	*** Friends And Family
Bhakti Yoga / **Wairua	*Change In World View
*Bhakti Yoga/**Hauora	*** Authenticity And Connection
*Bhakti Yoga / **Wairua	*** Integration And Surrender
*Bhakti Yoga / **Wairua	* Compassion, Equanimity, Moral Intuition
*Bhakti Yoga / **Whakapapa	*** Connected To All Flora, Fauna, Animals
*Bhakti Yoga/ **Whānau	*** Interpersonal Energetic Experiences
*Bhakti Yoga / **Wairua	* Transcendence Of Egoic Patterns
*Bhakti Yoga / **Wairua	* Unconditional Love
*Bhakti Yoga / **Wairua	*** Dreams, Egoic death
****Karma Yoga / **Whānau	*** Call To Serve
Jnana yoga / Hinengaro	*** Trusting your own wisdom
Jnana yoga / Hinengaro	*** Reframing emotional kriya
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Isolation
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Disruption to professional spheres
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Friends, Family
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Interpersonal Energetic Experiences
Bhakti Yoga / Hauora	*** Authenticity and Connection
Karma Yoga / Whānau	*** Call to service
Support and disclosure	
*Kriya Yoga / **Tinana	*** Stabilizing kundalini
Jnana yoga / Hinengaro	*** Finding information about kundalini awakening.
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Spiritual and psychological support
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Validating kundalini awakening
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Ignorance
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Disclosure
Bhakti Yoga / Whānau	*** Pathologizing kundalini phenomena

Notes

* Deductive codes and themes drawn from kundalini literature

** Second lens: Te whare tapa whā

*** Inductive codes drawn from interview data

**** Inductive theme drawn from interview literature

Appendix I | Co-Researcher Narratives of Fused Themes

Mental Health and Wellbeing

I asked my co-researchers about their mental health prior to their kundalini awakenings. Two co-researchers did not express any struggles with their mental health; Sirona said, "I've never had anxiety or depression or anything like that" and Gaidir replied "None. I can say that quite positively cause I've worked with so many in clinic. I've definitely not experienced any of those things.

The six co-researchers that did disclose mental health struggles attributed them to (1) kundalini awakening and egoic breakdown tipping into psychosis, (2) a brief period of psychosis bought on by teenage recreational drug use, (3) the trauma of a Mother's death, (4) PTSD stemming from childhood abuse, (5) an anxiety disorder stemming from Emetophobia (a fear of vomiting, seeing vomit or feeling nauseous) a subsequent pregnancy and "spiritual stuff" that was occurring at the same time, and (6) lifelong somatized anxiety, panic attacks bought on by extreme pain during pregnancy and post-natal depression that culminated in feeling of existential crisis.

In the context of mental health kundalini awakening was a causative factor for Selene. For Peregrine and Laetitia, yet to be understood kundalini experiences appeared to intermingle with comorbid mental health conditions; however, it would be difficult to know if their mental health struggles opened the door to kundalini, or if, like in Selene's experience, kundalini awakening contributed to some of their experiences. Within the bio-medical framework, Selene, Artemis, Laetitia and Peregrine were prescribed antidepressants and antianxiety medication. Additionally, Laetitia was taught breathwork and Peregrine offered mindfulness therapy. The following descriptive summaries provide a snapshot of my co-researchers' mental health experiences.

Selene: So, in 2004 I had an awakening experience that tipped into psychosis ... There was two, there was one in August, and one in September 4 weeks apart ... the first one was precipitated by a combination of recreational drug use, and emotional stress and lots of yoga and meditation, all of those things ... I ended up spending three days in an acute psych ward and the psychiatrist ... He said I'd opened up doors of perception that I wasn't ready to open up yet. He had some understanding, but he still classified me bipolar, so I was given medication and sent away... and then my fiancé broke up with me four weeks later and that

emotional stress and the patterns of suppression ... and the ego triggered a second episode of psychosis. So, I ended up back in the psych ward and that time I was there for nine days ... I haven't had any psychosis since then, or mania or anything like that. Umm, I have had experiences of depression, I don't see them through the clinical pathology perspective...I've experienced less and less and less and less depression over time because my ability to tune in and attend to it increased.

Apollo: No, nothing out of the ordinary. I was in a bit of a spooky place for a while but then that petered out. I think that was probably a pretty big thing to have to deal with as a 16 year old. I had a really bad trip which lasted a couple of days, it was such a drag and I kind of – I think I was in a bit of psychosis for a year or 2 afterwards.

Artemis: When I was about 17, it was about two years after my mum had passed and all the support had kind of gone, and it was kinda at the point when you should be over it I guess, you know your mum's died, get over it; is when my wheels kind of came off. So really high anxiety, just generally overwhelmed with life and ended up going on antidepressants to try and get my head back in order.

Vitus: I suppose right now although I work ... I'm technically also on WINZ and they classify me as having post-traumatic stress disorder which is because of the abuse in the foster homes ... I told my doctor that I wanted to be on the sickness benefit, because of my abuse and I think I might have PTSD and they just agreed with me. I suppose it would be accurate to say I have PTSD.

Laetitia: Emetophobia, is an intense fear of vomiting, I just kept it completely hidden from everybody. When I got pregnant, it all went completely downhill in that aspect because I was scared of getting morning sickness and things.... And in terms of mental health ... I was fine Apart from that phobia; I've always been a happy cheerful really positive person and it was when I got pregnant that it all went completely downhill in that aspect because I was scared of getting morning sickness... [Later] I developed a very bad anxiety disorder where I'd go to the doctor a couple of times and over the years, I went to the doctor about three times, three separate times to see what was going on. All she did was prescribe

to me antianxiety medication... I had the voices in my head telling me to not take the medication, whatever I do, do not take that medication because it would chemically alter my brain and then that will stop what's meant to happen.

Then we went private with the psychiatrist ... to try and get to the bottom of things. He basically just said that I was the person that had anxiety and I had to just use the breathing techniques and things like that and accept that I'm a person with anxiety and that's my life ... I got really angry and upset about that and felt again that there was no help and no answers to what was going on and had a massive massive break down.....me and my husband, you know it was down to me feeling how I was; and this was causing trouble and arguing ... There was even one night where ... I was going home but when I drove [there] I just went straight past where my house was cause I couldn't face going back there because it was like the place where I lost it with my anxiety and everything. I just keep driving and ended up at the ... south coast and parked up and ... just stayed there ... So, it was pretty dark ... It's from anxiety though, not depression. I started doing a diary because when I started realising that some spiritual stuff was starting to happen at the same time, I was like oh maybe there's something bigger going on here and I started recording it all in a diary.

Peregrine: Obviously, I've done quite a lot of therapy, ongoing now; most probably I had some kind of somatized anxiety my whole life, but I was high functioning ... And then no issues until I developed chronic pain in 2011 after a back injury and then went into two pregnancies where I had pelvic arthropathy during the pregnancy which is you get a really lax pelvis and a lot of pain as well ... By the time I had my second child I had been in extreme levels of pain during the pregnancy ... when that baby was about 7 months old, the pain really escalated to extreme levels and then I just suddenly started getting panic attacks about the pain, that I was being taken over by it ... and I just quickly unravelled ... I was just overcome with terror, just being swallowed by this pain syndrome and it just quickly dissolved into what you would call a dark night of the soul I guess, just losing my mind, I didn't understand what was going on...I was convinced I was dying... I must have been 41 or 40... I quite quickly got into conventional western treatment for post-natal depression because that's ostentatiously what you would call it in a western sense; post-natal depression,

anxiety with sertraline, lorazepam...very quickly became dependent on that. But then I ... was quite a severe end of the spectrum – so I was actually referred to maternal mental health services at ADHB and was under a psychiatrist and a case worker and then I went into respite care twice ... I was sort of up and down, but I ... I knew that I needed something kind of...that I was in existential crisis. I thought I was hearing voices, but I wasn't ... I heard a voice when I was half asleep saying “relax”, but it was a really scary voice. Yeah. And they had started me on mindfulness but not really in a formal way or structured way; you know, here's some meditations – do them.

Significant Illness or Injury

I asked my co-researchers about significant life events or injuries before their kundalini awakening. Among other illness experiences, four out of eight co-researchers had significant injuries to their backs or pelvis.

Selene: A spinal fusion at age 16.

Vitus: At about the age of 24 I got a back injury that was so bad they had to call the ambulance ... It was so painful; I could barely get out of bed to the toilet ... That did happen 6 months to a year before the kundalini

Sirona: I broke my pelvis and that was in my late 20s.

Peregrine: Yeah, I broke my pelvis and that was in my late 20s. I developed chronic pain in 2011 after a back injury.

Artemis: My ears had packed in so I was surfing and diving so much that my ear bones were growing over and so I'd made a hematoma in my ear which is a big mass which basically they had to drill into my skull and take out. So, I ended up being – I'm deaf in one ear:

Gaidir identified illness in her teens as a catalyst for her journey into healing, natural medicine and spirituality. She said:

I got really sick when I was 17 that was actually probably my big wakeup call. Yeah. Yeah - I got - I started with glandular fever and I got a lot of complications including diabetes insipidus and paralysis in my left leg; that's

actually where it started the big journey into natural medicine and healing and going to spiritual healers and tarot cards and all sorts of stuff was when I was 17.

Family Background (Upbringing)

I asked my co-researchers about their family backgrounds and upbringing. The six women I interviewed were raised in New Zealand. The two male co-researchers were born in the United Kingdom. Vitus emigrated with his parents when he was two and a half and Apollo by himself in his late 20s. Selene, Gaidir, Laetitia, Sirona and Peregrine described their childhoods as pretty typical New Zealand upbringings. Gaidir stood out from the other co-researchers as the only co-researcher who was raised in home where spiritual experiences and activities were supported with the caveat from her mum that “this is what we do but we don't talk about it with other people”. Snapshots of the co-researchers’ childhoods are below.

Selene: Typical middle class Pākehā Upbringing, parents divorced at 11 ... so mum was a single parent with 3. I guess typical middle class Pākehā Upbringing. Umm, yeah, you know...the emphasis was on doing well at school, getting into university.

Gaidir: Had a pretty standard kind of upbringing ... my mum was really into a lot of that kind of healing work and she'd taken us to do courses with Doreen [Virtue] when I was 19. So that was a big foundation of my upbringing as well.

Laetitia: Mum and dad still together in the same house. We were all happy with everything and yeah just sort of I guess normal close very close family and we still are which is really awesome.

Sirona: We lived by the beach, so there were lots of good times. I left school early and I got pregnant and I had three children to their dad, and we stayed together for a while.

Peregrine: I grew up in [New Zealand] and my parents are both kiwis, New Zealand European. I guess I probably had what you'd call a middle class upbringing, privileged, white upbringing. I would describe my upbringing as emotionally repressed, but otherwise fine.

In contrast to the childhoods described above, Artemis, Apollo and Vitus experienced family and personal trauma.

Artemis: Adopted into a family with another sister who's adopted from a different family. My mum who raised me, so my adopted mother; she passed away when I was 15. I had an interesting relationship with my family obviously being adopted, being a black sheep and being the only spiritual person in the family.

Apollo: Had a massive crisis in the family, my sister died, my dad became disabled of the back of that. they decided the best thing to do was to send me to boarding school which was probably wise.

Vitus: We came here when I was two and a half [from the United Kingdom]. My parents had difficulty having a baby. I remember my mother had 13 years of failures. My parents split up and my mum essentially abandoned me when I was 5 years old and my dad went to a mental hospital with the electro-shock therapy ... I had six years of very violent abuse in this foster home from the ages of 5 until 11.

Appendix J | Kundalini Circumstantial Triggers

Spiritual emergences can happen anytime in a variety of locations, they can also be categorised into six distinct sets of circumstances (Bragdon, 2006; Grof & Grof, 2017).

Time of Life: This can include “Dark Night” experiences, feeling of deja-vu and other mystical experiences. It typically refers to individuals in mid-life crisis but can include individuals of any age. They have achieved material goals in life yet feel a sense of existential meaninglessness and yearn for something more (Adams, 2001). The ‘Time of Life’ category corresponds to elements within Jung’s individuation process and Erikson’s stages of development model.

Spiritual Practices: A wide range of spiritual and religious practices such as yoga, breathwork, prayer, meditation and rituals intended to purify the body, mind and soul can be catalysts for spiritual growth and expanded consciousness (Adams, 2001).

Physiological Distress: Spontaneous spiritual emergenc(y) can be brought on at times of intense physicality. Examples include childbirth and pregnancy related traumas, intense physical exercise, surgery and near death experiences (Adams, 2001).

Emotional Upheaval: Category four describes emotional upheavals and distress in relation to a vast array of life changes and transitions internally and in the environment.

Intense Sexual Encounters: Powerful sexual encounters are widely reported as catalyst for spiritual experiences. Archetypal divine unions where the male and female energies are united can lead to feelings of expanded consciousness, other spiritual experiences and experiences of non-duality (Adams, 2001)

Drug Use: The final circumstance relating to spiritual emergence is drug use. Spiritual emergences brought on by drug use have the potential to be dangerous and seldom endure (Adams, 2001).

Appendix K | Accounts of Gradual and Sudden Kundalini Awakening Experience

Gaidir, Laetitia, Artemis | ergotropic or gradual experiences.

Gaidir: I've had many different experiences ... I've never really had to seek; everything's kind of just arrived at the right time ... but the first class I did it was just like a level of connection that I hadn't had ever before would be probably the best sort of explanation rather than anything so out of body, it's not one of those sort of experiences ... Some of them are gradual process of energy, you go through layers of going up in a lift. For me it's never been like a big release ... I get really hot when I know the energy is moving [inaudible] experiences of dropping in and then I feel heat rise up from the base of my spine after I'm practicing. Usually get so hot like it's a real uncomfortable heat ... Sometimes I'll get a really heavy forehead where that kind of experience happen ... I had a lot of really magical experiences that particular year because I would just do so much practice that I would go so deep and I was practicing with a really masterful and popular teacher who had a lot of tools and experiences to share ... It's the space where you are merged into your infinite self. And the kundalini awakening can take you to that space ... So I was in a very safe space in a big group you go a lot deep and higher in a large group ... then you go into a space that's very much timeless, you get a sense you're in a place of being, floating, is another kind of experience of what it feels like for me...

Laetitia: I had all these weird physical things going on that made me not feel well" physical things going on that made me not feel well ... Like sometimes my body feeling like it was buzzing. like and sometimes get quivery kind of shakes like I think it's an earthquake but it's not it's me ... With the pregnancy mucking me up it got psychological I think because I was so frustrated and couldn't understand it was that [illness] thing again where I really don't feel well but everyone's telling me physically, you're exactly perfect; healthy ... psychologically it was weird like my head would feel weird and dizzy like I could be completely fine ... [The health care workers said] as soon as the baby comes out it will go away, cause it's just the baby mucking you up. And so, I had him and then it didn't go away like the morning sickness feelings and stuff. It

continued for another eight weeks which I couldn't understand, and the nurses couldn't understand it either ... and this was for all the years after.

[It's been] two years since I think it really started with spiritual things started happening and I started paying attention thinking maybe there's something bigger going on here ... I thought my mind was going crazy and I started hearing things in the end, songs on the radio and stuff by George Harrison would start being really louder than the other songs or they'd start playing if I came into the room ... this is weird. He was my favourite Beatle, but I felt this really strong thing to like really look into him and not just as a Beatle ... and then I started learning all about him and found out that he was really spiritual, really into nature which I am as well. And I was like oh my God this is crazy over time [I] learned that he was guiding and showing me ... Then I would like get vision things [or] feel really emotional, [and not] know why ... It was really hard to tell people because they think you're nuts, and they won't believe you"... And I feel like I have to write down what has happened to me ... and there's such an urgency in what I'm writing down ... It's like my hand can't write fast enough and I get quite you know like rigid and my muscles are all tensed up because I can't do it fast enough ... the other thing that I've had for the whole time over the years and it's still doing it is I will wake up in the morning way more exhausted achy and tired than when I went to bed.

Artemis: I remember going home after the class and literally my organs just like being on fire ... Like going to the bathroom, my digestion was going, everything was...my imagination was awake; it was like a dormant child had been woken up for me ... My sexual energy changed and not with my partner; with myself which was really interesting. It was amazing actually So, I'd gone to interview a kundalini teacher, I was not keen to do kundalini I didn't really know much about it. I just thought "oh this is interesting", you know at the time. This is probably about 5 years ago. My writing had kinda started to – something was happening – starting to brew, I guess. But I was still very much in that in that 'try' state. We sat down for a conversation and it just flowed and it was like talking to an old friend and the more she talked to me about kundalini the more I felt like it was something familiar. We finished the interview and I went straight into a class with her and afterwards sat down and talked to her

about it all again. It was such a – definitely – a profound experience that she talked me through ... People, well they actually just showed up – I didn't have to find them, they just started to show up. Yeah, I think looking back everyone that I needed was there ... I would say definitely over the next year I kind of 'danced' with it because it was something that I was learning and understanding and probably the following year I really started to dial it up. So, I think the first year was a lot of "What the hell?!" and I was probably distracted with still trying to channel it creatively...it definitely ebbs and flows for sure" [Now] when I write I channel and it's a very meditative process for me. So, I write on an empty tummy and I write first thing in the morning and I can normally do it for about six hours. I don't eat or drink anything and at the end I read over everything and it's all news to me. So definitely the psychic channel side of things can hand in hand with the creative kundalini. It was all interweaved for sure, definitely.

Selene, Apollo, Peregrine | ergotropic or gradual experiences.

Selene: I worked out later that the actual kundalini started ... four years prior when I did a healing session with a guy in Hawaii. He was doing a past life regression and he couldn't regress me, he was like oh my God, you're so locked down, you're so shut down. He was working above my belly and all of a sudden – he had his hand on like above my belly, not touching me or anything – and my whole body just started to jerk and go into spasm with all this energy releasing out. I walked out of that session feeling completely heart open, blown wide open, like I'd had the best ecstasy ever. And I'd been taking ecstasy, so I knew what that felt like, I was like "holy shit, I'm completely sober and I feel like I'm on E. after that I started to get sensation in my spine like this energy that would rise up to a certain point, at about L1 maybe, or you know even lower, maybe L5, right down low and it would sort of rise up and then it would like pop and drop back down and then rise up again and pop and drop back down ... I was sort of aware of it, but it wasn't a big deal ... I just kind of took it in stride that this thing was happening in my spine now ... [Later] I took mushrooms and had a real heart opening then and felt all this grief from childhood. So, it's like the structures of the psyche were beginning to soften, and they were beginning to melt a little bit, the defence system ... Then in 2004 I had an awakening

experience that tipped into psychosis. There was two, there was one in August, and one in September 4 weeks ... I was just avoiding the truth of my life. I was stressed to the max” Then 2004 I had an awakening experience that tipped into psychosis. I ended up spending three days in an acute psych ward and the psychiatrist at the time dubbed it spiritual burglary... He said I’d opened up doors of perception that I wasn’t ready to open up yet ...I ended up back in the psych ward and that time initially when it all first started happening, it was like gifts coming on, like claircognizance, just knowing stuff...stuff I didn’t even want to know either and feeling stuff and seeing ... especially the first psychosis, it was as if I rocked out of fear-based living into absolute total bliss, oneness, trust, it was extraordinary. It was just amazing ... “I” disappeared ... It was like this mixed up salad of ... of spontaneous yoga practices, channelling of this ancient Egyptian [language] or something coming through, complete knowingness of all spiritual reality or texts, and you know, it was just all available to me, it was all coming through, and it would just ‘flip’, it was like having a radio and you have 100 channels and the dial’s just going nuts, going from channel to channel to channel, to channel. That’s what it was like. I wasn’t really eating much full stop. I wasn’t eating, I wasn’t sleeping. This in the first – no both of them actually – I wasn’t eating [or] sleeping ... The major thing was just this real sense of alignment, of everything being perfect, everything being exactly as it was meant to be at exactly the right moment. Being able to really trust, and there was a real knowingness about the fact that our needs are always met ... I did later – recently actually – spoke to a woman who’s a medium, who talks to Arch Angel Michael or whatever, and she was like you were channelling through a past life where you were a priestess in Egypt and you had all these different abilities and this is why they broke through. She was very matter of fact, and what she said made sense to me, it mapped with my experience

Apollo’s first kundalini experience occurred after smoking Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) with a friend at home

I’m about 7 years in now, so I’m still very young in it, but out of the nappy phase of it thank god which was frightening. I’m no stranger to psychedelic drugs in fact I really like them, now I actually understand them. I smoked it

[DMT] and my eyes closed, my third eye just opened – bang – the void opened up, I was in another realm, I was elsewhere, I was kind of in this matrix and there was this misty kind of soup at the end of it. Out of this soup came this number towards me which was the number ‘4’ which has significance. As the number 4 came towards me there was this knowing and this feeling that I had entered somewhere sacred but also ancient and also taboo; I shouldn’t have been where I was. It was also like magical but in more like a sorcerers, it was a bit dark as well so I kind of knew I was somewhere very serious. As this number four came towards me it started to unlock and open up. I was getting all these flashes of blood and bone and cartilage and muscle and sinew, like my own body’s. As this number four was coming toward me and moving, my body decided to vibrate and by brain started twisting. I could very tangibly feel that everything was moving in my brain like it was being rewired although I didn’t have the language before that. And then the four came over me. As it came over me and unlocked, a visual of a seed just happened – it was a quick flash – a seed sprouting. As it sprouted - I had never seen this symbol in my life, I didn’t know what it was – a caduceus came rising up; that is kundalini, that is the symbol for kundalini which I didn’t even know. So, the caduceus came rising up out of the four and the seed sprouting – I mean it’s all kind of metaphors isn’t it, and then the blood and the bone, it’s like my body was opening up ... I can now look back and see that I was starting to open up psychically; Synchronicity started coming into my life, but I didn’t even know what synchronicity was, so I didn’t even recognize it - I can remember one night – this is when ... I was looking out at the stars and for the first time in my life I had this very deep questioning of ..., who am I? ... it was a very deep wondering which I’s never done before – and then I was kind of back in a more traditional psychedelic experience with colours and fractals and shapes, but still my brain and body was doing this, and it was really really physical. Then I came down and I was fine, I was like fucking hell, that was mad, didn’t think anything more of it apart from “wow, that was just weird”. that night when I went to bed, just as I was falling asleep, my brain did the rubics cube – gizhummmnn – and I woke up, that happened every night for about a year when I was about 33 or 34 ... even within the realm of psychedelics and I knew at the time something very specific was happening

within the trip although I had no language, no meanings but it was just a 'known'

Apollo's next big kundalini experience occurred during a ten day Vipassanā meditation retreat

My partner at the time ... she'd done a Vipassanā, she'd done a few of them and it got to a point where I wanted to go and do one ... I had all this stuff going on at the same time ... I started getting quite extreme vertigo ... By this point my jaw was locked, I had this pain in my shoulder and neck which I've had for years ...

Went to vipassana, pretty much things started happening almost instantly ... I found I took to it very easily, and very naturally and very quickly ... I can remember it felt like someone had actually driven an axe into my head; it was unreal ... and then had a day of doing meditation. ... that day, I started getting these little flickering colours and images. Day three was when things really changed. The morning of day three I was having a dream ... I woke up choking with a fright, but also, I was really kind of buzzing. So, I got up, walked around ... as I was walking around the penny just dropped ... I'd just killed a part of myself and it was a very visceral understanding; I'd just killed a part of myself ... That day whilst I was meditating, every time I'd meditate, the tension in my head – like my muscles were spasming – my face was clicking and popping... My jaw would kind of move forward and then drop and then it would start doing that all by itself, moving from side to side. So, my body was preparing itself, it was trying to line itself up for what was to come; so that was day three and by this point I was starting to get visions, like flashes of buddhas or just colours and I was starting to feel quite energized”

There's this purple ball going babummn babummn babummb just like that, just this ball of purpleness just kinda emanating in the darkness in front of me and I felt fucking wonderful ... I just allowed it all to happen without really interfering, without judging, without trying to change anything which I think just really helped ... I was skipping all morning, I felt, I'd never felt so happy and so grateful in my whole life. Whilst I was in that deep meditation – but also really present at the same time – I felt this vortex of energy start spinning above

twitching. By the last few days every time I sit down to meditate my body was twisting and contorting; my arms were literally just flailing around.

So luckily, I survived, I can remember old acid experiences coming up like flashbacks, stuff was just basically coming out. I couldn't sleep for those last six days, ... I wasn't tired, but I just couldn't sleep ... there was a current of energy constantly being passed between my head and my body. so, it wasn't like a sleep deprivation in fact I was hyper aware, I kind of started seeing rhythms in life and nature and I could see through my hands at this point. I could see everything in minute detail ... I didn't even know what had happened to me ... I went back to my normal family life a different person ... I was going through other changes in my emotional state ... I was getting so angry about stuff and we were arguing my relationship ended about a year and a half after that ...

Peregrine: Over a period of three months I had a series of quite transcendental experiences, like a spectrum of them; some of them were bliss experiences and others were a lot of movement ... Even though I was totally adverse and closed to this sort of thing, there was some knowing in me or some thought that kept on coming up right from the start of the episode like “you need spiritual healing” and I didn't know where it was coming from or what it meant but it was clearly... you know... my soul sending me a message ... like yelling and yelling at me”

From then on, every time I meditated and even when I wasn't meditating, from then on, I had a very altered perception. I could feel chakras, feel energy moving around and opening, flowing of sorts like I had a hyper awareness of my body, like I could feel ... I could feel, my interception was just absolutely heightened ... It was, it wasn't overwhelming or jarring, it was beautiful. It really was just the closest thing to being on – I can just liken it to being on drugs but without the negative consequences potentially...

It was pretty full on ... I had back pain but then it morphed in about 2013 into burning pains like fire which shifted all over my body coming and going and really intense and the doctors had no idea thought I was loopy. Painful! ... do you know the term Tardive dyskinesia? It's like a side effect you can get from taking -usually – anti psychotics it causes your face to twitch and you get

dystonic type movements in the face. So, I had a lot of it in my face and I started freaking out that I had tardive dyskinesia ... then I had at various stages chakras ripping open, but I didn't know what a chakra was!! I had this thing where something erupted from my chest and my whole body extended and I said to my caseworker "What the hell is this?! I feel like I'm having a heart attack!" and she said "that'll be the kundalini rising"...

But I wasn't working then ... there was one whole day where I felt like [inaudible] the universe and felt huge compassion. I remember this because normally I find parenting really hard [laughter], I felt compassion for my children which is really unusual it was just natural, like a real ease and just love. And I had an episode where I felt like my body had dissolved. And an episode where I could ...everything slowed down so I could at least observe thoughts coming in like ... tree ... thought ... and then ... pause ... and then I could feel the interceptive response in my body ... I did experiments on myself, I'd experiment with different words that I thought might be triggering, like 'pain' ... then I'd feel my whole body contract and that I was very detached, just observing, it would be like 'keep watching', it would crescendo and then it would just fade away... stuff like that, that was quite cool. Something in me at that time didn't want to look it up, I didn't want to give myself preconceived ideas, I just wanted to roll with it... That was when I knew that the mind body connection was real! Thoughts effect your emotions and emotions effect your body.

Appendix L | Ongoing Phenomena, Changes in Self-Orientation, and Interpersonal Implications

Ongoing phenomena

Jnana Yoga / Hinengaro | Genius, Flow, Beauty, Creativity

Artemis: Everything became a lot less complicated.

Sirona: It transformed my life, all this energy flowed.

Gaidir: You understand the real magic behind life and how things flow.

Selene: When I'm anchored in the "I am", that is what observes kundalini, that is what holds the kundalini"

Jnana Yoga / Hinengaro | Psychic Opening

Laetitia: And another thing I could tell you about was last year in November for my birthday, this [non-corporal] person I'm connected with - I didn't know it was the twin flame connection or anything like that I just thought I was connected with ... started talking about they've left my present somewhere for me to find during the day ... I've been buying rose bushes and putting them in, trying to get all different coloured ones. [Later that day] I saw one, it was like almost this neon pink and it had heaps of buds all over it. I thought "Well that's a crazy colour I haven't seen that before". I was going to walk past it but then my eyes saw the big label stapled to the front of it; The name of that particular rose bush was "Happy Birthday". I just wanted to burst into tears but all I could do in front of my family was just pick it up and put it in the trolley.

Kriya Yoga / Tinana | Twitches, Jerks, Vibrations, Prickling

Apollo: [Seven years on] I still get that quite a lot of pops and little movements of the skull and the plates of the skull, that's fairly regular. The kriyas aren't just physical, they're also emotional. You go through emotional outbursts, emotional kriyas... like you start bursting into tears for no reason, stuff like that. like you start bursting into tears for no reason, stuff like that. Something that happens a lot for me still is the mudras, some days my hands are just kind of going nuts and its weird because I'm not doing it ... I can stop them from doing it ... But if I just let them, my hands will do all these really freaky mudras and really kind of

hold them really intently for a while ... Something that was a new development about a year and a half ago was spontaneous dance, kind of like temple dances, here in my lounge; pretty freaky... and I could really feel the energy moving up my spine and all my back muscles spasming from the energy moving down into my limbs and then me actually breaking out into this full on Indian goddess dance.

Laya Yoga / Wairua | Encounter and Entity Experiences

Laetitia: Because of things that have been happening over the last six months I know now I'm actually working with someone and I've connected with my twin soul; there is a bigger thing that I'm supposed to do but I'm not quite sure what it is yet.

Vitus: I got attacked by demons for two years and got abducted by aliens so yeah very much so. I had a huge blood clot come out my nose. I had a huge blood clot come out my nose. No, from being abducted and having an implant shoved up my nose by aliens on a spaceship

Changes in Self-Orientation, Self-Substantiation, and Self-Realization

Bhakti Yoga / Wairua | Change in World View

Vitus: After kundalini you're so totally changed: you change all your belief systems ... I was not religious and had never had any of these ideologies in my brain before. And the funny thing about being an atheist is that I was just an angry and in denial God believer who was just pissed off with God, I wasn't technically an atheist. I was just I was just a spiritual person in denial all my life.

Laetitia: So, I grew up you know like I said Methodist and stuff like everybody just says you know you only have one life make you count blah blah blah all that kind of stuff. But I don't know just recently with just my own research making the jump from that to spiritualism. It just makes complete sense that you have millions of lives. And each time you're learning more and learning more and learning more when you get to the point where you have learned it all if you understand everything.

Sirona: There's a part of me that understands more now that we aren't in control of everything. But doing Kundalini especially the teacher training

definitely had me thinking Wow is this shifting my beliefs in the sense of we're not in control of everything. And alongside that there is a part of me that that knows there is something bigger playing a part in my life.

Apollo: We construct all our meaning; true enlightenment is dropping through all meaning to just the no self. Once you've been there and you come back you realize that nothing matters, there's no meaning; [Before], I was not religious and had never had any of these ideologies in my brain.

Artemis: Every element of my energy I explored [including] my attitudes ... which was interesting.

Selene: [After kundalini] I couldn't resist things I couldn't lie about things; I couldn't avoid stuff.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Transcendence of Egoic Patterns

Selene: For example last year I excavated a really deep unconscious belief, and the belief was "I'm an absolute worthless piece of shit", now that had been running in me since I was about 8 years old and so that belief then "I'm a worthless piece of shit" drove a lot of my actions in the 10 years after the psychosis because unconsciously I was desperately trying to prove that I was not worthless; you have to get down and actually identify, feel, and release unconscious beliefs; it's like uninstalling a programme, going back to the beginning. Then once that's uninstalled, then everything is like oh my God! Such massive relief.

Laetitia: Yeah. I'm not sure - I feel like it has changed me - but at the same time it hasn't but it's sort of like I understand myself better and I'm proud of it. Like it makes sense.

Peregrine: I felt like my ego fell away and I could just see things for how they really were.

Vitus: In my mind I think the light of god that originates in the centre of my soul was responsible for breaking down the brick wall, and the brick wall simply symbolized all of my thought forms that made up my ego that made me quite proud and everything. But my wall of defences, how I view you, and everyone –

Carl Jung would call that you persona - and my brick wall was like “hey you’re talking to me, I’m Vitus!”. But all that was destroyed

Artemis: [Kundalini] helped me make peace with the fear and the doubt and all that stuff that shows up rather than trying to argue with it. I acknowledge it, and it’s OK for it to be there. I don’t really need to eradicate it; I just don’t really need to give it too much of my attention.

Gaidir: I think [kundalini] made me more non-judgmental and letting everyone have their own journey; I’ve learned so much from doing that yet.

Sirona: What I’ve realized is My true me or my authentic me - because I used to always think that the authentic me was the one that was strong and achieves all her goals, like really stood up and shone her light and everything - Now I get my authentic me, She’s the one that is vulnerable at times. And that has been really freeing because whenever I didn’t feel empowered and strong and everything, I thought I wasn’t being me; but it is!

Bhakti Yoga / Wairua | Compassion, Equanimity, Moral Intuition

Selene: It was almost like there was more fascination; who the hell is this person? What are these thoughts? What are these patterns, you know just more curiosity? Probably more analysis, more self-awareness.

Sirona: We can manifest a lot, even just if we feel good, we seem to attract more good, or we see it when we didn’t before.

Bhakti Yoga / Wairua | Integration and Surrender

Peregrine: Yeah words are a bit limiting to describe it. I’m still on that journey, like it’s taken me a long time even to get to this point [inaudible] but I feel like that spiritual side is strengthening as I go on.

Sirona: There’s a part of me that understands more now that we aren’t in control of everything ... And alongside that there is a part of me that that knows there is something bigger playing a part in my life.

Apollo: As I go along and I get more comfortable and I’ve spoken to more people, read more books, more stuff happens in life; more moments of inspiration and insights . And that’s accumulated over time. My understanding

around kundalini - also the nature of myself - my relationship with it, and also when and how it started, has changed. I've since found out that I've had the textbook experience and the very extreme one which. Although I knew, I just couldn't quite grasp it. [Tara Springette, a Buddhist teacher and therapist for kundalini syndrome] put me onto some other guy who's dead now who was a bit of a guru. I went to chat to him, I said "look, this is what's happened, I've read about this stuff, but I don't [inaudible]". He said, "you've had it". I thought "Alright then, ok", still didn't quite believe it. In fact, it was only two years ago that I finally accepted it. That was five years not really being able to really integrate it into my system.

Artemis: Over time I definitely learnt to understand and work with [kundalini]. I think a lot of people that maybe don't keep at it or chose to ignore it maybe don't grow to it to its full potential"

Laetitia: At the start, when it was happening, I didn't understand, and I thought it was me and that "Oh my God I'm not well! something's going on, something's happening!" and I'd be freaking out. But now I have learned that it's not me ... [Now], just in the last few months. I feel like the scales are tipping. I feel like I'm maybe on the way out of that"

Jnana Yoga / Hinengaro | Trusting Your Own Wisdom

Apollo: With all the stuff going on, there's a part of me that's always trusted the process of what I'm going through, "ok this is tough right now but I'm sure it's for some higher good for myself". So, there's been a certain amount of trust I've had to place in myself and my own decisions.

Artemis: Definitely there were tugs of war there for a while. You know my self-doubt, the fears, all the rejection stuff. That is probably rooted to my survival and adoption; it constantly shows up, even now. I've learnt to not let it drive be in the driver's seat; I acknowledge it now and its part of me.

Peregrine: That was when I knew that the mind body connection was real! Thoughts effect your emotions and emotions effect your body.

The Interpersonal Implications of Kundalini Awakening.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Isolation

Vitus: So, one of the biggest one of the biggest downsides of kundalini is it stuffs your life up because you'll always be lonely and never meet anyone who understands you. It's also been very isolating. I've spent most of my life alone.

Selene: I did feel, especially in the early days, quite isolated and alone, and the only one, and no one understands...like I was hiding a good portion of who I was and just...passing, pretending to be normal as such.

Peregrine: Even though I had no full support or full understanding, but it was enough you know... I had a full recovery. Is that in spite of it or because of it? I don't know"

Apollo: It doesn't strengthen relationships, if anything it has you feeling like the odd one out and misunderstood and at times becoming resentful, wanting to isolate yourself ... People just don't get it because, how could they? ... Once you realize that you can't start talking about what's going on for you – because people are either dismissive, or they're quite rude, even your good friends subjecting you to their opinion; "oh no, you're having this" [I think] "fuck off, you have no idea"

Gaidir: When I moved back here so it was quite a lonely transition from being part of a humongous community.

Sirona: It can be isolating but it can also be incredibly liberating.

Laetitia: I've done all this on my own and like I'm not like a person, learning with other people and doing all this hard stuff"

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Disruption to the Professional Sphere

Vitus: I've always been self-employed. You could say in the professional sphere I was working as a secretary in banking and I suppose you can just say that as a result of my kundalini I found banking and secretarial boring and that's when I decided to become self employed as a wood carver back then. You could say the kundalini experience made me less tolerant to the general working area and I couldn't be employed anymore because you can't listen to people tell you what

to do when you don't feel they are qualified to tell you what to do. So, I sought to be more self employed as a result.

Selene: I used to bartend so when I first came back, I got a job as a bartender. It was really challenging, I couldn't be in the same room with a whole bunch of drunk people anymore because then that information I was picking up, I could feel their pain and their suffering, and I wasn't yet clear enough, I wasn't able to hold my own boundaries energetically, so I just got to a point where it's like I can't do this. I wasn't capable of working a job just for money, cause there was just no point, it didn't make any sense

Peregrine: Before I was lost, didn't really know... I was in the rat race and trying to achieve but I didn't know why or what for. I probably couldn't have gone back to working anyway because I was too unwell, and it took me a while to settle down physiologically from all this. nonetheless I kept getting these job offers, like spontaneous ones and I kept saying no; I just could not. It felt like it was going against my soul's wishes. I had this rising feeling that health is wrong; we've got healthcare wrong, western [health care]. I couldn't palate it.

Apollo: [Advertising is a] toxic kind of industry that's just mean, it's just about money, egos, there's so much ego.

Gaidir: Well some people would say disrupt me because I was actually racing as a professional triathlete on the international circuit, I was actually quite good at it. But for me [kundalini yoga] was like a turning point. I just went to one of these classes then I was like "What am I doing?". I don't wanna race anymore and people thought I was ...I had a lot of coaches ring me and question what I was doing; just stopping when I was just getting to the top. So, I think that would probably be the only place that people had resistance to it

Sirona: [A client] told someone about me the other day and she said, 'she a spiritual guide' and I had never looked at it like that. I've always said I'm a life coach although those words don't actually resonate with me a lot. And then I started saying a mentor, but you know I quite like 'spiritual guide' but I just I don't know whether I'm ready to own that!

Selene: With my family, because I was hard out waking up, over time I'd been doing all kinds of psychological stuff like healing the father wound, healing the mother wound, clearing out this, clearing out that. So, my relationship with my family's constantly evolving as I clear out my shit the dynamic shifts. There were times when you know, I was really angry and really this and really that, I had to go through that, but the other person doesn't need to be growing ... My family are [onboard] to a degree now sure. Yeah, I mean with friends, I think that after that I was really only interested in true deep, intimate friendships, like real friendship and I was really good at cultivating that. I've got amazing friendships with a good number of people that are super deep, I really value that kind of intimate connection.

Laetitia: I feel like a lot of people that I was friends with before I don't have much to do with now. Life is just so different, and we aren't on the same page anymore. So, you drift apart. Yeah, it's just; things are different, life is different for me and I can't go back to where everybody else [is]. I can still be friends with people, and I can still interact with people and stuff like that. But in terms of the friendships that I had; they've changed because I've changed. And it scares me because it's sort of like that with my husband as well.

Apollo: There are some people that I've just pushed away now, just cause I've changed, and I see them as so toxic, I just don't want any part of that type of person in my life.

Gaidir: Because I see a lot of energy an area, I don't like to be around is with people who drink alcohol. It makes me feel really scared. And that's got nothing to do with sitting in meditation" because I see energy and spirits, I see a lot of dark energy and spirits, what they are I don't know, it doesn't make me feel very safe.

Artemis: I found a lot of friends falling away – organically ... it definitely changed some of my relationships for the better and gave me avenues to see who was and wasn't serving my greatest good or adding to my life really ... [kundalini' actually gave me more tolerance towards [my family] which was interesting. So, I was more at peace with the people who had raised me, I was

more grateful, I was kind of a bit more mature in accepting the way that they are and the way that they love is who they are. You know, it's not my business to change them.

Gaidir: Probably [kundalini awakening] hasn't had any effect because I've always been into it I guess to me it's never been something; no dramatic change cause it's something that I've always done and been and it's always been part of my life ... [but] I guess I then had resistance to [professional athletes] and didn't want anything to do with anyone to do with the ego and triathlon because I found them quite egotistical; the people.

Laetitia: My husband's never been religious, and he doesn't want to know about any of it, I think it scares him. Our marriage was really suffering ... how I see [my husband] has changed kind of I don't want to break up with him it's just this weird situation. We are struggling with it.

Sirona: Yeah it definitely has. So, I suppose in a way I've drifted away from some of the friends that I had because I don't party anymore, you know so we've drifted apart ... It's definitely changed my relationships. With my family I'm just content with who I am and that could be an age thing as well.

Bhakti Yoga / Whānau | Interpersonal Energetic Experiences

Laetitia: I would be out shopping and then just all of a sudden not know what was wrong with me but had all these weird physical things going on that made me not feel well - I think that there was - somehow I'd been affected or hit by someone else's energy ... because why would I all of a sudden just be like that? And then if I go away and go home it goes away ... I'm still trying to figure that out.

Bhakti Yoga / Wairua | Change in World View

Vitus: After kundalini you're so totally changed: you change all your belief systems ... I was not religious and had never had any of these ideologies in my brain before. And the funny thing about being an atheist is that I was just an angry and in denial God believer who was just pissed off with God, I wasn't technically an atheist. I was just I was just a spiritual person in denial all my life.

Laetitia: It just makes complete sense that you have millions of lives. And each time you're learning more and learning more and learning more when you get to the point where you have learned it all if you understand everything.

Sirona: there's a part of me that understands more now that we aren't in control of everything. But doing Kundalini especially the teacher training definitely had me thinking Wow is this is shifting my beliefs in the sense of we're not in control of everything

Apollo: We construct all our meaning; true enlightenment is dropping through all meaning to just the no self. Once you've been there and you come back you realize that nothing matters, there's no meaning.

Artemis: Every element of my energy I explored [including] my attitudes ... which was interesting.

Sirona: All belief is a construct. So, then it's a case of "what do I know? what do I feel?". There're all of these different constructs; Buddhism, Christianity, Yoga as a construct, a philosophy, magic and all of those constructs, what's the essence of them? If you strip back the words and the rituals and the language, then what's the essence?

Bhakti Yoga / Hauora | Authenticity and Connection

Selene: So, if I evolve and shift and release my anger and come to a place of unconditional love or whatever, then the whole dynamic evolves. It's extraordinary how the relationship then changes, even though the other person has not necessarily done anything. It never really concerned me whether they were on the path or not as such. I mean, I did feel, especially in the early days, quite isolated and alone, and the only one, and no one understands...like I was hiding a good portion of who I was and just...passing, pretending to be normal as such. But that's changed now. Now I feel like I bring all of me most of the time to the table.

Peregrine: Before I was lost, didn't really know... I was in the rat race and trying to achieve but I didn't know why or what for. As I've had more perspective I still don't know. I feel like we're art of this big picture and we're all on earth to discover and align with our soul purpose, it's about that potential;

but I still don't know why. It's a more peaceful way to live, I just feel more at peace with that knowledge ... it's reassuring. [Kundalini] is quite life changing, transformational.

Apollo: I am the same person; but there is stuff that drops away; it's still there, but things like snapping to anger or just being more stressed, stuff like that just drops away. Maybe that's the kundalini, or maybe that's because I've been meditating for years which I think is a big part of any process of change.

Artemis: [Kundalini] kinda gave me permission to be a lot more unapologetic about my spirituality. It definitely was a huge part of me coming out of the spiritual closet.

Laetitia: I just I was doing things, being polite and I was pleasing [my in-laws] to keep them happy. And now the place where I am now; it's just - I can't do it anymore - that's not what I'm supposed to do

Sirona: [Kundalini] has just made me more connected to my true ME not all this stuff that I would tell myself, I feel more – well – connected, and that's allowed me to feel more connected with the people around me and things. I'm just content with who I am and that could be an age thing as well. You know, definitely the kundalini has allowed me to be more grounded and speak my truth I believe. And it's that tall poppy thing, I just I want to be able to be myself and speak my truth and I do come from the heart; and that can be uncomfortable for people.

Karma Yoga / Whānau | Call to Serve

Selene: I got asked to teach yoga in 2006, and since then it's like, I'm learning the yoga, I'm practicing the yoga, I can teach the yoga; so, it all became one and the same. Then as my journey progressed more and more into the psychological realms, the work I was doing with people moved into the psychological realm. Now I'm in, you could call it the magical realms, the scientist might not like that so much, let's call it the quantum realms. If I'm teaching with someone, if I'm working with someone what I am saying is not really so important, it's the energy that I'm transmitting and the energy presence that I'm holding or what I'm being able to channel through with that person.

Peregrine: I had this rising feeling that health is wrong; we've got healthcare wrong, western [health care]. I couldn't palate it; and a rising urge, aspiration to be a change agent, to transform health care.

Apollo: One of the reasons I got into counselling was because I want to help in some small way that I can ... Sometimes spiritual counsellors take on a kind of persona as a wisdom person and the expert on you so that's one of the reasons why I also want to get into counselling because I actually want to be a counsellor for people that are going through transpersonal experiences because I know ... I'd like to do it in a way where I'm actually privileging them and their experience"

Gaidir: [After my awakening, I thought] "you know what, [professional sport] is just not my passion, it's not my drive" my goal was to have a wellness centre and help other people ; and [professional sport] is not helping anyone and it's not doing anything for me. I was like "OK I need to get myself out of these sponsorship deals, I need to stop racing, this is not what I want to do".

Sirona: My bigger vision is we help the planet and when we love and appreciate ourselves, we care; we really care about the families about the communities about a planet and so that's you know that's where my wires are.

Appendix M | Support and Disclosure

Support

Whānau | Spiritual and Psychological Support

Selene: No. Working with other people is definitely – it's one of the fastest routes, like what helped me a lot was I used my relationships as a way to wake up. But if I had been working with a professional who was working under the same context as I was and were working directly with me, I probably could've done it a hell of a lot faster. Yeah, less suffering for sure.

Laetitia: I did get comfort in ...every so often I will go for readings there is a crystal shop that's down the road and there's a lady in there that does a really good reading. every so often I'll go and have a reading with her, but I don't like getting the tarot card readings. I'd just say straight up I want messages from people on the other. go to the spiritual fairs every six months or something and get readings through professional people side. Even going to the church like I do have a good relationship with the minister. He's been really helpful every so often I'll have a little chat with him and he's really helpful and he's actually just lately told me that he knows now what I am.

Gaidir: Well I've always been to a lot of classes and a lot of courses so them.

Sirona: No [additional support] because I didn't really know that it was that, I just feeling better and better as I was going [to kundalini yoga class]. we do lots of grounding exercises to help it happen subtly

Tinana | Stabilizing Kundalini

Gaidir: Like the importance of knowing how to enter back into your body and have that grounding energy. Like when you come to a kundalini class you'll be like "wow we do so much navel work and breathing". And the reason we do that is to be really safe in knowing in knowing how to get back into the lower chakras and back into your body.

Hinegaro | Finding Information about Kundalini Awakening.

Selene: I think I struggled, I found stuff on the internet. I can't remember what I found now but it did put me in the mind of oh, it's a kundalini awakening. It was

the internet that proved to be my saviour. There I found stories about Kundalini Awakening and references to works by men like Krishna Gopi, author of *Living with Kundalini*, and Dr. Lee Sannella, author of *The Kundalini Experience: Psychosis of Transcendence*. I read everything I could get my hands on.

Laetitia: I feel like it's been really difficult for me, even with google or the library and all of that kind of stuff.

Peregrine: I just started doing reading and research on the net. Maybe there was still a part of me that was still guarded about diving in.

Artemis: I read a shit ton of books and I was lucky at the time because my first book was just kind of stating to come out, so it gave me avenues to connect kinda with the ... conscious community globally and in Auckland.

Gaidir: It's always been pretty easy I've never been a big google searcher, but I've probably done more reading and more seeking teachers. I also did have another spiritual teacher who helped me along the journey when I was maybe, must've been about 20. And I just crossed paths with this guy who was kind of like a spirit guide. He taught me a lot about you know seeing energy seeing auras and he taught me a whole lot of stuff that has kind of come into play a lot through my whole life.

Disclosure

Whānau | Validating Kundalini Awakening

Laetitia: It was really nice after we had our chat because I went to him with the problem and he helped me with that and then he said that he was being told about my situation and what is happening with me and stuff and he just kind of shook his head and did a big sigh but it was a nice sigh and he said they're telling me that many are called but few are chosen and you are one of them and it just made me feel so nice and comforted and yeah it was really nice.

Apollo: The only thing that makes sense to me is talking to people that have trodden the path before you. No one can give you any advice or guidance on kundalini if they haven't had the experience themselves; I don't know how they could because they haven't had the experience. They haven't been there so I don't know how they could even comprehend it.

Peregrine: I would say if I hadn't had Catherine who was the case worker, I think I would have been really at sea. I think it was adequate because of her which was just very random, I mean she was acting outside of her capacity as a health care worker, she just happened to have that other hat on.

Whanau | Ignorance

Vitus: It was just kind of like platitudes and it didn't really help me. It was boring and methodical, and they couldn't relate to me

Selene: My sense was always that the medical model – health professionals did not have the scope of understanding ... I did go to yoga teachers trying to find [help] but none of them knew about kundalini

Peregrine: She didn't give me an explanation what it was, and I didn't understand this as being part of the kundalini thing. I thought the kundalini thing was a feeling of energy coming up and the bliss. But it didn't fully explain it for me.

Gaidir: I couldn't work out why I'd never heard of kundalini yoga as well when I did the classes; like "why have I never heard of this before when I've done so many classes?" I've done yoga for so many years and I've never heard anyone talk about it. And realized that there was very little of it; basically, none in New Zealand and that's why I'd never been exposed to it.

Whānau | Disclosure Reluctance

Selene: I knew it would be detrimental to try and – because I can't convince them that how I perceive reality. So, I was like there's just no point for me trying to find someone to work with. frame it that no one was gonna be able to help me, or I frame it that it was too scary for me to do.

Apollo: Once that [invalidation] starts happening, then the problem is that impacts on other things that you'd normally open up and share about, it's like "fuck you, you are not even giving me the benefit of the doubt that my experience is valid, you're invalidating me, so why would I tell you about anything?". So that's kind of where I ended up actually with a few people. Then over time I realized oh well, they're just not going to know so I just won't talk about my experiences with those people, that's a phase that you go through.

Gaidir: I was at a time where I kind of closed myself off a little bit to talking about it cause my mum had taught me that this is what we do but we don't talk about it with other people. obviously now I just talk about it with anyone that wants to know.

Gaidir: They thought I was an absolute fruit loop. It was quite eye opening to just see how New Zealanders reacted

Laetitia: It was a really hard, so I tell people because they think you're nuts, and they won't believe you. it's so hard to not talk about it all the time like I want to, because everybody else they won't understand. They're not there yet.

Appendix N | My kundalini Bottom-Up and Top-Down Awakening

Kundalini Rising

Like my co-researchers, there were early signs of kundalini rising in the two years prior to my 2016 kundalini awakening and spiritual experiences in young adulthood. Like all my co-researchers I did not recognise my explosive kundalini experiences in 2016 as embodied psycho-spiritual transformation; I framed them as the mental breakdown. In the context of 2016, I had returned to university to study psychology. I knew and I had always known that I was spiritually, emotionally, and physiologically filled to the brim with unresolved childhood trauma, the trauma of invasive cervical cancer treatments, and the suppressed grief of adoption and my surgically induced infertility. I knew the anxiety, depression, and dissociative panic attacks that first presented themselves in my late teens were trauma responses to this embodied dross, but I was so egoically identified with and disgusted by my dysfunctional and damaged female body that I had no room in my mental schema to add mental dysfunction to my story of self. Like Selene, my coping mechanism had always been suppression, avoidance, radical self-reliance and achievement.

In 2016, it was a book called *The Body Keeps Score* by Bessel van der Kolk that catalysed my kundalini explosions and subsequent mental decompensation. I began to depersonalise on a daily basis, my panic attacks became more frequent and I was INSANELY fearful and anxious. What I did not realise at the time was the quality of my panic attacks had changed. In the past the feeling was akin to a light switch being turned off and I would (once or twice a year when I could not contain my panic) drop to the floor, slide down walls, or slip off chairs only to quickly come to; suggesting my state was caused by illness, jetlag, food poisoning or some other inane excuse. The new panic attacks felt more like huge energetic surges that started in my pelvis and shot up into my chest and out my head. These attacks were accompanied by hyperventilation and intense feelings of fear and terror; I thought I was going to die. During the same time period, searing pain would spontaneously appear, disappear and reappear in various parts of my body. I began to experience cramps in my left leg, electric shocks in head, and I leaked grief. I had what appeared to be whooping cough for six months in 2017, yet two tests at the doctor came back negative. My skin felt prickly to touch, I was nauseous and for months I vividly dreamt of purging bile.

Although I was frightened by these negative psychological experiences, I knew what terror, depersonalization, disassociation, and pain felt like; I had been living with less intense versions of these experiences for decades - I was not prepared to see auras or hear voices; I thought I was going mad and there was part of me that was relieved because maintaining my 'anti-victim' archetypal façade had been exhausting. Like Selene, Apollo, Sirona and Peregrine, I was almost disassociated from the experiences. It was as if "I" had been removed from the driver's seat of my body/mind and plonked in the passenger seat to observe the ride while I tried to maintain my normal life.

In 2016 my full on kundalini awakening had started. It was violent and painful; and like all my co-researchers; I was completely clueless to it on a conscious level; but also, like Peregrine, Laetitia, Apollo and Selene, I kind of knew something profound was happening. For my entire life I had treated my body as a dumping ground for fear, anger and resentment which I suppressed completely. My kundalini awakening in 2016 gave me no choice but to start clearing out the trash I had accumulated. In 2016 and 2017 there were still some truths I was not ready to face, and I did continue to study and progress into post-graduate health psychology (a programme that is competitive, yet strangely, I was accepted).

Then, in 2017, although I was yet to acknowledge my mental state, I observed myself embarking on a one year integral yoga course for trauma and PTSD. In that course I was able to reframe my embodied depression, anxiety and panic using the chakra system, and importantly as trauma responses, not as innate personal deficiencies. On the back of this newfound knowledge I began therapy with a counsellor who had uncannily experienced an awakening of her own within a Catholic framework, and began my own yoga practice that, sometimes sporadically, continues to date.

Towards the end of 2017, I met my supervisor whose contact details I had curiously looked up in 2016 when I didn't even envisage doing a master's thesis. She casually suggested I write a thesis on kundalini awakening; my body viscerally responded yes, even though I had no idea what it was. Synchronicity was the most dominant theme to emerge from the research and the synchronicities I experienced are not lost on me. To understand my kundalini experience, I was offered the thesis topic of kundalini awakening and to heal I somehow found a spiritually competent therapist with direct experience of awakening. Like Gaidir, I didn't really need to seek, as I let go,

“everything kind of just arrived at the right time and like Artemis “looking back everyone that I needed was there”. Now, like Gaidir “ [I am beginning to] understand the real magic behind life and how things flow”.

I was purging, healing and emptying in 2019 and 2020. These years were excruciating and exhausting; but also, I began to substantiate and strangely made friends with depression. In 2019, within the ACC system I was partially covered for mental injury and (uncannily) armed with my learnings from post-graduate health psychology and the support of my therapist, I wrote my own wellness plan for ACC to consider. In the plan I asked for spiritual healing from a Matakite and provided empirical literature to support this request. Then I approached the Matakite and asked to her apply to be an ACC approved provider. She agreed and after five months I began sessions with her. Somehow, I knew ACC would approve my plan, just as I knew this woman would agree to become a registered ACC provider. My councillor and Matakite were integral in my recovery and I continue to see them.

Later I asked for a review of my partial ACC mental injury cover and, upon review, I was fully covered for PTSD, anxiety, PDD and GAD with panic disorder. It is not easy going up against ACC, but I thought often of Selene who said of her awakening “the reason you’re being asked to move this mountain is so other people know it’s possible”. For my Matakite, I was her first client, since we began working together, other psychologists have sent their clients to her. My councillor was amazed by the complete cover I received upon review from ACC, working within the system she thought partial cover was just how the system worked. Now she knows for other clients this does not have to be the case.

Initially, I was grateful to ACC, but as I stepped into my power, I simply wanted my truth acknowledged. My courage has opened the door for other people to do the same. I am grateful for the cover and support I have received in the New Zealand healthcare system, and this even includes the diagnoses of PTSD, PDD and GAD with panic because they were framed as a normal response to trauma, and not as I had always perceived my dysfunction, as personal failing and weakness.

However, while I have come to accept the limitations I live with, they do not define ‘me’ whatsoever, and as I continue to ‘empty out’, I somewhat expect my trauma responses to lessen.

My journey has been difficult, however Gaidir sums up kundalini awakening thusly; “You’ll only kind of open up to whatever experience you’re ready for if you’re not ready for it, it won’t happen”. It wasn’t until I created the space that returning to university with its flexible schedule, provided, acknowledged my trauma and somewhat let go of my anti-victim archetype that I began to heal.

Still, it was not until the chariot cycle when I really engaged with Peregrine and Laetitia’s stories that so resonated with my own story of illness, anxiety, panic and pain; and a piece of research addressing the role panic attacks in kundalini awakening (Thalbourne & Fox, 1999) in October of 2020 that I finally cognitively grasped what had happened to me in 2016. I wasn’t going crazy; I had a kundalini awakening that forced previously unacknowledged comorbid trauma responses violently into conscious awareness. It looked very much like a woman in her 40s having a nervous breakdown which is how my GP and the psychologist I he referred me to categorised my experience.

Like Peregrine and Selene, now I can reframe my 2016 experiences as a restorative purging of things that were not me and the beginning of my journey toward self. As I’ve healed, I have experienced physiological healing as well. I no longer experience dissociative panic attacks; my severe hay fever has all but disappeared; 40 years of asthma is barely present; two nasal polyps the size of jellybeans came out of my nose (ewww! I know!), and my right estuation tube which was block for years is no longer blocked. I can breathe now.

I still live in a body that is hypervigilant, I still have many somatic presentations of anxiety and I still have ongoing kundalini manifestations. The allostatic load of this state of being and that of my kundalini awakening have taken a toll on me physically. For a period of time as I substantiated and healed, I did fall prey to the idea I would be healed of these afflictions. In late 2020 when I finally surrendered wholly to my experience, I somewhat let go of kundalini awakening as a force for total healing. Apollo had articulated this idea saying, “People always think that if they have a kundalini awakening, they’ll get lovely shiny teeth”. My experience now is closer to

Peregrine's who said "I still have pain, in fact it's worse than ever"; while this is not who we are, there is an acceptance of what is.

Descent of Grace

There is a reason I paraphrased the words of the nameless, European female Jivanmukta in my final hanged man cycle lense and that is my own direct experience of her transmission. In January of 2020 while listening to ... Jivanmukta's (?) ... transmission (?) on YouTube, I experienced what I can only describe as a top down kundalini awakening. As I wrote earlier, I had cultivated a practice which began with yoga and later morphed into meditation and mantra and deep contemplation of everything and anything related to kundalini awakening. In January of 2020, I can only assume that YouTube algorithms thought this obscure Siddha yoga video would be of interest to me. I did not know what Siddha yoga was, I did not know that shaktipat is the central tenant of the path, and I did not (and still struggle to comprehend rationally) believe it could be transmitted over an internet platform. The experience was so profound and terrifying that later that day I wrote about it in my reflective thesis journal. I include this entry below.

10.01.20

I had this experience this morning, it was so intense. Jesus! I wasn't sitting with my back straight, or in meditation. I was kind of lying in the recovery position in a warm but not hot sauna ... just letting my body writhe, breathe and release ... but I was listening to a video on YouTube from the Siddha yoga tradition, is it a form of shaktipat, or energetic transmission?... what the fuck? I don't know. I began spontaneously moving between yoga postures like the sphinx pose, child's pose and cat-cow pose [all heart opening poses] and I was observing myself do these movements. I was getting frightened because my heart wanted to burst apart....and then it did! It feels like you are going to cease to exist. As the energy expanded within me and overcame 'me', 'I' did cease to exist. But then the energy kept expanding and expanding and expanding and expanding. From the cat-cow pose, a surge of nothingness shot into my head and flipped my whole body clockwise. When I banged my head on the door of the sauna and my right hip on the floor; I came to. My mind screamed in terror and scrambled to take back its place as the boss screaming:

“WHERE AM I!”

“WHERE AM I!”

“WHERE AM I”

“WHERE AM I!”

My first rational thought was “I went to deep”. I didn’t transcend. It wasn’t transpersonal. It was intrapersonal.

I pulled myself back into the place where I was, and the body I inhabit. And the funny thing about this experience is ...it’s BIG and profound, it fucking blew my mind, but it’s also little, just a human experience. Time ceased to exist where I was, but I guess this little experience was less than 5 ...10 (?) seconds? I still have a thesis to write, carpet to vacuum and washing to hang out. But today, I noticed pale gold light streaming from my hands and arms and dissipating into the day. Some people rush into their fear and battle with it head on, but I will not do that anymore. I’ve ignored fear my entire life. God was in my body/mind today and she wants me to be as a loving mother towards those parts of me that are afraid.

I had a bruise on my forehead right where the third eye is and a bruise on my right hip after that. I told my husband about it and he suggested I slipped off the sauna bench. I had thought the same thing. For weeks after, like a CSI detective, I would get into the cat-cow, sphinx and child’s pose positions to recreate various ‘slipping’ scenarios. But they didn’t work. If I had slipped from the bench, I would have fallen on my left side and hit the sauna door with the back of my head and my left hip. That didn’t happen; the bruises were on my forehead and right hip. After this experience, my aspirations for a master’s thesis, and much of my identification with my trauma story dissolved and I truly came to all parts of myself. Also, like Apollo, I know and I knew, that this awakening was always going to happen to me despite my rationality and perhaps unrelated to any events I perceive as catalysts.

Appendix O | The Abandoned Scoping Review

Initially, I engaged with the literature via a scoping study because it shared fidelity with the analytic, intuitive, and transformational principals of intuitive inquiry and it resonated with my innate learning styles described as ‘input’ by The Clifton Strengths Finder. Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, and Harter (2007) suggest ‘input’ archetypes often become “subject matter experts” due to their inquisitive and curious natures and enjoyment of collecting, organizing and categorizing information. Scoping reviews are used for a number of purposes. However, the goal of my kundalini awakening scoping review was to explore the breadth or extent of the kundalini literature, map and summarize the evidence, and to identify gaps in the literature (Tricco et al., 2018).

Kundalini Awakenings | Scoping Goals and Methods

I followed the five step scoping review framework to investigate the kundalini awakenings literature and inform my primary interpretative lenses as below (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

1. Identify and document the emergence of the research question
2. Identify relevant studies while balancing feasibility with breadth
3. Use an iterative approach for selecting, recording and extracting data
4. Chart the data using both quantitative and qualitative thematic analysis
5. Collate, summarize, and report the results

Identifying and Documenting the Emergence of the Research Question

First, I developed a research question, what is known about kundalini awakenings? to frame the scoping review. Using this question, I developed a conceptual framework that articulated my preunderstandings about kundalini awakening as per Figure. O1 below.



Figure O1. What is known about kundalini awakenings?

Identifying Relevant Studies

Then using key terms from my initial search query (“kundalini awake*”) I used the key words, synonyms, subject fields and publishing locations to create a piece of art which gaveme a broad visual overview of the subject and laid the framework for my database search strategy (see figure. O2 on the following page).

Based on my artistic interpretation of the initial search query, I broadly understood kundalini awakenings to be: (a) a global phenomenon known by many different names that overlaps with spiritual, religious, mystical and yogic concepts, (b) an embodied psycho-spiritual transformative experience with positive and negative characteristics, and (c) a phenomena investigated from a variety of academic, yogic and mystical perspectives.

Database Search Strategies

I used three search strategies over twelve academic databased and identified 426 citations ranging from 1928 to 2020. Table. O1 on the following page summarizes the three search strategies I employed to answer the question what is known about kundalini awakenings?

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

My literature selection at each stage of the scoping review was an iterative process and included post hoc inclusion and exclusion criteria some as shown in Table. O2 on page 230.

Record Screening Process

After duplicates were removed, I screened 336 records. I excluded 258 records based on irrelevant titles, abstracts and unavailability of full text records. This left 78 full text records to screen. I excluded 36 records including (a) articles where kundalini was not the main focus, (b) newspaper articles, (c) reviews, and (d) previously overlooked duplicates. This left 42 records for inclusion. I added a further 12 secondary references (grey literature) which I manually searched for in the included records. The final scoping review included 54 records. Figure. O3 on page 230 presents a PRISMA flow diagram of the record screening process.

Table O1: Database search strategies

Search #	Database	Dates	Search query	Hits
#1	Discover	1974-2020	(("kundalini+awakening" OR "kundalini+shakti" OR "awakening+shakti") OR "spiritual+emergency" OR "kundalini+syndrome" OR "kundalini+activation" OR ("rising+of+kundalini" OR "kundalini+rising") OR ("spiritual+cris*" OR "spiritual+problems") OR "psycho+spiritual+transformation" OR ("sacred+illness" OR "physio+kundalini+syndrome") AND (psychology OR psychological OR mental+health OR psychosis OR dsm) AND RV Y	103
#1	PsychInfo	1985-2020	(("kundalini awakening" OR "kundalini shakti" OR "spiritual emergency" OR "kundalini syndrome" OR "kundalini activation" OR "kundalini rising" OR "spiritual cris*") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("spiritual problems" OR "psycho+spiritual transformation" OR "sacred illness" OR "physio kundalini syndrome")) AND ((yoga OR philosophy OR health OR psycholog* OR medic* OR psychiat* OR mythology OR religion))	91
#1	Philosopher's Index	1968-2019	("kundalini awakening" OR "kundalini shakti" OR "spiritual emergency" OR "kundalini syndrome" OR "kundalini activation" OR "kundalini rising" OR "spiritual cris*") OR ("spiritual problems" OR "psycho+spiritual transformation" OR "sacred illness" OR "physio kundalini syndrome") AND (yoga OR philosophy OR health OR psycholog* OR medic* OR psychiat* OR mythology OR religion)	31
#2	Scopus	2011-2019	("kundalini awakening" OR "kundalini shakti" OR "spiritual emergency" OR "kundalini syndrome" OR "kundalini activation" OR "kundalini rising" OR "spiritual cris*") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("spiritual problems" OR "psycho+spiritual transformation" OR "sacred illness" OR "physio kundalini syndrome") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ((yoga OR philosophy OR health OR psycholog* OR medic* OR psychiat* OR mythology OR religion))) AND (kundalini)	15
#2	Web of Science	1978-2020	Search#5 (search kundalini within results)	69
#2	CINAHL	1995-2020	Search #1 produced 984,912 results - narrowed search to : "kundalini OR "kundalini awakening" OR "physio kundalini" OR "kundalini shakti" OR "kundalini rising"	58
#3	JSTOR	1974-2014	Character limit 200: searched "kundalini awakening"	17
#3	PUBMED	1993-2020	Search #1 produced 650 results, search #2 produced no results. New search #3 "kundalini awakening"	3
#3	ScienceDirect	1959-2020	Character limit: searched "kundalini awakening"	13
#3	Newztext	2015	"kundalini awakening"	2
#3	Index New Zealand	N/A	"kundalini awakening" (1 article excluded on sight - irrelevant)	0
#3	Phil papers	1928-2015	Character limit: searched "kundalini awakening", no results, used "kundalini"	24

Charting the Data

I extracted the data from each record included in the scoping review and then categorised it in excel as follows: (a) Reference type, (b) author and year, (c) location, (d) journal, (e) discipline, (f) title (g) key words (h) sample size, population and setting; (i) theoretical paradigm/organizing principal; (j) definition of kundalini awakening, (k) aims focus/purpose/hypothesis/research question (l) study design, (m) methods, (n) outcome measures if applicable, (o) findings, (p) identified gaps in the research, (q) recommended topics or questions for future research, and (r) reported challenges and limitations.

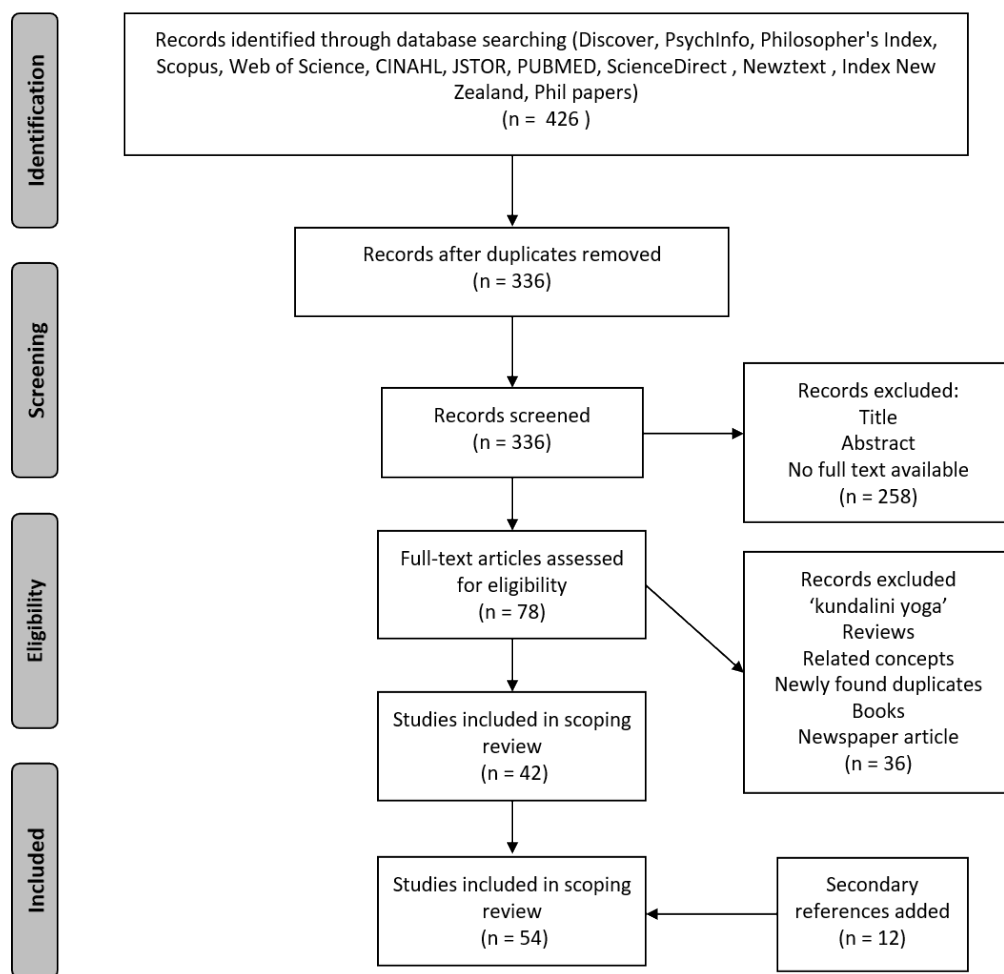


Figure O3. PRISMA. Adapted from Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009).

Table O2: Scoping review inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Included	Excluded
Language	English	Non-English
Concept	Kundalini awakenings and synonyms	Concepts related to kundalini awakenings such as NDE, STE, EHE, mystical, religious and spiritual experiences where kundalini and kundalini synonyms are not explicitly mentioned in full text
Context	All contexts, all disciplines, personal relevance to researcher	
Types of evidence/sources	Academic literature and grey literature cited in academic databases	No exclusions
Types of participants	Human	

Summary of the Findings

Collating, summarising, and reporting on the findings of included studies is the fifth and final stage in a scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). However, by this point in the scoping review, I had begun to engage with scholar-practitioners with lived experience of kundalini awakening. While the scoping review provided a comprehensive overview of the literature, it did not reflect the lived experience of kundalini awakening. However, scoping the literature not a fruitless exercise; in fact, it was supremely helpful because it informed my preliminary interpretative lenses and provided an overview of how kundalini researchers frame and research kundalini awakening.

Quick Stats from the Scoped Literature

How long have we been researching kundalini awakenings?

The earliest included record (Coward, 1985) was from the analytical psychology perspective and reviewed Jung's (1932) lectures on kundalini yoga. The most recent research came from Woollacott, Kason, and Park (2020), American researchers with backgrounds in neuroscience, psychology, and psychotherapy. Kundalini awakening research peaked in 2015 and has fallen since with only one research article published in 2020.

Which countries produce kundalini research?

The majority of the kundalini research comes from North America. Table. O3 below summarises the geographical spread of research into kundalini awakenings.

Table O3: Breakdown of countries publishing kundalini research

<i>Countries publishing kundalini research</i>	<i>Records (n=42*)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
United States	20	48%
United Kingdom	7	17%
Australia	5	12%
India	4	10%
Canada	3	7%
Japan	1	2%
Bhutan	1	2%
The Netherlands	1	2%

Notes: * Country of origin for two records was unclear

Which academic journals publish kundalini research?

The scoping review included different 38 journals. Psychology journals represented the bulk of the publishers (32%), and within psychology, 67% of the kundalini research was published in transpersonal psychology journals. Table. O4 on the following page presents an overview of the academic journals publishing kundalini awakening research.

Which disciplines are kundalini researchers situated within?

Based on the authors' (a) research profiles, (b) specified areas of expertise and/or (c) specified professional titles, I categorized the authors by discipline. The kundalini researchers in the scoped literature came from the following disciplinary lenses:

Psychology (49%),

Medical/health/wellbeing (18%),

Theology/religion/consciousness/spirituality/evolution (13%)

Psychiatry (10%),

Yoga philosophy (8%)

Psychotherapy/counselling (2%)

Table O4: Overview of journals publishing kundalini research

<i>Disciplinary focus</i>	<i>Journal Titles (n=38)</i>	<i>%</i>
Psychology:	Journal of Transpersonal Psychology (n=8) Journal of Analytical Psychology (n=1) Journal of Humanistic Psychology (n=1) Psychology of Religion and Spirituality (n=1) Transpersonal Psychology Review (n=1)	32%
Religion:	Mental Health, Religion and Culture (n=2) Journal of Religion & Psychical Research (n=1) Japanese Journal of Religious Studies (n=1) Journal for the study of religious experience (n=1) Religions (n=1) Journal of Religion and Health (n=1)	18%
Near-Death Studies:	Journal of Near-Death Studies (n=4)	11%
Mental Health/Addiction/Culture:	International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction (n=1) Journal of ethnicity in substance abuse (n=1) International Journal of Culture & Mental Health (n=1)	8%
Psychiatry:	International Journal of Psychiatry Research (n=1) Transcultural Psychiatry (n=1)	5%
Psychical Research:	Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research (n=1)	3%
Science & Healing:	EXPLORE: The Journal of Science & Healing (n=1)	3%
Spirituality and Consciousness:	The Journal for Spiritual and Consciousness Studies (n=1)	3%
Spirituality in Clinical Practice:	Spirituality in Clinical Practice (n=1)	3%
Transpersonal Studies:	International Journal of Transpersonal Studies (n=1)	3%
Yoga:	Journal of Yoga & Physical Therapy (n=1)	3%
Counselling & Psychotherapy:	Counselling & Psychotherapy Research (n=1)	3%
Energy Medicine:	Subtle Energies & Energy Medicine Journal (n=1)	3%
India International:	India International Centre Quarterly (n=1)	3%
Indian Philosophy:	Journal of Indian Philosophy (n=1)	3%

How did the scoped literature frame kundalini?

Table. O5 below summarizes how the scoped literature theorized kundalini awakenings.

Table O5: Framing kundalini in the scoped literature (n=42)

<i>Theoretical paradigm / Organizing principal</i>	<i>Authors</i>
Kundalini as a type of spiritual emergency: emphasis on psychosis, physiological and psychological upheaval mental health issues and clinical ignorance of kundalini phenomena (n=11)	Ankrah (2002); Bronn & McIlwain (2015); Cooper, Rock, et al. (2015); EL-Gamel (2015); Goretzki, Thalbourne, & Storm (2013); Grof & Grof (2017); Harris, Rock, & Clark (2015); Kaselionyte & Gumley (2019); Ossoff (1993); Susumu (1995); Thalbourne & Fox, (1999)
Physio-kundalini syndrome: Biomedical perspectives which the kundalini experience into series of neurobehavioral, neurophysiological and neurocognitive symptoms (n=6)	Benning, Harris, & Rominger (2018); Greyson (1993a;1993b; 2000); Paradkar (2010); Valanciute & Thampy (2011)
An somatic experience conceptualized as coherent vibration, sacred illness, post genital puberty and as a force for healing (n=6)	Harris (1994); Kumar (2002); Lim (2013); Linders & Lancaster (2013); Parker (2018); Sovatsky (2009).
A Non-dual psycho-spiritual transformation: Conceptualized in terms of tantric, and yogic philosophy, subtle body anatomy, Shaivic theology, and non-dual being (n=5)	Khalsa, Khalsa, Khalsa, & Khalsa (2008); Khanna (2003); Maderey (2017); Tzu, Bannerman, & Griffith (2015); Wallis (2008)
Associated with NDE: Theories suggest NDE is underpinned by kundalini, or kundalini spontaneously arises as a result of NDE (n=4)	Ring and Rosing (1990); Kason (1994); Greyson (1993); Prosnick and Evans (2003)
Kundalini as a subset of religious or mystical experience: associated with contemplative practices and spontaneous, enlightening shifts in consciousness (n=3)	De Castro (2015); Lockley (2013); Regner (1999)
Kundalini as a category of spiritually transformative experience (n=2)	Brook (2019); Woollacott et al. (2020).
Kundalini operationalized to create psychometric instruments for diagnosing kundalini activity (n=2)	Prosnick & Evans (2003); Sanches & Daniels (2008)
Kundalini credited with providing insights for Jung's psychological theory of individuation and synchronicity (n=1)	Coward (1985)
Similarity between kundalini and psychedelic drug phenomenology (n=1)	De Gracia (1997)
The clinical applications of kundalini (n=1)	Fonteinj (2019).

Summary of the Scoped Literature

35 years of investigations into kundalini awakenings has produced very little research. The scoped research dominantly views kundalini awakenings from within the bounds of science. Dominantly the kundalini research comes from North America. The bulk of research into kundalini awakenings is undertaken by psychology, and within that field, transpersonal psychology. Researchers used a variety of theoretical paradigms to frame kundalini awakenings. However, in the scoped literature kundalini awakenings were categorized as (a) a spiritual emergency that was associated with physiological and psychological upheaval, or (b) in terms of the physio-kundalini-model which focused on neurobehavioral, neurophysiological and neurocognitive aspects of kundalini.