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Hamlet’s Transformation

An Application of Stanislav Grof’s Holotropic Theory to Adolescents Who Are Experiencing Grief and Loss

Peter Bray

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at the University of Auckland, 2005
ABSTRACT

This thesis extends Stanislav Grof’s work on psycho-spiritual transformation by considering whether adolescents can experience what he and Christina Grof (1989, 1990) have called ‘spiritual emergency’ (SE). Grof contends that the human psyche, when stimulated by new material originating from loss experiences, may spontaneously reorganise itself. This process either unfolds gently as spiritual emergence or overwhelms the individual as SE. This thesis examines Grof’s holotropic theory, using Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as an illustration, to establish theoretically how SE might be experienced and observed in an adolescent. Hamlet’s powerful responses to the death of his father, the loss of his inheritance and the remarriage of his mother are explored via Grof’s extended cartography of the human psyche and a close analysis of Hamlet’s soliloquies. As counselling verbatim, the soliloquies provide an important opportunity to discuss how significant experiences of loss have the potential for developmental transformation in adolescence.

The possible incidence of SE in adolescence raises questions about how we identify, understand and support young people undergoing this process of transformation. In addition to analysing Hamlet’s experiences in the light of Grof’s theoretical framework, the thesis discusses the broader literature on grief and loss and the work of a range of other developmental, spiritual, transpersonal and integral psychologists and philosophers. The thesis engages Grof’s ideas critically and assesses their relevance for adolescent counselling practice and counsellor education in the New Zealand context.

This thesis challenges some widely accepted views among counsellors and educators. It argues for the acknowledgement and identification of the SE experience and recommends that further research be conducted with adolescents. It concludes that an understanding of the deeper dimensions of personal experience can assist professionals to be more effectively engaged with young people throughout their educational journeys.
DEDICATION
AND
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to Freddie, Ben and Brigitte, whose sudden passing initiated my journey, and to Jen and the children whose love and encouragement have kept me honest.

I would particularly like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their friendship, wisdom and practical assistance: Associate Professor Peter Roberts and Dr Margaret Agee of the University of Auckland; Ron Pedder and colleagues at Mangere College; my fellow travellers at the Glenbrook Community Church in South Auckland; and all the young people over the years who have taught me so much about how to view the world.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and specially thank the Tertiary Education Commission for the doctoral fellowship that has enabled me to complete this work so quickly and comfortably and to disseminate it to such a wide audience.

Peter Bray, July, 2005
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BPM Basic Perinatal Matrix
CBT Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
COEX Systems of Condensed Experience
F Folio
LSD Lysergic Acid Diethylamide
NOSC Non Ordinary States of Consciousness
NZYSPS New Zealand Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy
Q1 First Quarto
Q2 Second Quarto
SE Spiritual Emergency
SEN Spiritual Emergency Network
TOM Theory of Mind
WHO World Health Organisation
INTRODUCTION

This thesis addresses a very important question for those of us who work with adolescents. Transformation, which is broadly defined here as personal and developmental dimensions of learning (Karpiak, 2000), is a necessary part of development for adolescents and may often be accompanied by experiences of loss. Sometimes these experiences may prove difficult, in some cases carrying an individual into, hitherto, uncharted areas of awareness. Consequently, this thesis seeks to extend existing notions of grief and loss as well as human development by discussing what occurs when adolescents are confronted with life changing situations that create loss but also produce what Stanislav Grof has described as a Spiritual Emergency (SE).

It is suggested by Grof that loss of a loved one and the subsequent changes to future expectations caused by such losses may be significant enough to tip the balance in a psyche that is ready to transform, and it is through this process of transformation that SE may be present. In Grof’s (2000a) typology of SE there are at least twelve different varieties, some of which derive from his research into hallucinogens. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the term SE is used as a stipulative definition that specifically describes an altered state of consciousness that can occur at the same time as an experience of loss.

Grof’s general description of the SE process is that it is a disruptive but positive shift in consciousness brought about by the psyche’s transformation. As it makes these developmental adjustments, the psyche temporarily and powerfully attracts and submerges the newly developing and dominant adolescent ego at a time when it would normally be seeking separation. During this process SE is caused by the ego returning to the deep sources of the psyche before it can resume its own separate development and is experienced by the adolescent as an influx of non-ordinary material, or holotropic phenomena. Such experiences, when viewed from the perspective of Grof’s holotropic theory, call into question the belief that all
mental phenomena are exclusively based in the brain and originate from mental impairment. Accordingly, SE as a characteristic of psychic transformation cannot be ‘treated’ effectively using conventional medical interventions that seek to suppress this naturally indefatigable process as it has a distinctly non-organic origin. This research is concerned to create an accessible vocabulary and a meaningful context in which SE in adolescence may be usefully and safely discussed, examined and supported.

Professional experience and anecdotal evidence suggest that counsellors in New Zealand schools have difficulty in understanding ‘normally’ developing young people who present with unusually powerful and vivid imaginative experiences that are linked to situations which have caused them loss. These experiences can be misdiagnosed by mental health professionals or misunderstood by counsellors as incidents of poor mental health, manifestations of risk-taking, or an active imagination framed by personal loss, even in cases where in all other respects the individual appears mentally healthy. Furthermore, the dynamic of adolescent development can disguise the presence of SE unless the professional is aware of its possible existence. Consequently, challenged in their worldviews, counsellors can be forced into a position of having to make difficult ethical decisions about aspects of their counselling practice which will require them to seek additional support, training, and supervision. Certainly, adolescent spiritual experiences within the context of loss, development and healing are, it is suggested here, productive areas for further research.

Although Grof’s (1993, 2000a) general theory provides explicit accounts of a wide range of transpersonal and transformational experiences, research undertaken by Grof and others does not specifically include adolescents and SE is not associated with any particular age, gender, or culture. However, Grof’s conviction that crises share potential for transformation is not new. His work builds on ancient cultural traditions, draws upon the work of Jung, extends Maslow’s (1964) work on self-actualisation and explores difficulties that accompany spiritual awakening first recognised by Assagioli (1993). Washburn’s (1995) theory of regression in the service of transcendence also
complements Grof’s holotropic theory and indicates a possible model for adolescent transformation and further *individuation* in adolescence. Wilber’s (2000) contention that SE may occur at any stage in human development also supports the research here.

It is significant that the language used to describe the new knowledge and experience acquired in cases of SE draws heavily upon that usually associated with traditional spiritual beliefs and cultures. This may suggest that through the process of SE adolescents are, for a brief period in their lives, establishing connections with a rich source of collective unconscious experience. It is suggested in this thesis that school counsellors, mental health professionals and caregivers in New Zealand need support in assisting young people and their families to manage the experience of SE, and that in order to do so SE needs to be fully researched and recognised as a process of transformation which may occur in normal adolescent development. Furthermore, this thesis argues that there is a strong likelihood that incidents of SE will occur for young people who have experienced significant personal losses.

*Single Case Methodology*

William Shakespeare’s character of Hamlet in the play of the same name is a notable example of a case where an adolescent experiences grief and loss, and at the same time whose inner and outer management of holotropic phenomena can be described as a spiritual emergency. Thus, presented as a single case illustration, Hamlet’s experiences are central to this thesis. Single case methodology is also used in Part Two to provide a very clear way of generating a new hypothesis about adolescence and SE that may later be subject to a more rigorous examination and further research (Barlow & Hersen, 1984). Hamlet’s case is an accessible starting point for the investigation of a single unique event (Neimeyer & Hogan, 2001), which may not be replicated in an artificial laboratory situation (Bell, Staines, & Mitchell, 2001), and whose in-depth study may well suggest avenues for future
exploration with further cases (Yin, 1998), while still retaining the objective of thoroughly describing Hamlet as a single individual (Neimeyer & Hogan, 2001). Thus, the analysis of this case will be used to both illustrate Grof’s theory of SE and to build a theory that has clear implications for education and counselling with adolescents.

Case study research has a particularly strong tradition in the methodology of psychoanalysis, and has been theoretically influential in informing the work of almost every form of psychotherapy and counselling (Corsini & Wedding, 1995). The interpretation of case studies is an often controversial area of psychological debate (Bell, Staines, & Mitchell, 2001), yet still continues to provide the clinical basis for the experimental study of single cases (Barlow & Hersen, 1984). The methodology used in this thesis will be sympathetic with this tradition and consistent with the characteristics of the type of systemic single case study research categorised by Horowitz (1982, in McLeod, 1994). Horowitz reduces research designs to three types. One type of design is a ‘descriptive study’, which involves the careful observation and classification of ‘what one finds’ within a single case. The thesis will be a descriptive study but as it concentrates on the theoretical implications of the case material it will incorporate what Yin (1989, in McLeod, 1994) calls a ‘theory-building structure’. The design will follow the logical sequence of connecting Grof’s data to the research question and to its conclusion (Yin, 1998). Thus the approach will be to consider the implications of Grof’s SE in Hamlet’s case and subsequent parts of this research will reveal new elements of the theory as it is being constructed.

In the critical analysis of Hamlet, there is an assumed consistency between the analysis of literary works and the methodology of this case study, which is further discussed below. The aim of both is to reveal the structures and functions of the unconscious (Armstrong, 2001). The researcher’s engagement with Hamlet will be conducted through a close analysis of his soliloquies. The analysis will adopt a linear design by a progressive use of psychological and philosophical close analysis of the text (Holland, 1998) employing seven soliloquies to serve as clinical verbatim. Each soliloquy will
be examined against Hamlet’s observable behaviour and its disclosure of unconscious structures set within the context of the play’s world and contemporary theory. One clear advantage of using the soliloquies in Hamlet is that the research method does not involve any intrusion into a young client’s life through the counselling process (McLeod, 1994). Hamlet is not required to answer questions about his experiences, and the text already provides fully recorded, reported and self-reported observations.

Hamlet as a Case Illustration of Spiritual Emergency

It is important to state at the outset that although the text of Hamlet is to be used, and the subject Hamlet proposed as a descriptive study, this thesis is not primarily a work of literary criticism. It provides a vehicle to discuss certain fundamental ideas of transpersonal psychology and its value lies more in helping to understand adolescent SE and less in understanding the literary qualities of Shakespeare’s play. However, the methodology employed in this thesis to illuminate a psychological issue rather than a literary one does follow in the tradition of psychoanalytic criticism. Consequently, it is necessary to note some of the precedents employed by psychoanalytic method as they are applied to the use of Hamlet as a case study here.

Since its foundation a little over a century ago, psychoanalysis has always given a privileged place to literature. Some of the key concepts of psychoanalysis such as Oedipus complex, sadism and narcissism are taken from literature, and many of the case studies published by Freud exemplify this single case approach (McLeod, 1994). Indeed, Holland (1998), Armstrong (2001) and others have suggested that works of literature have anticipated the work of psychoanalysis. Consequently, there is an understanding here that there is a relationship between literature and psychoanalysis, which illuminates and assists both to understand and effectively reveal the human condition. Traditionally, psychoanalysis has sought this understanding by assuming an objective reality around creatures of fiction. As the social psychologist Cooley suggests, for example,
Hamlet is real to the imaginative reader with the realest kind of reality...

What, indeed, would society be, or what would any one of us be, if we associated only with corporeal persons and insisted that no one should enter our company who could not show his power to tip the scales and cast a shadow? (Cooley, 1922, p. 122)

Jones’ (1949) famous psychoanalytic reading of Hamlet speculates about the ‘latent meaning’ of Hamlet as a child and in his defence explains that ‘No dramatic criticism of the personae in a play is possible except under the pretence that they are living people, and surely one is well aware of this pretence’ (Willbern, 1997). Nonetheless, in accepting the fictional designation of Hamlet this thesis will not bypass the character of Hamlet and only analyse the language and metaphor of his soliloquies to ‘yield understanding of its creator’ (Sharpe, 1950, p. 244). Jones’ single case approach to Hamlet is useful because it invites the researcher to discover what Nuttall (citing Morgann, 1963) identifies as Hamlet’s ‘latent meaning’ alongside the pretence of dramatic personae. Nuttall notes that literature, as an interpretation of reality, must admit to an area of ‘latent meaning’. Indeed, for Lacan, the real psychological dimension of Hamlet does not lie in its creator’s purpose or Hamlet’s behaviour but in the language with its hidden, latent meaning and affinities to the language of dreams and the unconscious which often surpasses the apparent meaning (Holland, 1998). Lacan’s emphasis on the unconscious in Hamlet’s language provides a necessary key to fully understanding his usefulness as a case illustration of SE.

Hence, this research, in admitting the dimension of latent meaning, will investigate the language of Hamlet’s soliloquies through Grof’s transpersonal lens. As Holland suggests, Hamlet is himself aware of the ambiguous nature of his own speeches as well as of the feelings that drive them. Indeed, Nuttall’s suggestion that psychoanalysis’ acceptance that human consciousness has an area of latency that is peopled with mythic creatures and symbolic representations of reality, supports the fact that literature has strongly influenced Freud and others. He observes, ‘Freud is the allegorist, Shakespeare the psychologist’ (p.177). In addition, admitting Hamlet as a case illustration provides this discreet thesis with the same immediate, free and privileged access as those shared by notable psychoanalysts such as
Freud, Jones, Rank, Eissler, Holland, Lacan and Kristeva, and psychiatrists such as Conolly, Bucknill, Kellog and Turek (Bynum & Neve, 1985).

Another important point expressed in the play’s dialectic between reality and appearance, and surface and depth, is Hamlet’s self-conscious belief that whatever is happening to him is stranger and deeper than is presented by his mourning. Significantly, while acknowledging the importance of grief and loss, this thesis also addresses a far deeper transformation. Indeed, in the play, Claudius’ description of Hamlet’s transformation as a dual process involving exterior and inner change suggests that this transformation is so great that Hamlet is no longer recognisable as the same young man. He even conjectures that Hamlet does not recognise himself.

Something you have heard
Of Hamlet’s transformation – so call it,
Sith nor th’exterior nor the the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father’s death, that thus hath put him
So much from th’understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of …

(Hamlet, 2. 2. 10)

Claudius’ intuitive remarks reveal that what is occurring in Hamlet is ‘more’ than just a reaction to ‘his father’s death’. Likewise, this thesis takes a similar position that transformation is a central issue, particularly for Hamlet and in Hamlet.

Hamlet, therefore, serves the purpose of this thesis as an illustration of an individual in a transformational state of SE but he is not consciously presented here as an objectively real, complete and detailed psychoanalytic case study. In the spirit of Plato (Jowett, 1968), since ‘imitation has been proved to be thrice removed from the truth’ (p. 387) Hamlet is regarded as an imitative representation of nature and human behaviour in a mimesis of tragedy. Readers of Hamlet can recognise the psychological and moral struggles that the main character undergoes and, to this extent, some reference to a world of experience beyond the relationship between the signifiers and the signified is inferred. This is, of course, not to argue that Hamlet is a real person. What is read or heard resembles, or imitates what may be thought about. It is in this
sense that Hamlet is referred to here as a ‘mimetic character’. In the same way the relationship between works of fiction and psychology may also be defined in this instance in terms of ‘mimesis’ and ‘mimetic character’ (Paris, 1974, 1991).

Paris (1991), for example, adopting Scholes and Kellog's (1966) taxonomy of character, which recognises the ‘latent meaning’ implicit in a mimetic character’s motivational life, describes Hamlet as a ‘complex and inwardly intelligible’ ‘mimetic character’ (p. 8). Thus, although Hamlet the play and Hamlet the character do not present the truth of adolescent SE they do provide a way of commenting upon it. The problem of reality in this argument as it bears on accepting Hamlet as an appropriate case illustration is eloquently summed up by Allen’s (1986) analysis of the reality of responses to fiction. Even though Hamlet is not a presentation of facts, true statements can be made about what happens in it and beliefs directed towards those events can be true or false. Allen suggests that ‘once we realize that truth is not confined to the factual, the problem disappears’ (p. 6)

By the same token, the fact that Hamlet is a fictional character who lacks objective reality does not impair his usefulness as an illustration of adolescent SE. Nuttall (1983), working in the field of English Literature, even contends that Shakespeare’s work is the ‘greatest example of realism’. He argues that conceptions of realism in art change and that language does not directly correspond to reality. Nuttall takes the position that the metaphysical notions of style and form can preclude reference to reality and may presume that reality is itself a fluid social fiction. Thus reality may contain elements of truth and fiction and vice versa. Furthermore, Nuttall maintains, with Auerbach (1968), that presence of a marked style is incompatible with serious realism. Nuttall’s contention is that Hamlet is both naturalistic and realistic because Shakespeare’s plays ‘are not founded on artificial rules of dramatic composition but simply on the world itself’ (p. 66). Nuttall states, ‘the word reality can be legitimately used without apologetic inverted commas and that literature may represent the same reality’ (p. viii).
Paris (1991) also argues that a modern observer may not be able to make Shakespeare’s mimetic achievement more intelligible by viewing him in the light of Renaissance psychology, or by learning what Shakespeare’s conception of Hamlet was because, he adds somewhat cryptically, ‘The great artist sees and portrays far more than he can comprehend’ (p. 9). This too has a resonance with the work of this thesis as it suggests that the achievement of Hamlet as a mimetic character is comprehensive enough to serve equally the needs of its original and modern Elizabethan audiences. In fact, to paraphrase Bynum and Neve (1985), more has been written about Hamlet than of many people who have lived real lives, he has become part of world culture, and the literature about him knows no ordinary national or linguistic barriers (p. 290).

Thus purposefully limited in its comments about the nature of creativity and imagination in literary criticism, or Hamlet’s or Shakespeare’s genius as a ‘species of disease’, or whether Hamlet is a special case for pathological interest, this thesis accepts the fact that Hamlet is a work of considerable realistic achievement. Furthermore, it accepts that Hamlet as a mimetic character has a motivational life imbued with a ‘knowledge of reality’ (Paris, 1974, p. 232), which in this particular case illustrates an adolescent’s experience of SE, about which true statements can be made and true and false beliefs can be directed.

Summary of this Thesis’ Objectives

This thesis has a number of fundamental objectives and these are outlined here. The thesis seeks to show that:

1) The unique features of Grof’s holotropic theory and associated practices, particularly concerning the experience of SE, have much to contribute to the project of formulating a new model of the processes, characteristics, and direction of adolescent development and to the theories and practices of education and counselling. The value of Grof’s approach is that it
emphasises the need to recognise the important role of spirituality in modern, secular, pluralistic, liberal democracies.

2) There are significant theoretical links between the processes outlined in Grof’s cartography of the psyche, which incorporates the biographical, transpersonal, and perinatal dimensions of experience, and those processes of adolescent loss described by post-modern grief and loss discourse.

3) Understanding of adolescent functioning, grief and loss and theories of adolescent development may be extended by further investigating the possibility and significance of the SE experience when it occurs in adolescence.

4) Counsellors and educators can more effectively support young people by understanding that their experiences can include positive transformational crises with influential transdimensional features. That these have significant implications for their practice and beliefs specifically concerning the areas of spirituality and human development.

5) By bringing about a respect for and acknowledgement of adolescent clients’ spiritual lives, counsellors and educators may be assisted in contributing to a model of human development that will help them to anticipate, identify and assess, understand and support adolescents with losses that indicate a crisis with a spiritual dimension.

6) An application of Grof’s holotropic theory to Hamlet both as a text and as a character can provide a framework within which adolescents’ spiritual development, and grief and loss, may acquire new meaning and speak relevantly to the experiences of adolescents in general.

7) There is still work to be done to raise awareness, and promote research, about the importance and commonality of all types of loss experiences to adolescents.

8) Emerging patterns of research from different disciplines, whose common interests are adolescents, can be connected and synthesised in order to co-construct robust theories of adolescence that will broaden understanding and appreciation of adolescent experience and behaviour, particularly in the wake of multiple losses.
9) The tradition and standard of high profile and well-researched support for young people is maintained.

Thesis Structure

The thesis has been divided into four major parts followed by a conclusion which includes recommendations for future research.

Part One, 'Transformation in Adolescence: Education, Development and Holotropic Theory', outlines the theoretical territory to be explored. It establishes the vocabulary and the methodology to be used and the area of concern. Chapter 1 considers the role of transformation in education and its links to adolescent spirituality and development within a New Zealand context. It argues that adolescent transformation has implications for education and establishes a context for discussing the question later in the thesis in terms of developmental and transpersonal theories. Chapter 2 suggests that transpersonal psychology has much to contribute to the notion of spiritual experience and personal development in adolescence. It discusses the unique work of Maslow, Wilber and Washburn and particularly the models they use to illustrate transformation, and examines them in the light of normal adolescent development and adolescent mourning in preparation for Part Three. Chapter 3 specifically deals with a thorough examination, review and discussion of the work of transpersonal psychologist Stanislav Grof whose holotopic theory advanced over the last half century is central to this thesis. It is particularly concerned to discuss the clinical implications of Grof’s model of SE, and how individuals are diagnosed, enabled to understand, explore, inwardly transform and outwardly manage this often severe disruption to consciousness in the service of profound development. In preparation for the case application of Grof’s theory, Chapter 4 examines the use of Hamlet as an illustrative study of SE, discusses his journey as a mythic model of ritual transformation in adolescence, and makes suggestions about Shakespeare’s experiences of loss. Finally, Hamlet’s non-ordinary state of consciousness is assessed along side a brief examination of the forces that drive his psyche
and then Grof’s model of the inner cartography of the psyche is applied to Hamlet’s experiences.

Part Two, ‘Hamlet’s Transformation: A Study in Spiritual Emergency’, provides a comprehensive single case illustration of SE. The case is presented chronologically soliloquy by soliloquy and maps Hamlet’s holotropic journey through the play. Chapter 5 provides an introduction to the full analysis given in the next three chapters and concerns itself with the role of psychoanalytic theory and literary criticism in the analysis and illumination of Hamlet’s character and the function of Hamlet’s soliloquies. It concludes by placing Hamlet in his context as an adolescent primarily preoccupied with loss. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, Hamlet’s seven soliloquies are presented for holotropic analysis beginning with a conventional psychoanalytic and literary biographical reading and then extended by separate analyses of the transpersonal and perinatal dimensions of Hamlet’s experiences. Thus, the chapters describe Hamlet’s experience in terms of a holotropic state of consciousness and the soliloquies are used to demonstrate an understanding and explanation of Hamlet in all three of the domains found in Grof’s extended cartography of the psyche. As all aspects of Grof’s cartography overlap one another and are unified by influential systems of Condensed Experience (COEX), which are deep memory constellations formed while still a foetus, the readings are offered separately to show how the conscious and unconscious components may be considered independently as parts of a more homogenous whole. Similarly, Grof does not claim his model of Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPM), a structure which mirrors biological birth and provides access points to the complex dimensionality of the psyche, to be a stage process. However, in the interests of clarity Hamlet’s experiences are presented chronologically to the reader. Chapter 6 covers the first two soliloquies which appear in Act I of the play. The first soliloquy illustrates some pre-episode functioning and a transition stage between Grof’s first and his second BPM and the second soliloquy is firmly embedded in the latter. Similarly, in Chapter 7 the third soliloquy indicates a further transition between BPM II and III while the fourth and fifth are clearly resonant of BPM III. All of these soliloquies appear in Act III of the play. Chapter 8 establishes Hamlet’s
positioning in BPM III with the sixth soliloquy and finally looks at soliloquy seven in Act IV as a clear transition between BPM III and IV. Consequently, Hamlet may be viewed in Act V as having some of the experiences consonant with BPM IV. Thus Chapter 9 acts as a conclusion to the analysis of Hamlet’s SE by drawing together the threads of his holotropic journey and by providing three conclusions to his experience. Each offers a uniquely different perspective and together they provide an original analysis of trans-dimensional transformation.

Part Three, ‘Adolescence’, examines a number of current theories about grief and loss from a holotropic perspective and applies them to adolescence. It suggests that there are significant connections to be found between the processes of grief and loss, and normal adolescent development. It also confirms that the process of transformation found in spiritual emergency is similar to that found in grief and loss responses and that both processes are common to adolescent development. Chapter 10 discusses a number of influential theories of adolescent development alongside the management of unanticipated, traumatic life events for adolescents. These events, it is supposed, usually complicate normal development but it is suggested here that their initial disruption should give way to a more sensible and enhanced view of the world. This discussion develops the material presented in Part One and in the case analysis. The application of Grof’s holotropic theory to three significant grief and loss models in Chapter 11 provides insights into the inner experiences and the development of adolescents that can support the work of counsellors. This contributes to the analytical interpretative methodology of the case illustration by looking at current grief and loss theory from a holotropic perspective that emphasises the transformational aspects of the processes. It suggests that current theory may be broadened to acknowledge the SE experience as a facet or facilitator of the loss experience, which has important implications for the work of counsellors and educators. Chapter 12 seeks to summarise what has gone before by examining SE as a developmental or organising process that mediates grief and loss in normal adolescent development.
Part Four, ‘Counselling’, broadly discusses the implications for counsellors and educators of acknowledging the different dimensions of consciousness implicit in the holotropic process model by considering a strategic approach to enhancing protective factors around adolescent SE. It also discusses how counsellors in New Zealand schools may be identified as a first point of contact for students who may be experiencing SE, and while critiquing Grof’s contribution to counselling adolescents who may have SE, it examines implications for present practice and future research in counselling. Consequently, Chapter 13 discusses a collaborative strategy for managing SE for New Zealand’s ‘at risk’ youth and how effective school counsellors might be in responding to young people with SE. Chapter 14 examines how holotropic theory can contribute to such a strategy, and what the limitations of such a model are when applied to adolescents. Finally, Chapter 15 argues the case for potential care providers to understand SE by beginning with a brief summary of some of the key arguments in this thesis and ending with a discussion of their implications for counselling practice and research. It suggests how New Zealand counsellors might be trained to deal with incidents of SE in adolescents and considers the protective and risk factors around SE for New Zealand youth.

Finally, ‘Conclusions and Implications for Future Research’, identifies the outcomes of the study and their implications for future research. It also outlines a process model for adolescent transformation during development and makes recommendations as to what might be done to acknowledge transformative processes in schools, within the counselling profession and amongst those concerned with adolescent mental health.

The literature confirms that managing loss is part of adolescent development and is also responsible for initiating changes in an individual’s understanding of the world. Similarly, a psycho-spiritual crisis, like SE, depends upon a number of interconnecting experiences, including loss, which is ultimately expressed as a totally unique transformation event for each individual coloured by conscious and unconscious knowledge. This research, therefore, provides an opportunity to discuss a theoretical model of SE as a
transformative process in adolescence, and to understand the characteristics, process, management and outcomes of this uniquely personal experience.