

*Teachers Teaching Mindfulness with Children:
An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*



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Abstract (Summary)

Research Background

An extraordinary phenomenon has occurred. Teachers, *en masse*, in various countries around the world are teaching children techniques to cultivate loving kindness, compassion and inner peace. These practices are generally inspired by mindfulness principles and practices, commonly associated with Buddhist traditions.

To date, research in this new field has focused on assessing the efficacy of mindfulness programs in child populations, predominately using outcomes-based study designs. There has been less research focussing on the teacher's experience. In order to deepen and expand our understanding of mindfulness instruction with children, contributors to the topic have highlighted a critical need to understand the teachers' experience – particularly teachers with experience teaching mindfulness.

Research Question

In order to understand teachers' experiences, the following research question was posed, "How do teachers who are experienced MindBody Wellness practitioners make sense of teaching children mindfulness?"

Methodology and Methods

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodology, was employed to interview teachers and analyse a range of illustrative material. Eight teachers from Australia and the United States (one male and seven females) were interviewed during 2014. Participants' teaching experience in schools and out-of-school care settings varied from two years to 25 years. The teachers all had a regular mindfulness practice, but at a minimum, they also practised one other modality, such as yoga. The participants additionally provided demographic information and in some cases, data illustrative of their practice, such as unpublished materials, worksheets, journals and photos. Interviews with participants were facilitated by a method that incorporates authenticity, developing relational flow and mindful communication.

Findings

Through an in-depth analysis and interpretation of teachers' texts, it was found that MindBody Wellness practices, such as yoga, meditation and mindfulness played an integral role in teachers' lives. Four inter-related super-ordinate themes captured the essence of how eight teachers made sense of child-based mindfulness instruction:

- Spirituality
- Creativity
- Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing
- Being a Mindful Role Model.

It was found that a regular long-term mindfulness practice led to enhanced levels of wellbeing and connection to the self, others and the planet. The participants, having personally experienced the benefits of MindBody Wellness techniques, felt an inclination to share their wisdom with others, especially children. This inclination was generally supported and encouraged by either the school management or the school community and, when it was not, teachers moved to workplaces where a mindful way of being was valued.

Being able to teach mindfulness to children and colleagues further heightened participants' sense of wellbeing and enabled teachers to feel at home in their work environment, creating a conducive environment for learning and being. Teachers emphasised the importance of teaching mindfulness holistically and nourishing the whole of a child's wellbeing. They felt that there were many ways to approach child-centric mindfulness instruction. However, in general, it was the participants' personal and professional view that anyone considering teaching children mindfulness should first come to know and live the practice in his or her own life. A number of other recommendations are suggested for practice, policy and future research.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text. Submitted for examination 4 July 2016.

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Kate Leeson copy edited this thesis checking the accuracy of each word, sentence, paragraph and referencing.

Researcher Background



Nicole Albrecht – Nikki, teaches and conducts research at Australia’s largest university, RMIT University. She coordinates the MindBody Wellness undergraduate and graduate electives and has tutored in the graduate topics, Aromatherapy for Wellness and Wellness and Life Enhancement, and. During the course, undergraduates and graduates from a wide range of disciplines explore the theoretical dimensions of wellness and practically implement MindBody Wellness strategies in their daily lives.

Her research work at the university has focused on understanding the experiences of teachers, students, mindfulness instructors and health promotion staff when implementing mindfulness programs in school settings. She has consulted on several projects in Australia and New Zealand with government, faith-based and special needs schools.

Nikki’s interest in MindBody Wellness techniques started at a young age, in the 1970s, when her mother introduced her to guided imagery to battle colds. She then went on to use meditation techniques to enhance academic performance at university and discovered how to teach MindBody Wellness techniques to children when on her pre-service education placement. She has practised and continues to practise a number of different MindBody Wellness techniques, including tai chi, chi kung, yoga, guided imagery, meditation and energy healing. Her favourite technique at the moment is sound meditation. Nikki additionally teaches wellness theory and practice to community groups and offers personalised MindBody Wellness programs to students passionate about life-long learning and enhancing their wellbeing.

Creative Research Output - Higher Education Research Data (HERDC) & the Excellence in Research (ERA) schemes Citations

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Glossary of Terms

Beginner's Mind

Beginner's mind involves cultivating an attitude or state of mind, whereby it seems that we perceive everything as if for the first time. When cultivating this state, we are set free from our expectations based on our past experiences and are receptive to new possibilities. Beginner's mind prevents us getting stuck in a rut of our own expertise, in which we often think we know more than we do (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

Child/Children

How we define "children" varies throughout disciplines and educational philosophies. In the current research the term refers to an individual over the age of five years and under 18 years, generally school-age children.

Contemplative Practices

There is a wide variety of contemplative practices, originating from traditions all over the world. Contemplative practices cultivate a critical, first-person focus, sometimes with direct experience as the object, while at other times concentrating on complex ideas or situations.

On the Tree of Contemplative Practices, depicted in Figure 1-1, the roots symbolise the two intentions (connection and awareness) that are the foundation of all contemplative practices. The roots of the tree encompass and transcend differences in the religious traditions from which many of the practices originated and are described as allowing room for the inclusion of new practices that are being created in secular contexts.

The branches represent different groupings of practices. For example, *stillness practices* focus on quieting the mind and body in order to develop calmness and focus. *generative practices* may come in many different forms but share the common intent of generating thoughts and feelings, such as thoughts of devotion and compassion, rather than calming and quieting the mind. The classifications are not definitive, and many practices could be included in more than one category (Contemplative Mind, 2013).

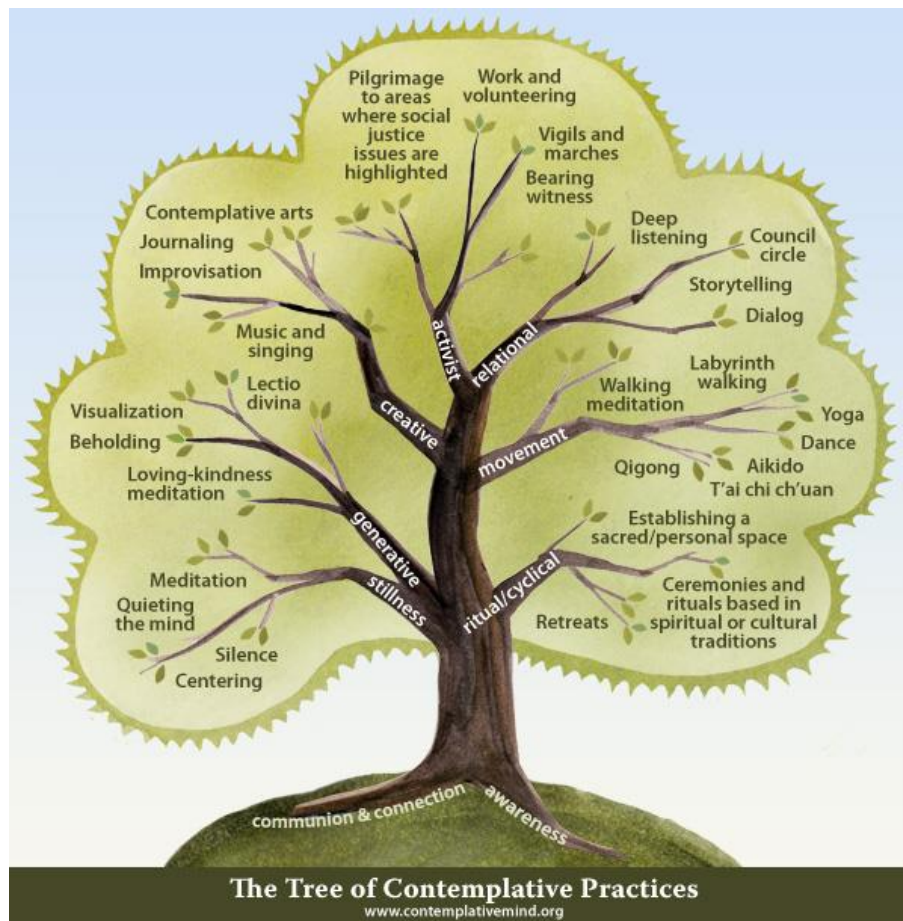


Figure 1-1: The Tree of Contemplative Practices (Contemplative Mind, 2013)

Co-researcher/Research Partner

Co-researcher is a term used to describe participants who have an active and reflective involvement in a study. The term is used to honour participants in an in-depth exploratory study (Curry & Wells, 2006).

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

In academic research in the Western world, CAM has become commonly known to consist of a heterogeneous array of practices for the treatment, diagnosis and prevention of illness or to promote health and wellness on a physical as well as energetic level. Therapies range from focused manual techniques, such as reflexology, to centuries old whole medical systems, such as Ayurvedic medicine.

East/Eastern

East/Eastern refers to the culture of Asia and the people who share the same root or have a religious link to Asia. Geographically speaking, it includes most parts of China, Taiwan, Japan, Vietnam and North and South Korea.

Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths are a conceptual framework that is often applied by practitioners when teaching mindfulness-based practices. They are described as the first major teaching that the Buddha gave after his awakening (Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2013). They are; 1) the truth of suffering; 2) the cause of suffering; 3) the cessation of suffering; and 4) the path to the cessation of suffering (Dakpa, 2004). These doctrines form the backbone of all Buddhist traditions (Dakpa, 2004). Not to be discouraged by the first truth of suffering, students of Buddhist philosophy strive to realise all four truths in their quest for ultimate happiness and release from suffering (Dakpa, 2004). The teachings are said to be relevant to people today, as they deal with the patterns of mind that keep people trapped in emotional suffering, rather than realising their true potential (Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2013).

Holism

The term “holism” is generally conceded to have been coined by Jan Smuts in 1926 (Freeman, 2005, p. 154). It is the idea that systems, be they research systems, biological systems or the human being need to be viewed as “wholes”, not merely as a collection of parts and that the interaction between the parts of a whole system can often be a determinant of system behaviour (Meadows, 2008; Smuts, 1936).

Homeopathy

Homeopathy is generally regarded as a wellness orientated healing modality. It is a systematised method of healing, which uses remedies with the power to resonate with the illness as a whole, in contrast with the more conventional method in bio-medicine of opposing symptoms with superior force. It is essentially a methodology for treating sick people, rather than a set of hypotheses about the nature of health and illness. Its fundamental principles follow from the law of similars (Carlston, 2006); that is “like cures like” – meaning that any substance, which can produce symptoms in a healthy person, can cure similar symptoms in a person who is sick (Hopathy, 2016).

Intuition

Intuition is a process whereby information is received from an unknown source, outside the range of cognitive processes and may pertain to present, past or future events. Individuals may hear this information through a range of senses. For example, they may hear a voice, see images, either in their mind’s eye or holographically, feel an energetic essence or presence or have a strong feeling about a direction to head in. Prior learning about a topic may help the intuitive information to be processed cognitively (N. J. Albrecht, 2010).

Intuitive Painting

Intuitive painting encourages individuals to travel on a personal journey in order to uncover images of their inner selves through painting. It is a tool for beginners as well as advanced painters. The goal is for the painter to give him or herself the space to be inside of the

colour, paint and process while locating the inner core of the creative self. The method emerged from basic art therapy techniques (Cassell, n.d.).



Photograph 1-1: Example of Intuitive Art Work by Participant, Daniella

MindBody Wellness Practitioners

People who regularly practice modalities such as meditation, guided imagery, mindfulness or intuitive healing.

Mystical Religion

Mystical religion was a term coined by Enrnst Troeltsch in the early twentieth century to describe a concept different from traditional religion, where individuals strive for personal inner exploration and ultimate union with the divine. Central to the meaning of the concept is an opposition to selfishness and materialism, combined with an individualistic eclectic system of meaning (Hasselle-Newcombe, 2005).

Outcomes-based

Interpreted to mean a linear chain of cause and effect from an external intervention to a single endpoint (Paterson, Baarts, Launsø, & Verhoef, 2009).

Post-secular

A renewed interest in the spiritual life; a relaxation of the secular suspicion towards spiritual questions; a recognition that secular rights and freedoms of expression are a

prerequisite to the renewal of spiritual enquiry; spiritual and intellectual pluralism; cherishing the best in all spiritual traditions; and a common heartedness with others (Canda, 1998, as cited in Todd & Coholic, 2007; King, n.d.).

Relational Mindfulness

Relational mindfulness is the practice of mindfulness in the flow of relationship between two or more people. There are three dimensions of focus in relational awareness. The first offers an opportunity for moment-to-moment awareness of internal experience, sensations, emotions and thoughts as they are happening within the movement of relationship. The second dimension of awareness focuses on the empathic attunement to the other as it is experienced. The third point of focus is the experienced movement and flow of connection and disconnections within the relationship (Beardall & Surrey, 2014, p. 276).

Self

The ever evolving, not completely known constellation of the human being, a being that is connected to all other beings and events (Christine Barnes, personal communication, March 5, 2014).

Singing Bowl

Tibetan singing bowls are thought to have originated from Himalayan fire cults of the fifth century Before Christ and have since been used in various religious ceremonies, including shamanic journeying and meditation. The Tibetan singing bowl is a type of standing bell played by striking or rubbing its rim with a wooden or leather-wrapped mallet. This excitation causes the sides and rim of the bowl to vibrate and produces a rich sound. Tibetan bowls are hand-made and their precise composition is unknown, but generally they are made of a bronze alloy that can include copper, tin, zinc, iron, silver, gold and nickel (Terwagne & Bush, 2011, p. 1). Sound vibrations have the capacity to modulate gene expression and cellular dynamics, playing an essential role in enhancing wellness (Muehsam & Ventura, 2014, p. 40). Not all bowls are harmonic due to having irregular or bevelled surfaces. If using for therapeutic sound vibration purposes it is essential to use a bowl with a harmonic surface (see <http://www.tibetinstruments.com/> for more information (Barbara Marchi, personal communication, April 15, 2016). These types of bowls are harmonic because they have only one fundamental sound. If the bowl is tapped in different points, it will produce the same sound. The sound frequency follows the same pattern as the Fibonacci's sequence (Barbara Marchi, personal communication, April 22, 2016 – translated from research in Spanish and Italian).



Photograph 1-3: Singing Bowl (Best Singing Bowls, 2014)

Speaking/Talking Stick

According to the First People – The Legends Website:

The Talking Stick is a tool used in many Native American traditions when a council is called. It allows all council members to present their sacred point of view. The Talking Stick is passed from person to person as they speak and only the person holding the stick is allowed to talk during that time period.

People responsible for holding any type of council meeting are required to make their own Talking Stick. The Talking Stick may be used when they teach children, hold council, make decisions regarding disputes, hold Pow-Wow gatherings, have storytelling circles, or conduct a ceremony where more than one person will speak.

Since each piece of material used in the Talking Stick speaks of the personal *medicine* of the stick owner, each Talking Stick will be different. The qualities of each type of Standing Person (Tree) brings specific medicine. White Pine is the peace tree, Birch symbolises truth, evergreens represent the continued growth of all things. Cedar symbolises cleansing. Aspen is the symbol for seeing clearly since there are many eye shapes on the truth. Maple represents gentleness. Elm is used for wisdom; Mountain Ash for protection; Oak for strength; Cherry for expression, high emotion, or love. Fruit woods are for abundance and walnut or pecan for gathering of energy or beginning new projects. Each person making a Talking Stick must decide which type of Standing Person (Tree) will assist their needs and add needed medicine to the Councils held (First People – The Legends, n.d.).

Walker Learning Approach

The Walker Learning Approach is an evidence-based pedagogy, designed for children from pre-school to Year 8. The approach was developed and designed by Kathy Walker and Shona Bass. It provides an authentic personalised learning model of teaching. It draws upon evidence from neuroscience and human development and reflects and respects the uniqueness of culture, family and relationships. It uses play-based and personalised learning theories as its basis and retains explicit instruction of literacy and numeracy (Early Life Foundations, 2014).

West/Western

West/Western refers to the culture of Europe and the people who share the same root or have a religious link to Europe (Niu & Sternberg, 2006, p. 20). Geographically speaking, it includes most parts of Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand (Niu & Sternberg, 2006, p. 20).

Chapter One: Introduction

Research Background

Research Aim

Research Significance

*Mindfulness Definition and
Context*

Epistemology

Methodology

De-limitations

Thesis Macrostructure

Research Background

An extraordinary phenomenon has occurred. Teachers, *en masse*, in various countries around the world are teaching children techniques to cultivate loving kindness, compassion and inner peace (Black, Milam, & Sussman, 2009; Kaltwasser, Sauer, & Kohls, 2014; Rocco, 2012). These practices are generally inspired by mindfulness principles and practices, commonly associated with Buddhist traditions (Dellbridge & Lubbe, 2009; Hooker & Fodor, 2008; Whitehead, 2011).



Photograph 1-3: Mindfulness Workshop for School Teachers, Hong Kong

A newcomer to this area may consider the usage of the term, “*en masse*” to be an exaggeration of the extent of mindfulness teacher practice. However, some examples will support my employment of this word. Photograph 1-3, taken by freelance writer and journalist, Angela Bucu, shows teachers participating in the Plum Village Community’s “Wake Up Schools: Cultivating Mindfulness in Education” workshop. Hundreds of teachers took part in the event, which was fully booked weeks in advance (A. Bucu, personal

communication, May 15, 2013). Across the other side of the globe in Ireland, over 500 primary school teachers recently commenced mindfulness training as part of a new Department of Education initiative (Irish Independent, 2014). School principal, Noreen Flynn, commenting on the justification for mindfulness, said:

Many of our pupils are highly disadvantaged. There's the generational challenge left by unemployment and addiction to drugs and alcohol, resulting in low self-esteem in the community. This, in turn, means children in every class have difficulties. The focus of our school is to create an oasis of calm, hope and learning where our children can reach their full potential in a secure, safe and happy environment. (Keane, 2014)

Programs such as those just described in Hong Kong and Ireland are commonplace around the world. Over the last decade, a wide range of organisations from universities to private businesses have designed mindfulness programs specifically to suit the school system. They predominately focus on enhancing the health and wellbeing of students and teachers, however, principals, parents and school counsellors are also being encouraged to try out these centuries-old techniques that have been adapted and given a new form to suit the Western palate. The number of texts devoted to the topic has grown significantly and there are now dozens of mindfulness programs catering for primary and secondary school children.



Photograph 1-4: Mindfulness Programs for Children

Child-centred texts (see Photograph 1-4) incorporating mindfulness elements include: *Meditation capsules: A mindfulness program for children* (Ettly-Leal, 2010); *The MindUp*

curriculum: Brain-focused strategies for learning – and living (The Hawn Foundation, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c); *Child's mind: Mindfulness practice to help our children be more focused, calm, and relaxed* (Willard, 2010) and *The mindful child* (Kaiser Greenland, 2010).

In May of 2013, in order to understand the prevalence of mindfulness programs in countries around the world, I conducted a general Google search in both the English and German languages. I conducted a Google search in the German language, due to a large number of German researchers publishing in English-speaking peer-reviewed journals, combined with my ability to translate the language. Search terms used were: “mindfulness schools”; “mindfulness children”; “mindfulness adolescents”; “mindfulness programs children” and “*achtsamkeit schule*” (direct English translation: : “mindfulness school”). In December of 2013, the search was replicated and verified in the English language by a research assistant. Over 30 different mindfulness programs were located. Some programs were web-based, others presented face to face workshops and there were a number of providers who offered hard-copy texts on the topic (see Appendix A for a list of hard-copy texts). The majority have been developed in the last decade in the US, translated into a number of languages and disseminated in China, Hong Kong, European nations, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India and Thailand (see “The mindfulness in schools project,” n.d.; “Wake up schools,” n.d).

Stories are how we come to know, understand and communicate what we experience and what we believe is possible. Stories can, and do, change the world. Teachers can, and do, change the world, a child's world, a student's world, the world of the classroom and the school (Rocco, 2013).

Research Aim

My research aim for this project was to explore the growing phenomenon of mindfulness instruction in mainstream schools and out-of-school care settings in English speaking nations. Specifically, I was interested in understanding and listening to experienced mindfulness instructors' perceptions on the topic – to learn from their wisdom of experience. The research question posed was, “How do teachers who are experienced MindBody Wellness practitioners make sense of teaching children mindfulness?” The question focused on understanding teachers' perceptions and experiences of *explicitly* teaching children mindfulness practices; not to be confused with *implicitly* imparting a mindful way of being to children through the teacher's own mindful presence. However, as the reader will recognise in Chapter Nine, teachers' considered their own mindful presence or lack of mindful presence to be an important aspect in how they made sense of *explicitly* teaching children.

Research Significance

The current research holds the potential to inform how individuals practice mindfulness, policy, pedagogy and future research opportunities. A plethora of questions related to the function and viability of teaching mindfulness with children remains unanswered. To write of “research gaps” would be an understatement – “gaping holes” would prove a better turn of phrase. Research exploring mindfulness in school systems is in the early stages due to

the recent wide spread introduction of programs around the world – offering researchers ample opportunities for exploration and discovery. For example, the Garrison Institute¹ noted in a mapping report on the status of contemplative and mindfulness techniques in Kindergarten (K) to Year 12 educational settings a number of emerging issues that need to be addressed by researchers in education (Garrison Institute, 2005, pp. 6-7).

They include the requirement to understand the:

- goals and impact of programs;
- mechanisms needed to effect systematic change within the field of education;
- mechanisms through which contemplative programs can lead to behavioural change among students;
- links between programs and spirituality;
- liability issues;
- most appropriate, accurate and relevant ways to describe school-based contemplative programs;
- characteristics of developmentally appropriate contemplative programs; and
- relationship between contemplative programs and core educational programs.

To date, the majority of these issues have yet to be addressed by academics.

Chapter Outline

In the current chapter I proceed to provide:

- a broad definition of mindfulness and its context within the broader field of MindBody Wellness;
- a summary of the work's epistemological foundations;
- a discussion of the methodology chosen to explore the research question;
- a description of the thesis's macrostructure; and
- a synopsis of the contents of each chapter.

¹ The Garrison Institute is a United States-based organisation dedicated to applying the power of contemplation to the fields of education, contemplative care and ecology.

Mindfulness involves an elemental and spontaneous openness to experience, grounded in the body, in the timeless, in not expecting anything to happen, a befriending and inhabiting of this present moment for its own sake. (Stahl & Goldstein, 2010, p. x)

Mindfulness Definition and Context

In the West, mindfulness attracts an array of rich descriptions and definitions, such as the one above. However, Buddhist scholar, Bodhi (2013), relates that the term “is so vague and elastic that it serves almost as a cipher into which we can read anything we want” (p. 22). Notwithstanding this elasticity, it is commonly used in the academic literature in three main ways (N. J. Albrecht, Albrecht & Cohen, 2012). First, it is used to refer to a *state*, *trait* or *way of being*, which has prescribed characteristics, such as; acceptance, non-striving and non-attachment (see Table 3-1 for more characteristics). Next it is applied to programs that cultivate a *mindful* state, for example, the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction program. And lastly it denotes a type of meditation technique – mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness is often practised, *formally* – through meditation, but may also be cultivated *informally* – by paying attention to one’s every day activities, such as eating, gardening and housework (N. J. Albrecht, 2014; N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012). The concept is applied to all types of awareness – auditory, gustatory, tactile and visual (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005, p. 100), as well as one’s thoughts and emotions. Mindfulness is not just about paying *more* attention it is about the *kind* of attention we pay (Ager, Albrecht, & Cohen, 2015; Williams, Teesdale, Segal, & Kabat-Zinn, 2007).

Mindfulness practices include a range of activities and psycho-educational approaches and thus in the academic literature they are commonly categorised under the broader

term, “MindBody Wellness”². MindBody Wellness (MBW) focuses on the interactions among the brain, mind, body and behaviour and the powerful ways in which emotional, mental, social, spiritual and behavioural factors can directly affect wellness (definition adapted from the United States’ National Institute of Health’s National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) definition of MindBody therapies 2005, as cited in Rotan & Ospina-Kammerer, 2007, p. 2).

A number of practices fall under the wing of MindBody Wellness and they range from modalities that are ancient in origin to those more recently developed. For example:

- relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation
- meditation (including mindfulness meditation)
- yoga
- informal mindfulness practices (e.g., mindful eating; mindful listening)
- guided imagery
- hypnosis
- autogenic training
- Cognitive-behavioural therapy
- psycho-educational approaches
- *qigong*
- humour and laughter
- intuitive healing
- expressive writing (Astin, Shapiro, Eisenber, & Forys, 2003; Rotan & Ospina-Kammerer, 2007).

There is considerable crossover between categories even though they have been defined above as discrete categories (Astin et al., 2003). For example, autogenic training often uses imagery and relaxation techniques (Astin et al., 2003).

MindBody Wellness practices such as meditation, guided imagery, mindfulness, *qigong* and yoga are increasingly being offered in an array of organisations and educational

² Other terms interchangeably used in place of MindBody Wellness include: MindBody Skills, MindBody Medicine, MindBody Healing and Mind-Body-Spirit Medicine.

settings, including:

- hospitals
- wellness centres
- primary, secondary and tertiary institutions
- nursing homes
- prisons
- drug rehabilitation centres and
- out-of-school care settings (RMIT University, 2010).

In an Australian-based study, where the authors investigated the use of 17 of the most popular forms of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)³ it was found that: 17.5% of participants engaged in meditation; 12% practised yoga and 6% participated in *qigong* (tai chi or chi kung) on a regular basis (Xue, Zhang, Lin, Da Costa, & Story, 2007). In the US, the National Health Interview Survey ($n = 23,393$), revealed that 9.4 % of adults engaged in meditation, approximately 6% practised yoga; under 1% regularly perform *qigong* and over 15% undertook deep breathing exercises or progressive muscle relaxation between the years of 2002 and 2007 (Barnes, Bloom, & Nahin, 2008). Another survey conducted in the US between 1997 and 1998 with English-speaking household residents aged 18 or older found that 70% of survey participants commonly used MBW practices to promote wellness and prevent illness (Wolsko, Eisenberg, Davis, & Phillips, 2004).

In regards to child populations, it was estimated via the US National Health Interview Survey that approximately 10% of children participated in MBW therapies such as Yoga and meditation (Barnes et al., 2008). Recent statistics from the United Kingdom suggest that the percentage of children engaging in MBW practices has dramatically increased since 2007. An electronic survey administered to schools in the Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire areas showed that nearly 50% of school-age children engage in

³ In academic research in the Western world, CAM has become a commonly used term covering a heterogeneous array of practices for the treatment, diagnosis and prevention of illness or to promote health and wellness on a physical as well as energetic level (Coulter & Willis, 2004; Ernst, 2000; McCabe, 2000; Zollman & Vickers, 1999). Therapies range from focused manual techniques, such as reflexology, to centuries-old whole medical systems, such as ayurvedic medicine (Coulter & Willis, 2004).

mindful activities during classroom time (Stone, 2014).

In school systems worldwide there has been a focus on integrating 1) mindfulness-based practices; which commonly incorporate yoga postures (*asana*), mindfulness activities, relaxation activities and guided meditation and 2) Transcendental Meditation™ techniques (Black et al., 2009). These MBW modalities are also the most frequently investigated (Astin et al., 2003).

The Nature and Prevalence of Mindfulness Research

In the West, mindfulness research in adult populations emerged in the early 1980s. At the close of this decade 13 studies were published on the topic (Black, 2013). By 2012, the number of peer-reviewed articles in the field had swelled to around 2 500 (Ager et al., 2015). Over this time period, mindfulness academic enquiry has largely been led by researchers with a health sciences background, a community that is noted for holding the study design of the “randomised controlled trial” (RCT) in high esteem. RCT’s are often considered to be the gold standard for evaluating the effects of health-care therapies and take the top rung in the hierarchy of research evidence (Pirota, 2007). As a result of this reductionist viewpoint, mindfulness research, in both adult and child populations has predominately been outcomes-based⁴.

An outcomes *only* approach is described by prominent mindfulness researchers Hayes and Shenk (2004) as the least desirable option, as the methodology is unable to come to grips with the complexity, intricacies and nuances that mindfulness presents. They posit that an excessive technological focus (such as using bio-medical testing and markers as objective measures of assessment) combined with a purely outcomes-based research program can produce misleading findings and lead to a less progressive science (Hayes & Shenk, 2004). Verhoef and Vanderheyden (2007) suggested that in order to comprehend the impact of an intervention, such as meditation or mindfulness, we need to recognise that the creation of knowledge is continuous and evolutionary, requiring the employment of a variety of research methods. An outcomes approach, which has consumed mindfulness research to date, may divert attention away from important contextual factors, feedback

⁴ Interpreted to mean a linear chain of cause and effect from an external intervention to a single endpoint (Paterson, Baarts, Launsø, & Verhoef, 2009).

loops, the users' experiences and learning processes as well as individualised long term outcomes (Paterson et al., 2009).

The complexity involved with researching the impact of wellness interventions, particularly those directed towards the cultivation of Mind Body skills is demonstrated in a study titled, "The Art of Living with HIV". The researchers involved in this study employed mixed methods – a RCT together with interviews – in an attempt to understand the role MBW techniques play in an individual's healing journey. The results from the RCT demonstrated that participants in the treatment group were more stressed after the intervention than the control group (Verhoef & Vanderheyden, 2007). In contrast, the interviews revealed that the intervention group experienced personal growth:

'Living' began to feel more meaningful and conscious. Participants were learning to feel everything, pleasant and unpleasant, with greater intensity – but this greater self-awareness also included greater awareness of changes, stress, pain and discomfort. Accepting and embracing these changes was not always comfortable and at times proved stressful (Verhoef & Vanderheyden, 2007, pp. 80-81).

In a similar vein, primary school teacher, Karen Ager, when learning mindfulness techniques and explicitly incorporating the practices in the classroom noted in her reflective journal, an assessment piece in the Master of Wellness course MindBody Wellness:

Allowing my '*self*' to behold the 'gift of time', and gently reminding myself that healing is a process has helped me to find harmony within. In the Wellness Workbook (2004) Travis examines Wellness and Transcending (p. 282). In this chapter, Travis discusses that transformation is a process, and how at first it can look like we are 'falling apart' when really it is that we are 'falling together.' I now understand that part of this process is about 'unpacking ourselves' so that we can transform into something more joyous. While writing this journal, there were times when I felt like I was '*falling apart*'. But I trusted this process and knew that every step I took on this journey would bring me closer to my vision of high-level wellness. I'll continue to 'ride this ever changing wave' and challenge my limits in search of greater clarity, simplicity, love and peace. (personal communication, May 13, 2013)

As can be seen from these illustrations, using a RCT to assess a wellness intervention does not allow for a rich understanding of the mechanisms involved in the process, the thoughts and feelings of individual participants, and interactions between different parts of the system, and may lead to erroneous results. Outcomes-based research may help researchers understand a component part of the meditation process; however, to fully comprehend the impact wellness programs play, one should allow the "system" to remain

intact (Verhoef & Vanderheyden, 2007). Reviewers of mindfulness studies in school systems additionally suggest that there is a critical need to explore the area in depth, with a focus on phenomena finding explorations that use rich ethnographic descriptions, case studies of exemplars and other forms of qualitative assessment (Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012).

It is my perception and observation, from analysing mindfulness research since 2009, that researchers are now recognising the need to employ qualitative research designs to enrich our understanding of the complexity, simplicity and inherent beauty of mindfulness. For example, when searching for studies on meditation in 2009, I struggled to locate qualitative studies; those I did find were derived from the nursing and business management disciplines. An analysis of Black's⁵ (2013), *Mindfulness Research Monthly* indicates that my perceptions and observations are accurate, as almost 25% of published studies in March 2013 employed qualitative methodologies.

Researchers are not only changing the way they approach mindfulness research, but a significant amount of attention is now⁶ being directed towards understanding the impact of the practice in school systems. Up until 2011, the majority (approximately 98%) of mindfulness research has focused on understanding the efficacy of mindfulness meditation in adult populations (Albrecht, 2011b; Hayes & Shenk, 2004). However, at the close of 2014, when I had completed data collection for the current thesis, the prevalence of research focused on children and school systems had dramatically altered. With the assistance of a research assistant we estimated that in 2014, approximately 36% of original mindfulness studies (approximately 100 peer-reviewed articles) were conducted with this population group.

⁵ Each month, David Black (2013), a mindfulness researcher and founder of a school-based mindfulness program in the US, publishes a monthly report dedicated to providing information and links to the latest peer-reviewed journal articles in the area. Black categorises published research into the following four areas: 1) interventions – articles testing the applied science and implementation of mindfulness-based interventions; 2) associations – articles examining the correlation and mechanism between mindfulness and other variables; 3) methods – articles developing empirical procedures to advance the measurement and methodology of mindfulness and 4) reviews – articles reviewing content areas of mindfulness or conducting meta-analyses of published research.

⁶ For this thesis I reviewed mindfulness literature up until the beginning of July 2015.

While the body of research investigating the experiences of teachers or children who are new to mindfulness has grown rapidly over the years (Weare, 2013, 2014), there are, at the time of writing (June 2015), still few published studies where authors listen to the wisdom of teachers, *teachers* who have experience teaching children mindfulness. I only located one other study (Kwon, 2015) that examined the experiences of teachers who have a long-term MBW practice combined with experience teaching mindfulness with children.

Epistemology

In order to explore the research with the depth and clarity required for a complex intervention such as mindfulness, I have taken a holistic approach to the gathering of wisdom. This holistic approach, which I have termed “whole systems mindful enquiry”, combines two mutually compatible epistemological stances, namely, *whole systems* research thinking and a *holistic relational enquiry* paradigm, both of which I will now briefly outline.

Whole Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is not a new concept – it is ancient in origin (Meadows, 2008), having been employed by many great thinkers including Einstein (Meadows, 2008). It is additionally a fundamental element in Buddhist conceptual frameworks (see Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2013, p. 92). Core principles of systems theory include:

- A system is more than the sum of its parts.
- Many of the interconnections in systems operate through the flow of information.
- The least obvious part of the system, its function or purpose, is often the most crucial determinant of the system’s behaviour.
- System structure is the source of system behaviour. System behaviour reveals itself as a series of events over time (Meadows, 2007, p. 188).

Systems theory allows for a flexible approach to analysing complex problems such as the multilevel and interacting variables that affect the implementation and efficacy of school-based mindfulness programs. When assessing the efficacy of mindfulness programs it is essential that we consider the practices within a holistic framework, taking into account factors that may potentially mediate the positive development of physical,

behavioural, emotional, social, intellectual, moral, spiritual and cultural outcomes, such as the child-parent relationship (Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Finlay, 2015). For example, a RCT conducted at a school may assess how a mindfulness intervention impacts upon a student's psychological wellbeing but neglect to consider the family environment and whether it mitigates or promotes the cultivation of mindfulness. As I stated in the previous section, it is considered critical when researching complex interventions such as meditation and mindfulness that we allow the *system* to remain intact (Verhoef & Vanderheyden, 2007).

Systems theory is employed in various disciplines from biology and engineering to education and management. It is used for policy analysis, hypothesis generation and to test and explore theories (J. B. Urban, Osgood, & Mabry, 2011). One of the strengths of the theory is that it can be used as a guiding framework to gain a better understanding of a problem or research area (J. B. Urban et al., 2011). Systems thinking allows the researcher to gain a holistic viewpoint of a problem through the careful consideration of the multi-faceted nature of the topic. Sub systems can be analysed using outcomes-based study designs and the results will be given perspective and credence within the whole system, while in-depth qualitative research may shed light on the nature of the whole system and the interactions between its parts.

Whole systems thinking is an excellent method to approach any research problem. It allows the researcher to: acknowledge and give equal respect to the employment of a variety of research methodologies; view the problem from a holistic stance (Verhoef et al., 2005); take a transdisciplinary approach and integrate perspectives from various disciplines; and recognise the multi-dimensional, dynamic and emergent nature of human health and wellbeing (Picard, Sabiston, & McNamara, 2011). The philosophical stance considers participants as unique and dynamic entities, influenced by other systems. However, it does not readily focus on how as researchers we engage with these dynamic and evolving entities. A holistic relational enquiry approach fills in the gaps and provides guidelines for researching *mindfully* with participants, who may also be called to be, and more importantly thought of as, *co-researchers*.

Holistic Relational Enquiry

Burrows (2011a) developed a holistic relational enquiry paradigm when working with a

vulnerable child and his family in South Australia. To a large degree it is influenced by Native American⁷ wisdom, Jungian philosophy and relational mindfulness (see Burrows, 2011b; Beardall & Surrey, 2014). It is an approach to academic enquiry that is centred on the premise of researching *with* people rather than *to* people. It recognises that there are multiple ways of knowing and wisdom may arise from dreams, inner knowing or even synchronistic events. The philosophical stance also acknowledges that, while human beings may hold different perspectives and opinions, knowledge is co-created and the moment or the *now* is the most helpful point for meaning making (Burrows, 2011a).

A holistic relational enquiry approach acknowledges that the researcher acts as a catalyst to participants' meaning making and the data gathered emerges from the relational flow between research parties. The epistemological stance encourages the researcher to develop a mindful presence when working *with* people and when interpreting wisdom gathered (Burrows, 2011a). This includes the cultivation of characteristics that are listed in Table 3-1, such as empathy, gentleness, acceptance and curiosity as well as providing individuals with the space and time to reflect on questions and their own personal meaning making. In my opinion, the cultivation of a mindful way of being encourages a deep and dynamic level of connection between the researcher and participant whereby knowledge can be co-created, personal meaning making is respected and each person feels the freedom to voice their opinions and talk openly and honestly about their experiences.

Respecting this approach requires the researcher to: focus on participants' strengths; value and be cognisant of individuals' varying intelligences; adjust methods to suit the research group's needs; value the strength of subjectivity; and be open and share results with participants. The two approaches (whole systems thinking and holistic relational enquiry paradigm) combine together to produce a whole systems mindful enquiry epistemology, which encourages and allows *respect* for all parties concerned in the research process and *respect* for multiple ways of gaining or retrieving wisdom. In the next

⁷ I recognised that there are problems inherent in using the term "Native American". The term has been used as a political necessity to unify oppressed groups of people (K. Cohen 1998). I use it in this thesis in order to distinguish oppressed and marginalised Indigenous communities from other countries, such as Australia.

section, I go on to describe the methodology I used to examine how teachers make sense of teaching children mindfulness, a methodology that I feel exemplifies and brings to light the epistemological underpinnings of the thesis.

Methodological Choice

Methodology serves an important role and vital function in academic enquiry – precision and report quality is considered paramount. When searching for an appropriate methodology to conduct the current research I wanted to locate a methodology that 1) aligned with my values, ethics and preferred ways of gathering wisdom – my epistemology; 2) was rigorous and resonated with a readership audience from a range of disciplines; and 3) allowed me the room to explore mindfulness in depth and holistically.

In one sense, I felt like the methodology I used for this project chose me. I was writing a paper on intuition and during one of my database searches I located an article exploring homeopaths' experiences of clinical decision making. The authors of the study, Brien, Dibb, and Burch (2011) employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to understand how homeopaths generate knowledge in clinical settings.

One theme generated as a result of the in-depth interviews was that homeopaths readily use intuition in clinical decision making. Intuitive insights arose naturally in the first 10 minutes of conversations with clients. However, instead of prescribing a remedy based on this intuitive knowledge, the homeopaths spent the bulk of the consultation period using the systematic, logical-deductive tools of their trade to confirm or nullify their initial intuitive deductions. They felt that their clients and society in general favoured logical deductive reasoning over other forms of knowing, such as using dreams, intuition, insight meditation or other senses or signs to solve problems. The practitioners hid their intuitive insights from clients. I knew immediately after reading the paper that I wanted to use the same in-depth level of exploration to understand teachers' experiences and interpretations of teaching mindfulness with children – I wanted to connect with the heartbeat of mindfulness pedagogy.

What is IPA?

IPA is an experiential qualitative approach to research in psychology and the human, health and social sciences (Birbeck University of England, 2011). The majority of IPA

research has been conducted using in-depth interviews. This enables the participant to give a rich narrative account of their experience and allows the researcher considerable flexibility in order to explore interesting areas which may emerge (Birbeck University of England, 2011). Interviews are audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and subjected to detailed qualitative analysis in an effort to elicit key experiential themes from the participants' stories. Other qualitative data collection methods, such as accessing personal diaries can also be used in conjunction with interviews or on their own terms (J. A. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

The approach is relatively new but draws on the concepts of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, which have much longer histories (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). The methodology was developed by Jonathan Smith (see J. A. Smith, 1996) and is now widely used⁸ in a range of disciplines including education (J. A. Smith, 2011a ; Wagstaff et al., 2014) and mindfulness education (see Carelse, 2013; Hawtin & Sullivan, 2011; Hemanth & Fisher, 2014).

IPA is concerned with experience-based knowledge. The methodology assists researchers in providing a detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of that experience to participants and how they make sense of that experience in particular contexts (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 9). One of J. A. Smith's (2011b) primary concerns was "to make a robust, vigorous and uncompromising case for qualitative psychology centred on personal experience because this was so lacking at the time" (p. 56).

IPA has predominately been used to explore individuals' suffering, documenting detailed and emotional-laden narrative accounts of people's experiences of psychological distress, surgery and a wide range of illnesses. There are few examples of IPA being used to investigate wellness-orientated life experiences. J. A. Smith (2011a) in a review highlighted authors' preoccupation with detailing human suffering and suggested that future researchers employing IPA need to focus upon describing and interpreting the experiences of individuals involved in behaviour or programs that promote health. This call to researchers echoes and resonates with the central focus of the positive psychology

⁸ Approximately 300 peer-reviewed journal articles were identified in a database search between the years of 1996 and 2008 (J. A. Smith, 2011a).

movement, where a paradigm shift has occurred. In the last 15 years psychologists have shifted their attention away from examining human illness and all the things that can go wrong in a person's life and are beginning to bring more attention, regard and consideration to all the things that can go right in a person's life (Peterson, 2006).

Researchers have found that understanding the attributes, behaviours and activities that lead to human flourishing, loving-compassion and respect for the environment informs the design and development of programs that promote positive health and prevent and/or ameliorate unnecessary suffering (Peterson, 2006).

IPA Core Axioms

Leading writers in the philosophical fields of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography supply the inspiration and ingredients for the three core axioms or assertions that simultaneously guide the researcher when using IPA (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). The philosophical movements, their origins and key principles shaping the foundations of IPA are briefly described below.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, developed by Edmund Husserl (b. 1859-1938, Germany), is a philosophical movement concerned with lived experience (J. A. Smith, 2011a) and at its heart connects us with everyday experiences (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Husserl, was not the first person to use the term, "phenomenology", but is considered to be the father of this philosophical branch. His first work on the topic was published in 1900/01 and he wrote extensively on the topic until his death (see Beyer, 2013) for a full list of English translated works). Today, phenomenology is also viewed as a research method and an overarching perspective from which all qualitative research is sourced (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

The creators of IPA have attempted to translate key insights of phenomenological philosophy into a practical yet coherent approach to the collection of third person data (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Prominent figures in phenomenological philosophy, such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, have all shaped IPA to varying degrees (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). A phenomenological approach encourages the search for essences of people's experiences (phenomena) in order to unveil the underlying reasons or beliefs giving life to a person's description of phenomena (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). It is not concerned with attempting to produce an objective record of the event or state itself but

rather investigate how people make sense of and explain their experiences (Birbeck University of England, 2011). There is thus a fundamental rejection of the Cartesian divide (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006), where matter and mind, God and the world, science and religion, are perceived as eternally separated (Samarpanananda, 2013). Researchers when applying the methodology acknowledge that each human being is an integral part of a meaningful world and the meaningful world is a fundamental part of each human being (Larkin et al., 2006). Human behaviour and experience can thus only be understood and revealed as a function of each individual's unique interaction with the universe (Larkin et al., 2006).

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation (Kinsella, 2006). The methodology has a long history of scholarship and practice, originally used for the interpretation of ancient and biblical texts (Kinsella, 2006). Over time, hermeneutics was gradually applied to the human sciences more generally (Kinsella, 2006). Researchers, when applying a hermeneutic approach ideally seek understanding rather than explanation, acknowledge the situated location of interpretation, recognise the role of language and historicity in interpretation, view inquiry as conversation and are comfortable with ambiguity (Kinsella, 2006). IPA creators (J. A. Smith et al., 2009) note that their work has been influenced by Heidegger, a hermeneutic phenomenologist, as well as Schleiermacher and Gadamer.

The art of interpretation manifests in a multiplicity of ways in IPA research, as it does generally in all qualitative inquiry (Kinsella, 2006; J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Recognition of the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, on a graduation of levels, commonly termed the "hermeneutic circle", plays an integral role in IPA analysis (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Researchers need to have awareness of and appreciate the relationship between a single word embedded within the context of a sentence while simultaneously understanding and interpreting subjects' experiential accounts in relation to wider social and cultural norms, theoretical positions and worldviews (Larkin et al., 2006; J. A. Smith et al., 2009)

The creators of IPA also recognise and value that an experience cannot be "plucked straightforwardly from the heads of participants" (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 10). Researchers need to develop a companionable and supportive relationship with their co-

researchers, one that encourages trust and rapport and is conducive to new forms of meaning making, interpretation and discovery (J. A. Smith et al., 2009; J. A. Smith, 2011b). Both parties join together in a collaborative effort to understand with respect and compassion a significant part of the participant's life. It is important that both the participant and researcher allow themselves the freedom to rely on multiple ways of knowing to interpret and reveal data, such as the use of intuition and other senses; for example, how the experience was embodied in their physical person (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). J. A. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that this is not an easy process as the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of an experience of import. This is known as the "double hermeneutic", a term coined by Giddens (1987).

Idiography

Nomothetic and idiographic are terms that were coined in 1894 by German and neo-Kantian philosopher Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) to distinguish between the ways in which the discipline of history (and related fields) differed from that of psychology or other sciences (Hurlburt & Knapp, 2006). The terms are thought to have entered into psychological discourse around 1898, when Hugo Munsterberg used them in his presidential address at the American Psychological Association meeting (Hurlburt & Knapp, 2006).

A nomothetic approach involves understanding phenomena at the group level (J. A. Smith et al., 2009), for example, examining how a six-month mindfulness program impacts 500 children's physiological responses to stressful situations. A researcher in such a study is not looking to understand the specifics of individual experience, but averages for the whole group. In contrast, an idiographic approach deals with understanding unique and subjective descriptions of phenomena (J. A. Smith et al., 2009), such as uncovering five children's experiences of stress after completing a six-month mindfulness program.

Researchers utilising the IPA methodology tend to concentrate on conversing with specific individuals who have had or are experiencing similar situations of importance (Larkin et al., 2006), such as, teachers teaching children mindfulness. The researcher needs to become immersed with and at one with the experience of each case. Data analysis is highly intensive, detailed and focused on the examination of the individual experience, before moving on to relating this experience to other cases. Thus, studies

usually have no more than 10 to 12 participants (Larkin et al., 2006; J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Larger numbers compromise internal validity (Larkin et al., 2006).

Nomothetics and idiographics were viewed by psychologist, Allport (1937) as overlapping and mutually compatible constructs within a discipline, in contrast to Windelband's standpoint. For example, according to Allport's view, a controlled pragmatic randomised cluster trial of 500 children's physiological stress responses to a six-month mindfulness program will help researchers understand the efficacy of the intervention. Whereas, evaluating and interpreting five children's experiences via journals may help to determine *how* the program impacts stress levels. Likewise, the creators of IPA believe that delving into the specifics of a situation may give us some insight into populations at a general level (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Continuing along the lines of the example given above, researchers may discover through analysing journals that the children felt that a specific mindfulness practice was a key ingredient to reducing stress levels. Further research can then be applied to larger populations to see if this is the case, using nomothetic methods.

It is important to note that IPA is not phenomenology, nor is it hermeneutics, which J. A. Smith et al. (2009) point out is often diffused with a writing style that is hard to comprehend and inaccessible to many. The focus is on describing and illuminating lived experience – the “stuff” of everyday life – “not the philosophical account of lived experience” (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 33). It has been designed to be a “coherent approach to the collection and analysis of third-person data” (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 33).

IPA and Conceptual Frameworks

IPA is claimed to be well suited to exploring novel research areas such as mindfulness (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). At the start of the research journey, it is recommended that the researcher forgo using pre-existing theories or models to guide the development of the research process (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Similar to the concept of “beginner's mind” in mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005), the researcher is asked to set aside cherished or conditioned belief systems temporarily and allow the data to speak for itself (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). This openness and expansive way of thinking and perceiving permits the researcher to be receptive to new possibilities, and helps prevent them closing down novel

As I write these words I am not simply conveying content, I am entering into a relationship with you the reader (Burrows, 2011a, p. 221)

ways of thinking, or trying to match findings with pre-existing theories. In mindfulness traditions, this way of thinking is described as clear and uncluttered (Hardin, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2005) and in my opinion, cultivating “beginner’s mind” is a hallmark of good IPA work.

As the research process proceeds and the interviewer processes and explores participants’ views, he or she may find models or research that helps to articulate, explain and illuminate findings. In the case of the current research, a number of models and theories from a variety of disciplines were used to assist with the interpretation of teachers’ meaning making. The usage of related research and models is also thought to serve as a credibility check (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

IPA has a number of merits as a methodology and is now widely used in a wide range of disciplines throughout the world (see Brien et al., 2009 – complementary medicine; Cotterill, 2013 – management; Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2010 - nursing). However, a chief criticism of published, peer-reviewed IPA studies is that researchers have a tendency to describe their participants’ thoughts and feelings but neglect to describe anything about the complex interaction of thoughts, feelings, biases and experiences that govern the framework or lens through which the author views the data. This problem is known as authorial absence (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). To help remedy this deficiency found in the literature, I draw upon what is known in academic fields as autoethnography.

What is Autoethnography?

Autoethnography is simultaneously a way of approaching research and an academic style of writing (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). It emerged on the academic scene over one hundred years ago (Hayano, 1979). However, in contrast to today's modern conceptions, it was not considered to be a specific research technique, method, or theory (Hayano, 1979). The technique was described as lending colour and dimension to ethnographic fieldwork, where the researcher had an insider perspective, that is an identification with the group being researched (Hayano, 1979). Modern conceptions of autoethnography have largely evolved from research work conducted in the 1990s. In the last two decades, autoethnographers have published extensively (Anderson, 2006) and, similarly to IPA, researchers have predominately focused on "emotionally wrenching experiences, such as illness, death, victimization, and divorce" (Anderson, 2006, p. 377).

These researchers remain largely marginalised in mainstream social science venues, due to their rejection of traditional social science values and styles of writing. But they have gained entrée into many traditional realist qualitative-research journals (e.g., *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *Symbolic Interaction* and *Qualitative Sociology*) and have been influential in the creation of journals sympathetic to post-modern orientations (e.g., *Qualitative Inquiry*), handbooks (e.g., Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry*) and even book series (e.g., the AltaMira Press series on "Ethnographic Alternatives") (Anderson, 2006, p. 377).

Autoethnography invites and encourages researchers to draw on their experience and write in a highly personalised style in order to convey and extend understanding about a societal phenomenon of importance (Wall, 2006). "A central feature of autethnography is that the researcher is a highly visible social actor within the written text" (Anderson, 2006, p. 384). Autoethnographers challenge culture and society into motion in order to initiate social change (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433). The methodology helps writers and readers to shift away from the "distanced and detached observer" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433) role, the default mode that dominates academic enquiry and embrace intimate engagement, involvement and embodied experience with a topic.

Autoethnography recognises "the innumerable ways personal experience influences the research process" (Ellis et al., 2010, no page). It "acknowledges and accommodates

subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist" (Ellis et al., 2010, no page). The goal is to write meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter and make a difference (Ellis, 2004). It thus offers the guidance and know-how to apply IPA in a manner that acknowledges there is a researcher with thoughts, feelings and opinions participating in the research process. The methodology has similar considerations to IPA. It asks researchers to listen to meaningful episodes in an individual's life within a specific context and to illuminate and explicate epiphanies in a compelling manner, which may require comparing and contrasting personal experience against existing research (Ellis et al., 2010).

It is my view that autoethnographic methodology and methods complements and extends IPA, shining a light on a researcher's background, preconceptions, biases and the lens through which participants' experiences are being interpreted. It additionally enables both the voice of the participants and the voice of the researcher to be heard authentically as their stories and meaning making converge, diverge and unfold during the research process.

What does the finished autoethnographic piece look like? Final products of autoethnography have not followed one common paradigm or distinctive framework (Hayano, 1979, p. 101). The methods come to life in various shapes and forms and perhaps are limited only by the author's imagination. Findings may be portrayed via poetry, conversations, storytelling, journal writing and live performances (Ellis, 2004). In the current thesis I use the autoethnographic method of storytelling. In the first two sections of Chapter Two, I tell the story of how I came to understand mindfulness in an academic and experiential way. Following Chapter Two, autoethnographic methods come into play when I report the study's findings. As I attempt to interpret how teachers make sense of teaching mindfulness, I share some of my own stories, thoughts, feelings and images. This form of storytelling I feel helps convey the process of interpretation, enables new forms of meaning making and discovery and hopefully finds resonance with the reader. Later in the discussion section, I continue to use the methodology to discuss results within the context of literature in the field (up until June 2015) as well as my own personal meaning making.

In the previous sections I have described the methodology I will apply to understand

the research question, “How do teachers who are experienced MindBody Wellness practitioners make sense of teaching children mindfulness?” In the following section I describe the macrostructure of the thesis.

Thesis Macrostructure

The macrostructure (organisation) of the thesis may be loosely classed as “traditional: complex” (Paltridge, 2002) and generally follows the recommendations made by the creators of IPA in regards to organising a thesis. The traditional: complex approach is a variation of the traditional: simple structure, which sequentially consists of an introduction, literature review, materials and methods, results, discussion and conclusion or summary. A traditional: complex thesis differs mainly in terms of the placement of the methodology and literature review (Paltridge, 2002). In the traditional complex, methodology is incorporated within the introduction and in the current thesis literature is reviewed and integrated throughout the entirety of the dissertation.

What this Study will not Cover

In the current study I am not investigating:

- novice practitioners’ thoughts and feelings;
- mindfulness teachers who work in non-mainstream schools, such as Steiner or Montessori;
- the implementation of programs in schools or
- specific mindfulness programs, for example, Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

I am also not providing an in-depth analysis of mindfulness programs for children. In the next section, I provide a brief outline of what will be covered in each chapter of the thesis.

Chapter by Chapter Outline

Chapter Two: Coming to Terms with Mindfulness

In the following chapter I explore the concept of mindfulness from a variety of perspectives. In the first two sections of this chapter, I give an autoethnographic account of

how I first came to terms with mindfulness in an academic and experiential way. I then depart from the autoethnographic style, but not abruptly, in order to outline:

- an example of how a model of mindfulness applies to a primary school teacher's working life;
- the antecedents of school-based mindfulness programs;
- the two different traditions of mindfulness in education and
- my schema for articulating mindfulness.

In the final section of this chapter I start to examine the question, "Is mindfulness meditation?" This question not only mystifies the general public, but also academics (Cardoso, de Souza, Camano, & Roberto Leite, 2008; Davanger, 2013). The terms are often used interchangeably and the word, "mindfulness" is often used in favour of other terms such as "meditation". Establishing the differences between the terms, as will be become clear later, is essential for practice, policy and research.

Chapter Three: Is Mindfulness Meditation?

In Chapter Three I continue to discuss the difference between mindfulness and meditation. I distinguish between mindfulness as a "way of being" or state; meditation; mindfulness meditation and activities designed to cultivate mindfulness. I present an operational definition of meditation, followed by an outline of:

- the difference between informal and formal mindfulness practices;
- qualities indicative of a "mindful way of being";
- two school-based mindfulness programs; and
- one of the many ways in which mindful qualities may be cultivated in the classroom.

Chapter Four: Methods

The primary focus of this chapter is to detail my research methods. I gathered three types of data from the participants: demographic information (see Appendix E & F); interviews; and data illustrative of a teacher's practice, such as unpublished materials, worksheets, journals, art work and photos. Interviews provided the main source of data collected and examples of interview transcripts are provided in the Appendix section. In

this chapter in following order I detail:

- interview questions and technique
- trial interview
- participant characteristics and commitment
- recruitment process
- mode of communication for interviews
- demographic information
- instructional climate
- data analysis and reporting procedures.

I then provide a synopsis of the methods to evaluate the qualitative rigour of the study.

Chapter Five: Overview of Findings

In this chapter I present an overview of the main findings. I outline and pictorially represent super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes and define and discuss some of the terms used to make sense of teachers' meaning making. In the final section of this chapter I explain how each super-ordinate theme is presented.

Chapter Six: Spirituality

In Chapter Six, as the title suggests, I report findings related to the super-ordinate theme of Spirituality. I found that notions of spirituality were integral to how teachers made sense of teaching and practising mindfulness. Four sub-themes emerged:

- The Devotional Nature of Practice
- Connection
- Spirituality at Work
- Rituals.

Mindbody Wellness (MBW) practices were found to hold a central role in both participants' personal and professional lives. Teachers felt that devotion to a MBW routine or discipline encouraged them to feel grounded and spoke to the core of their being. This devotion was closely tied to feelings of connectedness among participants. *Connection* seemed to occur first on a *personal* level and then extended out to *others*.

A heightened sense of connectedness enabled teachers to form closer ties with children and they were able *truly* to listen to, acknowledge and respond to student voices – providing a firm foundation for effective learning. However, running like an undercurrent throughout the interview process were ripples of discontent – a *disconnection* from some of the rules governing educational policy and practice and the way society functions as a whole. This was an important aspect of how teachers made sense of mindfulness instruction with children. Mindfulness practices were perceived to help alleviate some of the problems caused by *mindless* policy, practices and pedagogy. I felt like teaching children mindfulness acted as a peaceful form of rebellion.

Chapter Seven: Creativity

In this chapter I present findings from the second super-ordinate theme, Creativity. The theme reverberated to varying degrees throughout participants' texts with three sub-themes emerging:

- Defining Creativity
- Creativity in Motion
- A Congenial Environment.

For one study participant, Daniella, exploring her own creativity was the catalyst driving her motivation to teach children mindfulness and she placed particular emphasis on defining the concept. Thus, Defining Creativity emerged as a sub-theme and also played an integral function in the remaining sub-themes.

In the second sub-theme, Creativity in Motion, I discuss the creative energy that emerged for teachers through the *action* of teaching children mindfulness. The last sub-theme, A Congenial Environment – a term coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1996) – deals with extrinsic factors which participants felt encouraged or discouraged child-centric mindfulness instruction.

Chapter Eight: Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing

In Chapter Eight, I present findings from the third super-ordinate theme, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing. Within the theme, four sub-themes emerged:

- Sharing Mindfulness with Students at a Young Age

- Holistic Vision
- Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing
- The Learning Environment.

Central to how teachers made sense of teaching children mindfulness was the belief that it was important to teach MBW skills at a young age, at school, rather than waiting until adulthood. Participants also expressed and demonstrated throughout their conversations the necessity of having a holistic outlook when teaching mindfulness. During the interview process participants often spoke or wrote about how practising mindfulness enhances a student's wellbeing and discussed factors related to the learning environment that detract from achieving high-level wellness.

Chapter Nine: Being a Mindful Role Model

In this chapter, I report findings from the fourth and last super-ordinate theme titled Being a Mindful Role Model. Being a mindful role model was central to how participants made sense of teaching children mindfulness. To be an effective role model, teachers felt that they needed to practice mindfulness both formally and informally. The majority of participants also expressed the need for the whole school system to embrace a mindful way of being.

In the analysis and interpretation of teachers' texts three sub-themes related to this super-ordinate theme emerged:

- Incorporating Formal and Informal Practices
- Cultivating a Mindful School System
- Mindfulness: A Personal Journey.

The last sub-theme, Mindfulness: Personal Journey, resonates with the first sub-theme, The Devotional Nature of Practice, presented in Chapter Six. In this first sub-theme, I gained insight into the essential role that MindBody Wellness (MBW) practices play in a teacher's life. In line with this philosophy, participants on the whole felt that to teach children mindfulness an instructor first needed to connect deeply with the practices. They perceived this deep level of connection with the "self" to be an elemental foundation to becoming a mindful role model and, in some cases, a pre-requisite to teaching mindfulness with children.

Chapter Ten: Discussion

In this chapter I continue to discuss the findings within the context of a variety of literature. However, instead of interacting with texts that assist with understanding and interpreting the participants' meaning making, the "register changes" (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 112) and I shift to reflecting upon: unanticipated results; challenges faced with the integration of mindfulness in school systems; how the findings support mindfulness education research and the epistemology, methodology and methods. All of these reflective points are interconnected and through the process I provide a number of additional recommendations for research and practice.

Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

In this final chapter I briefly summarise the main findings and recommendations made during the thesis. I then proceed to discuss the implications of the findings in terms of developing frameworks, theories and models to guide our understanding of mindfulness research and practice as well as educational policy. Next I move on to considering the implications arising from the way in which this research was conducted.

Chapter Two: Coming to Terms with Mindfulness

My Mindful Journey

*A Model of Mindfulness
Practice*

*Mindfulness Traditions in
Education*

*The Antecedents of Child-
Centric Mindfulness Programs*

A Teacher's Experience

Is Mindfulness Meditation?

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I explore the concept of mindfulness from a variety of perspectives. The research question posed for the project was, “How do teachers who are experienced MindBody Wellness practitioners make sense of teaching children mindfulness?” Clearly articulating the concept of mindfulness is thus central to the current thesis. However, coming to terms with the intricacies and workings of mindfulness is not such a simple task for two main reasons. First, mindfulness has attracted a multitude of interpretations both in the East and more recently in the West (Bodhi, 2013; Grossman, 2008). Each thinker, writer or researcher’s understanding and foundation for defining the construct is reflected in the dynamic interplay of a multitude of interacting factors, such as his or her:

- unique worldview;
- cultural background;
- subscription to a religious or philosophical tradition;
- academic discipline;
- meditation experience; and
- prejudices or biases.

Second, in the Western world, research has shown that the majority of adults have little to no understanding of the term “mindfulness” (Van Dam, Earleywine, & Danoff-Burg, 2009). Therefore, in the first two sections of this chapter, I give an autoethnographic account of how I first came to terms with mindfulness in an academic and experiential way. This method brings the concept to life and shows how I as the researcher have come to know and be with mindfulness at the time of writing. The approach additionally offers the opportunity for the reader, if unfamiliar with the concept, to experience a taste of mindfulness and develop his or her own unique understanding. During the autoethnographic journey I share my experiences of learning and teaching about mindfulness questionnaires, wellness planning and a model of mindfulness practice. I then depart from the autoethnographic style, but not abruptly, in order to outline:

- an example of how mindfulness applies to a primary school teacher’s working life;
- the antecedents of school-based mindfulness programs;

- the two different traditions of mindfulness in education; and
- my schema for articulating mindfulness.

In the final section of the chapter I start to examine the question, “Is mindfulness meditation?” The terms are often used interchangeably and the word, “mindfulness” is often used in place of other terms such as “meditation”. Establishing the differences between the terms, as will become clear later, is essential for practice, policy and research.

The word “mindfulness” is itself so vague and elastic that it serves almost as a cipher into which we can read virtually anything we want (Bodhi, 2013, p. 22)

Remembering Mindfulness – A Personal Autoethnographic Account

Mindfulness is on the one hand, a complex concept, with multiple meanings and at the same time, simple in its essence. For example, one of my young undergraduate students remarked in her reflective journal while contemplating and experiencing mindfulness practices that, “Being mindful really is all about understanding the beauty of the world, in all its diverse complexities”. This short, succinct sentence, in my opinion, simultaneously sums up both the simplicity and complexity of the concept.

I know when I first stumbled across “mindfulness” in the academic literature I was a bit perplexed as to what researchers were referring to. It seemed to be something to do with meditation, but not quite. I initially felt a bit like a fraud. I had been engaging in MBW practices since I was a child but I had no idea what the academics were trying to convey. Maybe I had no idea what I was doing? I kept spotting researchers in journal articles deploying “mindfulness guru”⁹ Kabat-Zinn’s (1994) definition: “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (p. 4). But that was pretty much it!

My mind turned off when I read this definition, like when an ad is on TV that I find particularly boring, or a cricket match – I just do not tune in. I definitely was not paying attention to the definition, in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. Being none the wiser after reading several outcomes-based studies on the topic, I decided to keep searching, as the terms mindfulness meditation and mindfulness were popping up everywhere on database searches. This was back in 2009, when 290 articles on the topic emerged (Black, 2013).

I then struck academic gold when I encountered K. W. Brown and Ryan’s (2003) Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS). The scale reproduced as Figure 2-1. I

⁹ The term “guru” in this context describes a human teacher with spiritual knowledge (Kempton, 2011).

have to confess that when I first took the questionnaire I actually thought the test was going to measure my level of mindfulness accurately. I wondered whether decades of meditation, sometimes spending hours a day meditating, had made a difference to my level of mindfulness. Was I actually mindful? I took the test quite seriously and was completely honest in my responses. I guess it can be likened to taking an eye test. If you go to the optometrist to have your eyes tested and find yourself having to squint to read some of the letters as they fade into oblivion, it is time to be up front and admit to yourself that you may need glasses. You need to open your eyes and read to the best of your ability. Unfortunately, however, this does not seem to be how most people approach the MAAS. Researchers have found that people have a tendency to mark themselves a bit higher on each item (Van Dam, Earleywine, & Borders, 2010). They are squinting, so to speak.

The items that I scored relatively lowly on at the time were, “I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else,” “I forget a person’s name almost as soon as I’ve been told it for the first time” and “I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.”

I then embarked on a plan, as part of a general wellness course, to mindfully attend to: “I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else” and “I forget a person’s name almost as soon as I’ve been told it for the first time.” I found after completing a general wellness inventory for the course that I was not at peace in each moment of the day. I was peaceful when I meditated and this feeling would last for a couple of hours after a session, but I wasn’t able to stay in this calm space throughout the day.

Mindfulness Awareness Attentions Scale (MAAS)

Instructions:

Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below. Please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Almost	Very	Somewhat	Somewhat	Very	Almost
Always	Frequently	Frequently	Infrequently	Infrequently	Never

I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of

it until some time later. 1 2 3 4 5 6

I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying

attention, or thinking of something else. 1 2 3 4 5 6

I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the

present. 1 2 3 4 5 6

I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying

attention to what I experience along the way. 1 2 3 4 5 6

I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort 1 2 3 4 5 6

until they really grab my attention.

I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it 1 2 3 4 5 6

for the first time.

It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness

of what I'm doing. 1 2 3 4 5 6

I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I drive places on 'automatic pilot' and then wonder why I went there.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself doing things without paying attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I snack without being aware that I'm eating.	1	2	3	4	5	6
MAAS Scoring						
To score the scale, simply compute a mean of the 15 items. Higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness.						
Source: K. W. Brown and Ryan (2003, p. 826)						

Figure 2-1: Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale

My perceptions align with a study where the authors examined the relationship between measures of everyday mindfulness and mindfulness during meditation. The results suggest that: everyday mindfulness is a different construct from mindfulness during meditation; individuals who are more mindful during everyday life may not be more mindful

during sitting meditation than individuals who are less mindful during everyday life and there may be no relationship between everyday mindfulness and mindfulness during meditation (Thompson & Waltz, 2007).

In the course we were required to design a “SMART Plan”. I have to admit I wasn’t keen on the *planning* aspect. I felt like the planning structure was antithetical to the non-goal orientated aspect of mindfulness. So, I wrote this on my assignment, almost like a disclaimer and after getting this out of my system I moved on with the planning. SMART is an acronym that generally stands for: s – specific; m – measurable; a – action-based; r – realistic and T – Time-based (M. Moore & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). SMART planning is all about organising your dreams in order to turn them into reality. It can be applied to all aspects of life and is a great tool to help integrate MindBody Wellness practices into a person’s daily or weekly routine. Often people tweak the methodology and my own version, which has worked well with clients and students, starts with first creating a *vision* and a *desired outcome*, then working out an *action* congruent with the vision, a suitable *time-frame* and perhaps a *reward* at the end (see Figure 2-2). An example of SMART planning in action is listed in Appendix J.



Figure 2-2: SMART Planning

One of my visions for the wellness plan was to become peaceful throughout the day. I planned to achieve this by paying attention each moment to how I moved dishes and cups from one location to the other and focused on remembering people's names when I met them for the first time. As I am writing this, I can't quite believe that engaging in these simple actions brought peace to the majority of my day, but it did! During my mindfulness SMART plan, I experienced one of those light-bulb moments. I *remembered* what mindfulness was. I had learnt about it in Japan. Friends had reverentially pointed out monks engaging in the techniques and then I *remembered* how mindful I was as a child – mindfulness infiltrated every aspect of my being.

At this point, if you are not a Buddhist scholar or well versed in mindfulness academic literature you may be wondering why I am emphasising the word, *remember* to such an extent. The Buddha designated "*sati*" (aka mindfulness) as the main pillar of his meditative system (Bodhi, 2013, p. 22). *Sati* means "to remember or call to mind" (Bodhi, 2013, p. 22). Bodhi (2013) writes that the Buddha assigned the word a *new* meaning. However, early discourse on the topic does not formally define the term (Bodhi, 2013). For me, the essence of mindfulness is remembering – remembering that we were once perhaps mindful – and I feel that mindfulness techniques *remind* us of this natural way of being. They call us back to how we once were; they trigger our "being" back to its natural state.

Since the Buddha's time, pinning down the meaning of *sati* has caused a great deal of discussion and debate.

For example, Gethin (2013) writes in regards to the definitions of mindfulness:

The key element in the early definitions, it seems to me, is that they take the sense of *sati* as 'remembering' seriously. The basic idea here is straightforward: if one is instructed to observe the breath, one needs to remember to do this, rather than forget after a minute, five minutes, 30 minutes, and so forth. That is, one has to remember that what it is one should be doing is remembering the breath. There is a further dimension to this remembering implied by my use of the expression 'what one is supposed to be doing.' That is the specific context in which practice of mindfulness is envisaged by ancient Buddhist texts, in remembering that one should remember the breath, one is remembering that one should be doing a meditation practice; in remembering one should be doing a meditation practice, one is remembering that one is a Buddhist monk; in remembering that one is a Buddhist monk, one is remembering that one should be trying to root out greed, hatred and delusion... This seems to me to make sense of such traditional Buddhist

meditations as recollection (anussati) of the qualities of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, which the texts themselves seem keen to include within the broad framework of mindfulness practice. (p. 270)

The interpretation of “remembering” that Gethin describes is not the same kind of feeling or insight I reached on that day. I did not focus on the “shoulds” of mindfulness practice. In a moment in time, I realised that being mindful allows the true beauty of the soul to shine forth. It is a way of being, available to each person, in each moment. As mindfulness instructors Stahl and Goldstein (2010) eloquently describe:

Mindfulness involves an elemental and spontaneous openness to experience, grounded in the body, in the timeless, in not expecting anything to happen, a befriending and inhabiting of this present moment for its own sake. When you rest in mindful awareness, you are participating intimately in life and its unfolding, seeing what happens, experimenting, allowing the original beauty and mystery of the world and of yourself to speak to you, without shying away from wonder, and awe, and joy – and the miracle of being alive in these precious moments that are available to all of us but that we so often ignore in the hope of some “better” ones at some future time. (p. x)

When I *remembered* mindfulness, I had a vision of men and women throughout the centuries being mindful. Some were practising the ancient art of tai chi, others were immersed in painting and others were enjoying and connecting with the environment, for example, a surfer gliding through a barrel. I knew (remembered) in that moment that mindfulness is a universal quality. I do not feel that it belongs to a religion, a philosophical tradition or any particular group in society. It transcends religion and dogma and is always there, waiting for the individual to clear away the obstacles and connect to the eternal waves of harmonic resonance.

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

Shapiro's Model of Mindful Practice

The next phase of my journey in coming to know mindfulness academically and experientially started when I encountered Shauna Shapiro's work on mindfulness. I believe she was one of the first researchers to look at the links between mindfulness and wellbeing (see Shapiro, Oman, Thoresen, Plante, & Flinders, 2008). There was something about her work that captivated me, even though it followed the traditional distanced academic norms. I felt the person behind the "clinical" words.

I was not surprised when I later read Schwartz's written interview with Shapiro (Schwartz, 2008) and discovered her long history and immersion in mindfulness and meditation practices. Shapiro first became interested in mindfulness when she was 19 years old. Her father gave her a copy of *Wherever you go, there you are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994), just before embarking on a backpacking trip in the Gila wilderness in New Mexico (Schwartz, 2008). Shapiro writes:

The combination of the mindfulness teachings and the simplicity of living in nature, allowed me to connect with a deep knowing and reverence for this way of living – this way of being. It was a beautiful and life-changing month. When I returned from backpacking, my vision for how I wanted to lead my life and what I wanted to study were clear ... all I wanted to study was mindfulness, at every level.

That same year, I was studying abroad in Israel where I met Sylvia Boorstein who introduced me to loving kindness meditation (metta). I was very moved by her teachings, and this catalyzed my commitment to continue to study meditation. When I graduated from Duke University, I decided to travel through Nepal and Thailand to explore meditation further. While there, I met a beautiful monk who guided me to Wat Suan Mokh in Thailand where I attended my first Vipassana meditation retreat.

This was truly an eye opening experience. First, I was awed by the unruly nature of my mind. It seemed impossible to tame it and keep it focused on the breath. The harder I tried, the more frustrated I became. Was everyone's mind like this? As I continued to practice, guided by the gentleness of the monks' teachings, my mind began to settle (more of its own accord than due to any effort on my part). I touched into a deep peace and an ease that I had never known. I also experienced a joyfulness and energy, and a deep sense of interconnectedness. I left the monastery committed to continuing what I had learned as I began graduate school back in the West (Schwartz, 2008, p. 1).

Shapiro has conducted numerous studies, using outcome-based trial designs to understand the impacts of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction program developed by Kabat-Zinn (Schwartz, 2008). In 2006, together with Carlson, Astin, and Freedman she turned her attention to developing a model of mindfulness to elucidate both the concept's simplicity and complexity (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009, p. 8). The model builds on Bishop et al.'s (2004) two-component model of mindfulness:

The first component involves the self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on an immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment. The second component involves adopting a particular orientation towards one's experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness and acceptance. (p. 232)

Shapiro et al. (2006) propose three core elements involved in a mindfulness practice: intention, attention and attitude, which I will outline shortly. The elements are not sequential, but rather are engaged simultaneously in the process of mindfulness – “they are interwoven aspects of a single cyclic process and occur simultaneously, the three elements informing and feeding back into each other” (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009, p. 8). The model helps explain some aspects of mindfulness practice and in the following section I apply the framework within the context of the school system.

Intention

Intention or an individual's vision is seen as an integral first step in a mindfulness practice. Buddhist traditions highlight that a person's intention – “why one is practising” – is a central component of mindfulness and is crucial in understanding the process as a whole (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). This perspective is consistent with SMART planning and also modern systems theory, which asserts the centrality of a system or concept's purpose. “The least obvious part of the system, its function or purpose, is often the most crucial determinant of the system's behaviour” (Meadows, 2008, p.16).

In the Western world there are a myriad of wellness-orientated motivations for pursuing a mindfulness practice. For example, schools may adopt mindfulness primarily to enhance academic achievement, whereas others may implement programs to reduce stress in child and teacher populations. However, as Freedman (2009, as cited in Shapiro and Carlson, 2009), discusses, a person's vision or mindful intention is often dynamic and evolving. For example, a therapist's initial purpose for beginning a mindfulness practice may be to decrease her own stress levels (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). As she continues her mindful journey the therapist might realise that her intentions and way of being extend to her clients through increased levels of compassion and empathy. Studies have verified this phenomenon, where a person's intentions for practice shift along a continuum of enhanced wellbeing, moving from concerns consumed with the self to an expanded worldview where the individual considers how and in what way his or her actions can benefit the wider community (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). This evolution of consciousness that may occur marries with Buddhist teachings, where mindfulness meditation was offered as a form of phenomenological practice aimed at helping the student examine the stream of experiential phenomena with an attitude of acceptance and clarity that would reveal the knowledge that we are all One and connected (Dalai Lama, 2005, as cited in Gause & Coholic, 2010).

This transcendence in consciousness has the potential to catapult humans into a new manner of behaving and acting in the world, one premised on peace and compassion. Einstein describes how transcendence can open the mind to perceiving the planet and humanity from a systems perspective:

A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and our feelings as something separate from the rest. A kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty... We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive. (Einstein, 1950, as cited in Levey & Levey, 2003, p. 255)

The actualisation of this level of consciousness is the optimal aim and intention of both wellness (Dunn, 1961; M. Cohen, 2010; J. W. Travis & Ryan, 2004) and mindfulness (Bodhi, 2013). And striving for this way of being is considered to be an innate drive of the human condition (M. Cohen, 2010). This manner of being manifests itself in what is known

in Buddhist traditions as “right mindfulness” or “right intention”.

Buddhist scholar Bodhi (2013) writes that mindfulness has to work in unison with “right view” and “right effort”.

This means that the practitioner of mindfulness must at times evaluate mental qualities and intended deeds, make judgments about them, and engage in purposeful action. In conjunction with right view, mindfulness enables the practitioner to distinguish wholesome qualities from unwholesome ones, good deeds from bad deeds, beneficial states of mind from harmful states. (Bodhi, 2013, p.26)

The role and place of judgment in mindfulness discourse is often neglected – the practice is often considered to be devoid of judgment (Bodhi, 2013). Kabat-Zinn’s (1994) definition of mindfulness “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (p. 4), is one of the most commonly cited definitions in academic literature (Hyde & LaPrad, 2015; McCown, Reibel, & Micozzi, 2011) and its emphasis on a non-judgmental stance seems to have influenced our conceptual understanding of mindfulness in the West (Hyde & LaPrad, 2015).

I believe a non-judgmental stance is an important aspect of a mindfulness practice when, for example, you are beset by a range of conflicting and turbulent emotions about a situation. Observing and embodying the understanding that no emotions are good or bad, they just are, dissolves the power of the emotions and allows a person to return to a more harmonious state. However, if you were to see a friend being bullied, being mindful would require you to stand up for your friend and try to prevent the action from occurring in the future.

Attention

The second axiom, *attention*, refers to paying attention in the moment to your internal and external experience. It involves suspending judgment and observing the changing field of thoughts, feelings and sensations as they occur in the MindBody. A mindfulness practice involves a dynamic process of learning how to cultivate attention that is discerning and non-reactive, sustained and concentrated (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009), in order to develop a way of being that illuminates experience, as it occurs, in its full essence and vibrancy.

When I think of ways to relate this experience to others (especially my students from

Asia), I sometimes describe it as akin to viewing a Vietnamese or Chinese movie depicting moments in peoples' lives in the eighteenth century, where eating a piece of fruit is shot over a five minute journey. The viewer enters a beautiful world, time is inconsequential; all that matters is embracing each moment of experiencing the fruit; the first bite as it enters the mouth, the reactions as the taste buds are triggered a light and the nourishment and sensations as the fruit slides down the throat. The experience in these types of movies is often interwoven with the rich textures of surrounding furniture and textiles, sunlight as it cascades through the window and the sweet sound of a bird whose song converges and finds harmony with the experience. Unfortunately, most people do not have my predilection for Asian movies set in the eighteenth century and I often resort to the analogy of a car's windscreen to relate the concept. A mindfulness practice is like clearing your windscreen, you can artfully take in your life's journey, see signs as they approach, traffic coming your way and stop when required. Experiencing life without mindful attention is like driving your car around with a dirty windscreen.

This ability that mindfulness presents to understand and observe the many layers of human experience was probably what the philosopher, Husserl was searching for when arguing for a programmatic system in philosophy. Mindfulness flows to the heart of phenomenological inquiry. Shapiro and Carlson (2009) in their model of mindfulness describe the *attentional* component of mindfulness similar to "what Husserl referred to as a return to things themselves, that is suspending (or noticing) all the ways of interpreting experience and attending to experience itself, as it presents in the here and now" (p.10). The creators of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis note that if the researcher focuses mindfully, the essential features of an experience will transcend the particular circumstances of their appearance and may illuminate the event's "essential qualities" – making it available for others to relate to and learn from (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). They write:

Famously, Husserl argues that we should 'go back to the things themselves.' The 'thing' he is referring to, then, is the experiential content of consciousness, and he is alluding to the various obstacles that can get in the way of its pursuit. Our predilection for order can mean we can too quickly look to fit 'things' within our pre-existing categorization system. Instead, Husserl suggests that we should endeavour to focus on each and every particular thing in its own right. (2009, p. 12)

Husserl's phenomenology calls for the researcher to free themselves from their normal

“habits of mind” that may close down on new or novel information and to examine experience from what Kabat- Zinn (2005) term a beginner’s mind.

Attitude

Attitude, the third axiom, involves the qualities a person brings to their attention. Mindfulness is often associated with “bare awareness” or “bare attention”. However, Shapiro and colleagues (2006) feel that the description of “bare awareness” does not adequately reveal what qualities individuals bring to a mindfulness practice. They feel it could mean an individual observes their life with a cold and distant attitude or they pay attention from a state of innate stability, where compassion, open-heartedness and peace for others and self reside. The researchers believe the qualities one brings to the practice of mindfulness are crucial. They posit that individuals can attend to their own internal and external experiences without evaluation or interpretation whilst also being in a mindset of loving kindness – even if what is occurring is contrary to deeply held wishes or expectations. This state of being compassionate and loving to oneself and others in the face of unexpected and unwelcome life events is also promoted in the practice of yoga, where one is encouraged to operate from a natural state of equilibrium and stability (Richard Miller, 2005).

Mindfulness in Practice: A Teacher’s Experience

In 2011, in an effort to communicate mindfulness by various means, in order to reach wider audiences, particularly those related to education, I gave an example, in a journal article (see N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012), of how mindfulness relates to primary school teacher, Karen Ager’s work life. Karen mentioned to me that before formally practising mindfulness she already intuitively incorporated many of the mindfulness practices (see Figure 2-3 and 2-5) outlined in Whitehead’s (2011) position paper “Mindfulness in early education” (personal communication, April 15, 2012). This suggests that mindfulness may be practised in many aspects of life without formal training and many teachers may naturally be incorporating mindfulness in classroom life without realising it.

Karen found that formally cultivating mindfulness in a graduate Positive Psychology course (see Figure 2-4 for outline of the mindfulness assessment task) enabled her to deepen her understanding of the practice. She applied mindfulness to her daily teaching routines and found that by cultivating a more mindful way of being she was able to gain a

new awareness of her teaching habits and noticed a particularly effective teaching

A Simple Mindfulness Practice for Children

Deep Belly Breathing

Sitting in a circle with a small group (say 3-10 children), get children to focus on the 'in' and 'out breath'. Put a soft toy on each child's tummy (lower end of stomach) and get them to feel the soft toy go up and down as they breathe. Let them quieten down and see if they can hear their breath going in and out. You could say, 'Let's close our eyes and take some slow deep breaths. See if you can find your still peaceful place. Can you feel a kind of warm, happy smile in your body? Do you feel it? Take some more deep breaths and really snuggle into your peaceful place. Remember you can come here whenever you want and stay as long as you like'.

This mindfulness listening activity was presented in Whitehead's (2011, p. 22) position paper, Mindfulness in early childhood education.

Figure 2-3: A Mindfulness Practice for Children

strategy that she regularly used with students. Karen shares:

During the week I suggested to a 10 year old that she trust her feelings about spelling. I asked her to tick words that she "felt" were spelled correctly and to underline words that were perhaps "not quite right". We did this during a number of sessions. It turns out that whenever she trusted her intuition she was perfectly correct. As Kabat-Zinn suggested it is better to trust your intuition, even if you make some "mistakes" along the way. This may not be the usual interpretation of trust, but this awareness was enlightening. I've done this with other students, but I've never really been mindful of the activity. Follow up? I am hoping that this will become a work habit for my students in general and that they will trust themselves in all aspects of their lives. (personal communication, April 15, 2012)

Before *formally* practising mindfulness, Karen was not fully aware that she routinely encouraged students to use their intuition and thus she developed the capacity to view her teaching habits through a new lens. Shapiro et al. (2006) in their model of mindfulness describe this shift in awareness as a "rotation in consciousness" and suggest that it is a meta-mechanism that is basic to human development and enhanced through mindfulness practices.

Mindfulness Discussion Assessment

After reading course materials on mindfulness incorporate mindfulness into your weekly life through:

- a. **Mindful Eating:** Practice eating mindfully up to 5 x this week. At least for as long as you can ... but try to reach 5 minutes.*
- b. **Mindful Focus:** Apply mindfulness to something else that you already do, and that might be easy for you (e.g., during runs, yoga, cooking, playing?).*
- c. **Mindful Challenge:** Apply mindfulness for five minutes per day during another typically mindless or challenging activity (e.g., on public transport, in the shops, watching TV,), and especially whenever you catch yourself going into judgement mode? Or multi-tasking?*

Reflecting and Sharing: *Reflect on these experiences and share highlights and challenges with your group. That is, include both what you found challenging (including lack of practice which is highly relevant and common), as well as awareness of any uplifting or flow-on effects (i.e., impact on rest of your day and well-being).*
(L. Ievleva, personal communication, March 26, 2012)

This assessment piece was designed for the online positive psychology course at RMIT University.

Figure 2-4: Mindfulness Discussion Assessment

Other mindfulness instructors note that class participants commonly develop this capacity – moving from a position where they are completely identified with their experience to a position in which the experience becomes available for observation (McCown et al., 2011). However, they feel it is important to note that “(1) re-perceiving does not create distance and disconnection from one’s experience but rather enables one to look, feel and know more deeply; (2) importantly, the “observing self” is not reified, but rather is seen as a temporary platform for observation and questioning” (McCown et al., 2011, p.66).

The Antecedents of School-based Mindfulness Programs

In the previous sections, both teacher Karen Ager and mindfulness researcher Shauna Shapiro discussed the profundity of mindfulness researcher and practitioner Kabat-Zinn’s teachings. The antecedents and practices of a large number of established school-based mindfulness programs can often be traced back to Kabat-Zinn and colleagues’ Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course (Broderick, 2013; Rechtschaffen, 2014). For example, adolescent mindfulness program developer, Patricia Broderick (2013) states:

Without Jon Kabat-Zinn, whose brilliant Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program invites everyone to experience a more mindful life, this book would not exist. He and Myla Kabat-Zinn have been gracious, generous, and tireless advocates for so many of us in the field of mindfulness in education. (p. xiii)

The course was founded by Kabat-Zinn and colleagues in the late 1970s at the University of Massachusetts Hospital, in the US and was initially called the Stress Reduction and Relaxation program (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). The rationale for the program’s establishment was to “catch patients who tend to fall through the cracks in the health care delivery system” (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, p. 33). Kabat-Zinn’s (1982) aim was to assist individuals suffering from chronic pain; those that were either dissatisfied with bio-medical health care or could no longer be helped by the Western practices of medicine. The course’s primary objective was to develop the internal resources of the client systematically through a spectrum of 1) meditation techniques; such as yoga postures (*asana*) and mindfulness meditation; and 2) education about the physiology of stress, consequences of disregarding the stress response and understanding the mechanisms

involved with the relaxation response, pioneered by Herbert Benson (see <http://www.relaxationresponse.org/>) from the Harvard Medical School in 1975.

The program was initially 10 weeks in duration with clients attending a two-hour session once a week. The following meditation practices were taught: body scan; mindfulness of breath and other sense perceptions; Hatha Yoga; mindful walking; mindful standing; and mindful eating. Didactic material included information on the relationship of stress to physical ailments, consequences of the flight or fight response and how to balance autonomic arousal.

Key elements of the program include:

- participating in groups of 15-20 to enhance individual motivation and the sharing of experiences;
- the suggestion that the practices are powerful and regular practise will bring relief of pain and suffering;
- the cultivation of an attitude of non-striving – that anguish arises from wanting life to be other than what it is (Hyland, 2011, p.170);
- self-responsibility – healing can only occur if the individual takes responsibility for their own health;
- impressing on individuals that becoming mindful and reducing pain and suffering takes dedicated work;
- providing a range of meditation activities to suit differing needs of individuals;
- homework assignments – so students can relate and apply mindfulness to their everyday life;
- finite duration – in order that individuals do not become dependent on the course and develop their own resources for coping, independent of the group;
- long-term perspective – step-by-step development of skills that can have an impact on long-term health and wellbeing; and
- offering a second program to advance skills.

This formula held an extraordinary appeal to the public, health practitioners and teachers in the United States and beyond as it is now the most widely taught mindfulness program in North America and Europe (Purser & Milillo, 2015).

It is interesting to note that at the time of Kabat-Zinn's development and research into a mindfulness-based stress reduction course, other researchers, D. Brown, Forte, Rich and Epstein (1982/3) were examining the phenomenological differences between hypnosis, mindfulness meditation and imaging. However, research participants in the D. Brown et al. (1982/3) study practised mindfulness meditation under the Burmese lineage of the Mahashi Sayadaw, which involved continuous alternation between hourly periods of sitting and walking meditation over a span of 16 hours daily for either two days or two weeks and required abstinence from sex, substance use and communication with others. This traditional practice did not find resonance in Western countries either in research or practice. This demonstrates the appeal of adapting programs to suit the needs of target populations.

Mindfulness: Two Different Traditions in Education

Contributing to the complexity associated with clearly articulating and capturing mindfulness in words is the issue that two different traditions are actively practised in the field of education. This has created an element of confusion in the academic literature on the topic (Compton & Hoffman, 2013) and it is therefore important when writing about mindfulness that researchers explain what type of mindfulness they are referring to.

There are mindfulness practices connected to and influenced by Buddhist meditative disciplines and other spiritual traditions including Hinduism, Islam, Taoism and Judaism (Stahl & Goldstein, 2010), which are explored in this study. And there is another perspective developed by Ellen Langer (1989) in the field of psychology (Levinthal & Rerup, 2006), which adopts a more secular and behavioural approach. The two constructs have intersecting elements and implications and some authors clearly distinguish between the two constructs (see Compton & Hoffman, 2012), others discuss the concepts as if they are one and the same (see Reid & Miller, 2009) and lastly some researchers and educators blend the approaches when teaching (see Bernay, 2012).

The confusion that has crept into academic literature really hit home for me when a reviewer of an article I submitted for publication questioned why I had not included the work of Langer in my article on mindfulness teacher education (see N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012). Langer's approach involves paying attention to external stimuli, noticing what is happening in the environment and responding in a mindful rather than mindless or passive

way. This form of mindful attention has the potential to help individuals create new categories of experience and to be open to new information and different points of view (Compton & Hoffman, 2012). As an example, one of Langer's (1992) mindfulness strategies involves participants completing six-minute word-production exercises in which new or novel words are generated by thinking of a word. This practice would not be classified as a meditation or a MindBody Wellness practice. It is, as Langer (1992) states, a "cognitive strategy" and Langer acknowledges the differences between the two practices (Ostafin & Kassman, 2012).

In contrast, mindfulness influenced by Buddhist traditions is associated with observing moment to moment internal and external stimuli without categorisation or judgment, remaining unattached to outcomes, developing a basic trust in your experience, feeling at peace and in contrast to Langer's approach, does not require the individual to alter behaviour (Compton & Hoffman, 2013). However, a mindfulness practice will often lead to behaviour change. Another fundamental difference between the two traditions is that Langer's perspective encourages children to think about something in a novel way, whereas mindfulness meditation focuses simply on observing the fact that one is thinking (Ostafin & Kassman, 2012). Kabat-Zinn emphasises "silence" and "spaciousness of the non-conceptual" in a mindfulness meditation curriculum (McCown et al., 2011, p. xv). Without this he writes "it would merely become a cognitive exercise, no longer speaking to or cultivating the heart of mindfulness" (McCown et al., 2011, p. xv).

My Schema for Articulating Mindfulness

In this chapter I first gave an autoethnographic account of how I came to understand mindfulness. In short, I believe my view or schema for articulating mindfulness could perhaps best be described as a Western contemporary wellness-orientated post-secular perspective. A number of principles interact and combine to inform my interpretation of the concept, namely:

- Our understanding and interpretation of mindfulness will continue to grow and change as we as humans evolve.
- Mindfulness will be uniquely experienced, understood and expressed by each individual.

- Converging themes will be associated with individual expressions and interpretations of mindfulness.
- Mindfulness needs to be conveyed by a variety of methods in order to capture the component parts, the interaction between the parts and, the relationship between the parts and the whole.
- States of mindfulness may be measured on a continuum.
- Mindfulness may be expressed and discussed at an individual, group, cultural and societal level and will be context dependent.
- The goal of mindfulness is to realise what has been described as bliss, spiritual enlightenment or *samadhi*; however, this state can only be embodied once the seeker recognises that no technique is required to arrive at this state. Practising mindfulness, however, may act as a springboard to bringing down barriers that obstruct this realisation and subtly shift consciousness in a way that illuminates this realisation.
- Meditation practice may enhance our connection to a mindful way of being.

Is Mindfulness Meditation?

In the previous section, I explored mindfulness from a variety of perspectives. Another step in coming to terms with the concept is to discuss the differences between mindfulness and meditation. “What’s the difference between mindfulness and meditation?” is one of the questions that veteran mindfulness instructor, Janet ETTY-Leal (see Photograph 2-1) is regularly asked in the classroom when instructing children and adults (personal communication, November, 12, 2013). It is a question that not only mystifies the general public, but also academics (Cardoso et al., 2008; Davanger, 2013).



Photograph 2-1: Janet ETTY-Leal Sharing Mindfulness with Children, March 14, 2011, The Age.

My views on this question largely correspond with those of meditation researcher and lecturer Roberto Cardoso from Brazil. Cardoso asserts:

Not all interventions of mindfulness meditation are meditation - although many of them are very good interventions. Not all interventions of Tibetan Buddhism are meditation - although many of them are very good interventions. Not all interventions of Yoga are meditation - although many of them are very good interventions.

However, many of these mystical-philosophical lines were brought to the public with a package of interventions that was generally called meditation. Here is the root of all the mix-up. (personal communication, December, 18, 2013)

From my observation and experience of mindfulness practices with children, some lessons do involve the process of meditation, but some do not. They may incorporate contemplative or MindBody Wellness (MBW) practices such as guided imagery, meditation and yoga as well as positive psychology interventions, and similar to Kabat-Zinn's program, information related to the stress response. Whitehead's (2011, p. 22) position paper gives an example (see Figure 2-5) of what commonly occurs in the classroom when teachers share "mindfulness" with children.

A Simple Mindfulness Practice

Mindful Listening

Get children to lie down in a suitable place without noisy distractions. A few examples could include reading the children an uplifting book, or playing some soothing music and let them be transported to a place where there are no worries, only peace and tranquillity. Another technique is to take them on a guided journey through a forest, beach walk, outer space or get them to think of their favourite place. You can make up these journeys, or use specific guided visualisations from books.

The mindfulness listening activity was presented along with four other activities in Whitehead's (2011) position paper, Mindfulness in Early Childhood Education.

Figure 2-5: Mindful Listening for Children

In this activity Whitehead used a wide range of activities such as storytelling, music therapy and guided imagery techniques to promote the cultivation of "mindfulness listening" in the classroom. It is difficult to ascertain clearly from the example whether children would reach meditative states during these activities, as it would depend on factors such as the length of time the music is played, what type of music was being played and how children were positioned and set up for the activity. However, it is certainly possible through listening to the rhythms of the music to meditate and it seems from Whitehead's description of transporting children to a place of peace that students in her class are engaging in meditation.

An article in *Greater Good Magazine* may give an indication why the term "mindfulness" is being used so frequently, even though teachers are teaching children a wide range of Mindbody Wellness techniques. The opening line of the column states, "With

eyes closed and deep breaths, students are learning a new method to reduce anxiety, conflict, and attention disorders. But don't call it meditation" (Suttie, 2007). In the article, geneticist and Director of the Mindful Awareness Research Center at the University of California, Susan Smalley comments, "I don't even like to use the word 'meditation' when I talk about mindfulness, since it has religious connotations for some. The programs we are studying are about stress reduction and increasing awareness and are totally secular."

In schools where I have evaluated programs, teachers and management have expressly asked for the term "mindfulness" to be used over "meditation" in parent correspondence. As mindfulness program developer and actor, Goldie Hawn relates, the term, "meditation" is perceived by some as being "scary" (Suttie, 2007). Additionally, some segments of our community do not condone the use of meditation in schools. For example, from an interpretation of online discussions¹⁰, certain religions (e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses) may endorse meditation and reflection via prayer or scriptures and informal activities such as mindful reading, but consider mindfulness meditation based on the breath (see Figure 2-6 for example) to be dangerous due its purported connection with the devil (Downes, 2014).

Those subscribing to the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, similarly do not advocate meditation activities such as mindful breathing for children, but do advocate practices such as listening to the sounds in the environment and activities that encourage open heartedness or stillness, for example creative pursuits (Gidley, 2009). Former Steiner teacher, Burrows emphasises that deep listening plays a major role in the pedagogy, however, the capacity for children to listen intently is not developed with conscious intent but rather implicitly through practices such as storytelling – therefore according to Burrows, it is not described as "mindful listening", as in Whitehead's (2011) position paper (personal communication, October, 6, 2014). Mindful qualities are actively nourished in the Steiner classroom, "without specifically drawing children's attention or awareness to their explicit cultivation. For example, during a botany lesson the emphasis will be on listening carefully to sounds such as birdsong before any naming or identification takes place in order to

¹⁰ Please note due to ethical guidelines for internet research, for privacy reasons, citations linking people with their specific comments cannot be referenced without the author's written permission (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

experience it phenomenologically” (L. Burrows, personal communication, October, 14, 2014).

Mindfulness Breathing Practice

Bring your awareness to your breath wherever you feel it most prominently in your body. It may be at the nose, neck, chest, belly or somewhere else. As you breathe in normally and naturally, be aware of breathing in, and as you breathe out, be aware of breathing out. Simply maintain this awareness of the breath, breathing in and breathing out.

There is no need to visualize, count, or figure out the breath; just be mindful of breathing in and out. Without judgement, just watch the breath ebb and flow like waves in the sea. There’s no place to go and nothing else to do, just be in the here and now, noticing the breath – just living life one inhalation and one exhalation at a time.

As you breathe in and out, be mindful of the breath rising on the inhalation and falling on the exhalation. Just riding the waves of the breath, moment by moment, breathing in and breathing out.

From time to time, attention may wander from the breath. When you notice this simply acknowledge where you went and then gently bring your attention back to the breath.

Breathing normally and naturally, without manipulating the breath in any way, just be aware of the breath as it comes and goes.

As you come to the end of this meditation, congratulate yourself for taking this time to be present, realizing this is an act of love. May we be at peace. May all beings be at peace.

This activity is from a mindfulness-based stress reduction workbook by Stahl and Goldstein (2010, p. 45)

Figure 2-6: Mindful Breathing Activity

Additionally, distress and suffering have the potential to arise during silent meditation, if an individual has experienced significant trauma and/or actively suppressed or repressed painful emotions or abuse (J. J. Miller, 1993). It is recommended by some researchers that individuals experiencing grief, paranoia, psychotic episodes, schizophrenia, physical or emotional abuse, significant past trauma, such as being sexually abused, or who are being bullied for gender issues do not sit in quiet meditation (Astin et al., 2003; Compson, 2014). The effects of participating in silent meditation may be incapacitating for some people at certain times in their lives (J. J. Miller, 1993). In a review of the iatrogenic effects of

meditation, Langer, Torres, Van Gordon, and Shonin (2015) found that there is a small amount of evidence to suggest that over-intensive meditation, such as participating in silent meditation retreats (up to 18 hours a day) can induce psychotic episodes for people with and without psychiatric illness.

Children have also experienced difficulties when participating in school-based meditation activities. In a study investigating the impacts of a mindfulness program with children aged approximately 12 to 13 years of age, Arthurson (2015, p. 37) found that some students had difficulties dealing with emotions that arose during silent meditation. “One student, for instance, mentioned being overwhelmed by his/her emotions” (Arthurson, 2015, p. 37). Given the prevalence of sexual and mental abuse in society (J. J. Miller, 1993) it is undoubtable that some children will be actively suppressing emotions and feelings to survive in hostile environments (P. M. Albrecht, 2009). Practising meditation may unearth abuse, abuse that needs to be tackled, or will otherwise lead to a range of somatic symptom disorders (P. M. Albrecht, 2009).

These concerns by various interest groups and the differential effects of various MBW activities, underscore the importance of clearly labeling and describing activities. The findings from Arthurson’s study also suggest a need to understand how sitting in extended periods of silent meditation affects children and develop strategies and a best-practice approach to deal with distress that may arise. In Germany, designers, researchers and instructors of school-based mindfulness programs believe that systematic training in MBW techniques such as meditation, yoga or *qigong*, is an instrumental pre-requisite to teach children mindfulness (Kaltwasser et al., 2014). However, they also consider it indispensable that teachers have psycho-educational training, affirming that psycho-educational literacy, combined with an extensive MBW practice equips teachers with the background knowledge to intuitively understand mindfulness activities that best suit the classes’ and individuals’ needs (Kaltwasser et al., 2014). Psycho-educational training may give teachers the skills to detect and deal effectively with contraindications.

Summary and Next Chapter

In this chapter I have explored the concept of mindfulness from a variety of perspectives. I gave a personal account of how I first came to understand mindfulness in an academic and experiential way. During this autoethnographic journey I shared my

experiences of mindfulness questionnaires, wellness planning and a model of mindfulness practice. I then departed from the autoethnographic style in order to outline: an example of how mindfulness applies to a primary school teacher's working life; the antecedents of school-based mindfulness programs; the two different traditions of mindfulness in education; and my schema for articulating mindfulness.

In the final section of the chapter I started to examine the question, "Is mindfulness meditation?" In the next chapter I expand on this discussion by outlining and differentiating between: mindfulness as a way of being or state; meditation; mindfulness meditation and activities designed to cultivate mindfulness.

Chapter Three: Is Mindfulness Meditation?

What is Meditation?

Mindfulness Meditation

*Formal and Informal
Practices*

*Mindfulness as a Way of
Being*

*School-based Mindfulness
Programs*

*Cultivating Mindfulness in
the Classroom*

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I continue to discuss the difference between mindfulness and meditation. I distinguish between mindfulness as a “way of being” or state; meditation; mindfulness meditation and activities designed to cultivate mindfulness. I present an operational definition of meditation, followed by an outline of:

- the difference between informal and formal mindfulness practices;
- qualities indicative of a “mindful way of being”;
- two school-based mindfulness programs; and
- one of the many ways in which mindful qualities may be cultivated in the classroom.

What is Meditation?

For centuries children and adults with various belief systems have practised meditation. For many in the West the word “evokes a matrix of mental images associated with its spiritual heritage, whether our own or that of others” (Wootton, 2008, p. 195). The term may conjure images of a yogi in a loincloth, Buddhist monks seated in a semi-lotus position, or Roman Catholic priests praying in long robes and sandals (Wootton, 2008, p. 195). However, since around the 1980s, our “matrix of mental images” may have shifted – meditation has become disassociated with its spiritual underpinnings and applied to secular considerations of physical and emotional wellbeing (Wootton, 2008, p.195). This separation has largely been driven by academic research in both the East and the West.

During the 1930s researchers turned their attention to understanding the intricacies of meditation and this scholarship has affected modern conceptions of the practice (Davanger, 2013, p. 227). At the close of 2011, there were over 5,908 conference proceedings and journal articles on the topic from a range of disciplines, with yearly research output doubling since 2003 (Davanger, 2013). However, despite the academic interest in the topic, an operational definition has been slow to take shape (Cardoso et al., 2004). The inability to define the term clearly and succinctly is perhaps due to the fact that over the centuries hundreds of different techniques have been developed around the world tailored to meet a wide spectrum of goals.

Meditation, similar to mindfulness is used as an umbrella term to describe a multitude of techniques as well as referring to a “state” in and of itself. As a consequence of the complex, diverse and multi-dimensional array of practices grouped under meditation’s umbrella, researchers have found little consensus when it comes to demarking, classifying or defining meditation practices (Andresen, 2000; Ospina et al., 2007). It has been noted that definitions of meditation are often a function of the researcher’s own familiar practice/s and thus fail to represent the many techniques classified by the term (Bond et al., 2009).

Over 35 years ago, Brown addressed the dilemma involved in defining meditation:

In the experimental literature, meditation has many meanings. It has been defined in certain physiological variables, for example, as a certain meditation pattern, measured by EEG (Akishige, 1973; Anand et al., 1961(a); Banquet 1973; Kasamatsu & Hirai, 1996 (reprinted as Kasamatsu & Hirai, 1969a,b); by certain changes in arousal (Fischer, 1971); by more specific autonomic variables (Wallace, 1970; Walrath & Hamilton, 1975); and by a certain pattern of muscular tension/relaxation (Ikegami, 1973). Others have defined meditation more in terms of attention deployment (Davidson & Schwartz, 1976; Deikman, 1966; Van Nuys, 1973) (also see DiNardo and Raymond, 1979), related cognitive control mechanisms (Silverman, 1968), or ego control mechanisms (Manupin, 1965). Still others have defined meditation more as a process of therapy, with resultant significant changes in affective and trait variables (Davidson & Goleman, 1975; Davidson, Goleman, & Schwartz, 1976; Goleman, 1971).

There is little agreement on: how to define meditation: what should be measured and what the most useful measuring instruments may be (Brown, 1977, as cited in Andresen (2000. pp. 19-20).

Brown suggests that the most fundamental questions researchers need to ask are:

- What are the most important properties of meditation?
- How may they be operationally defined and measured?
- How are these variables related to each other?

However, caution needs to be foremost in a researcher’s mind when categorising meditation techniques into a stringent box with a list of demarking criteria, as defining the essence and purpose of meditation and separating it from other related MBW practices is similar to trying to capture a beautiful day in a glass bottle. No definition will serve as a perfect depiction of reality but will merely give the reader glimpses of what the author is referring to and then will be highly dependent on the reader’s own meditation experience and ontological views.

Andresen (2000) notes in a discussion on the epistemological confrontation that occurs when the East meets the West to discuss the implications of meditation research:

Personally, I shy away from definitions, which appear to me transient at best, contrived at worst, and, as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) have shown, smell suspiciously of the human body/mind/brain's 'Container Image Schema'. Nevertheless, some containers actually do hold water. (p. 20)

Notwithstanding Andresen's concerns about defining meditation, several researchers have addressed Brown's questions and presented a working definition of meditation by listing the technique's most important properties (see Bond et al., 2009; Cardoso et al., (2004,2008); F. Travis & Shear, 2010). For the purposes of this thesis I will draw on the conceptualisation of meditation developed by Cardoso et al., (2004), which is now being used by dozens of researchers. The definition largely accords with my own experiential awareness of the practice and offers a gateway to understanding mindfulness meditation. It additionally gives the reader the opportunity to discern and consider the differences between mindfulness and meditation. In the following sections I will describe Cardoso et al.'s (2004,2008) theory within the context of a mindfulness meditation exercise called mindful breathing, which is a core practice in the MBSR program and commonly features in mindfulness programs for children. According to Buddhist teachings, regular and prolonged mindful attention to the breath is a core practice for self-knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment (Courtney, 2011).

In an analysis of English- language mindfulness programs for children (see Appendix A) I found that all texts incorporated mindful breathing activities, with the majority having the potential to elicit meditative states. Brain wave studies show that with experienced meditators (20 years-experience) meditation starts to occur after approximately 50 seconds, with deeper states reached after eight minutes (Kasamatsu & Hirai, 1966).

Meditation's Five Parameters

Five parameters guide Cardoso et al.'s (2004,2008) understanding of whether a technique can be classified as meditation and these parameters are associated with data from brain mapping studies. A practice needs:

1. to be self-induced;
2. to have a "focus" or "anchor";
3. to involve logic relaxation;
4. to have a specific technique that is clearly defined; and
5. to have muscle relaxation somewhere during the process.

In the following sections I will explain in more detail what each parameter entails.

Parameter 1: Meditation Needs to be Self-induced

"Self-induced" means that even though an individual may learn a technique from an instructor and attend group meditation sessions, when they get home they will have the capacity to apply the technique anywhere; without the aid of an instructor (Cardoso et al., 2004). With the children's programs that elicit meditative states it is quite conceivable that students will be able to go home and enter into either light or deep meditative states depending on the time-length of practice.

Parameter 2: Meditation Needs to Have an Anchor or Focus

An anchor is used, such as a sound, a physical point, for example the burning flame of a candle, the breath or an imaginary anchor such as a conveyor belt running along in your mind's eye. The anchor is used in order to prevent sleep or mind chatter (Cardoso et al., 2004). If the individual, during meditation, starts thinking about what they are doing tomorrow or begins to worry about something, he or she will gently return his or her concentration to the anchor. The anchor may be definite, such as the breath or it may be a "negative anchor", or an "anchor of absence" (Cardoso et al., 2008). There is no anchor in some mindfulness meditation practices, such as the "Mindful Check-In" (see Figure 3-1). The self-focus skill consists of allowing the attention to move freely from one direction to another – the orientation to

experience (Cardoso et al., 2008). The anchor is said to consist of maintaining “logic relaxation” (Cardoso et al., 2008).

Parameter 3: Meditation Involves Logic Relaxation

Cardoso et al. (2008) believe that one of the most difficult aspects to understand in the process of meditation is “logic relaxation”. It means that when meditating, if a thought enters your mind, for example, “Oh, I wonder what I am going to do about all the work I need to do,” you simply recognise this as a thought, but you do not analyse, get involved in the thought, or judge the wandering processes of your mind (Cardoso et al., 2008). From my experience teaching meditation, many beginning meditators then think, “Oh, I have just thought about something else, I need to be meditating. I’m doing it all wrong.” Instead of following this thought stream, it is preferable to understand that a thought has entered your field of conscious, similar to an item moving along a conveyor belt and say to yourself, “Oh, a thought. I will let it move along the conveyor belt.” And then you may return to the visual anchor in your mind of the conveyor belt. Logic relaxation also refers to having no expectation regarding the benefits of meditation. There is no intention that the meditation process will impact your wellbeing. It can be seen from Figure 3-1, the Mindful Check-In, that the last sentence of the meditation (underlined) is a positive affirmation: “...congratulate yourself for doing this practice and directly contributing to your health and wellbeing”. This is where the meditation script wanders into the territory of guided imagery. The wording sets the intention in the mind of the reader or listener that the meditation will benefit their wellbeing. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this, at this point in the script where the practice would according to Cardoso et al.’s (2008) working definition deviates from being classified as a meditation practice.

Parameter 4: A Specific Technique is Required

A clearly defined technique is also required to classify a practice as meditation (Cardoso et al., 2004). The techniques illustrated in Figure 2-6 and Figure 3-1 would be classed as clearly defined techniques. It is not the case, for instance, of telling the student to sit down and start to meditate (Cardoso et al., 2004, p. 59). “The effects and future evolution may be different from person to person, but, as some say, the

initial technique must be transmitted as if it was a “recipe” (Cardoso et al., 2004, p. 59).

Parameter 5: Muscle Relaxation

Finally, a meditation practice needs to involve psychophysical relaxation somewhere throughout the process, which can be measured for research purposes (Cardoso et al., 2004, 2008).

Mindful Check-In

Take a few moments to be still. Congratulate yourself for taking this time for meditation practice.

Begin this mindfulness check-in by feeling into your body and mind and simply allowing any waves of thought, emotion or physical sensation to just be.

As you begin to enter the world of being rather than doing, you may notice the trajectory of the feelings that you have been carrying within yourself.

There is no need to judge, analyse, or figure things out. Just allow yourself to be in the here and now, amidst everything that is present in this moment.

As you come to the end of this mindful check-in, again congratulate yourself for doing this practice and directly contributing to your health and wellbeing.

This activity is from a mindfulness-based stress reduction workbook by Stahl and Goldstein (2010, p. 21).

Figure 3-1: Mindful Check-In

Formal and Informal Mindfulness Practices

Using Cardoso and colleagues' definition of meditation a number of mindful practices can be classified as meditation techniques. Mindfulness researchers and practitioners commonly class these techniques, (where time is set aside from the normal daily routine to practice) as "formal" mindfulness practices (see Shapiro & Carlson, 2009, p. 13). Practitioners are encouraged to apply the formal techniques to their everyday life (Bishop et al., 2004). Whenever an individual notices that they are consumed by worrying thoughts or feeling stressed, they can guide themselves back to the breath and become aware of and be in each moment (Bishop et al., 2004). The person may take this time just to re-centre or engage in a five-minute meditation, away from their "doing activities". However, the psycho-educational activities included in mindfulness training programs, such as documenting your stress levels or what you worry about, would not be considered to be meditation, as there is no anchor or logic relaxation.

Informal mindfulness practices are considered to be activities such as mindful eating, mindful reading and mindful communication, where mindfulness skills such as patience, acceptance and loving kindness are applied to everyday activities (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). For example, if a primary school teacher applied mindful skills to the way she or he interacted with her or his students, this would be considered "informal mindful practice" (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009, p. 13). Logic relaxation is most likely not involved. For example, in the classroom a teacher may mindfully attend to a student's explanation of how they solved a mathematical problem, patiently and with loving kindness listening to the child's attempt to understand his or her thought processes. As the teacher is actively engaged in another activity it would not, using Cardoso and colleagues' working definition, be considered, in an academic sense, to be a meditation practice.

Equating Mindfulness with Meditation

It is important to note that some mindfulness researchers use the terms, "mindfulness" and "meditation" interchangeably and do not seem to consider the broader academic literature on the topic. For example, Kabat-Zinn (2012) views

mindfulness as one of the many forms of meditation, which in the case of some practices is consistent with academic definitions. He broadly defines meditation as:

... any way in which we engage in (1) systematically regulating our attention and energy (2) thereby influencing and possibly transforming the quality of our experience (3) in the service of realizing the full range of our humanity and of (4) our relationships to others and the world. (Kabat-Zinn, 2012, p. 1)

As with much of Kabat-Zinn's writing the definition is inspirational; however, it is also quite general and could apply to any number of human activities. As mentioned in the previous chapter it is important for practice, research and policy that we differentiate between:

1. mindfulness as a "way of being", state or trait;
2. meditation;
3. mindfulness meditation; and
4. activities designed to cultivate mindfulness.

In the next section I examine what a mindful way of being means to researchers in the field.

What Does it Mean to be Mindful?

This question will no doubt be debated for eternity in academic circles. However, there are a number of behaviours, qualities, experiential manifestations and thought processes that are commonly described as being indicative of mindfulness. When researchers, practitioners or program developers refer to the cultivation of mindfulness, they appear often to be discussing the growth and development of qualities that I have outlined in Table 3-1 (synthesised and adapted from the work of: Huston, 2010; Hyde & LaPrad, 2015; Hyland, 2011; Hyland, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Hahn & Plum Village Community, 2011; M. Moore & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Schwartz, 2008; Shapiro & Carlson, 2009, p. 11; Shonin, 2015; Stahl & Goldstein, 2010, pp. 160-161).

Table 3-1: A Mindful Way of Being

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Description</i>
Acceptance	Seeing and acknowledging things as they are in the present moment.
Authenticity	Openness, honesty with the self and others and gaining a realisation of the beauty and completeness of each human being.
Awareness	Awareness of thoughts, feelings and habits. Seeing the “big picture” rather than giving into one’s conditioned and habitual behaviour. Awareness of the wider environment.
Curiosity	A spirit of interest, investigation and exploration.
Discernment	The operation of wisdom where you can see the subtleties – the thousand shades of grey between black and white.
Empathy and compassion	A respectful consideration of one’s own experience and of another person’s experience – including compassionate listening and communication of feelings, needs and desires. This consideration will naturally extend to include the environment, with an aim of reducing oppression, injustice and suffering.
Equanimity	A quality of wisdom, an evenness and steadiness of mind that comprehends the nature of change.
Gentleness	A soft, considerate and tender quality; however, not passive, undisciplined or indulgent.
Letting go	Non-attachment, not holding on to thoughts, feelings or experiences – letting things be as they are.
Loving kindness	A quality where you truly wish another well – to be healthy safe, free from harm and free from fear. A quality embodying friendliness, benevolence and love. Loving-kindness extends to all that surrounds a person – including the self.
Non-attachment	Letting go, not grasping and clinging to outcomes. Allowing events to simply unfold.
Non-judging	Impartial witnessing, observing the present moment without evaluation or categorisation.
Non-reactivity	Ability to respond with consciousness and clarity, instead of automatically reacting in a habitual or conditioned way.
Non-striving	Non-goal-orientated, remaining unattached to outcome or achievement.
Openness (beginner’s mind)	Seeing things newly, as if for the first time.
Patience	Allowing things to unfold in their own time.

Trust	Developing a basic trust in your experience and your own inner wisdom.
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Mindfulness Programs for Children

There are a myriad of ways that mindful qualities are imparted to children in schools and out-of-school care settings around the world. Snel, author of *Sitting still like a frog: Mindfulness exercises for kids* (2013) writes, “The specific applications of this learning are seemingly boundless” (p. x). Over the last decade numerous texts (see Appendix A) have been written on the topic by mindfulness practitioners and researchers, mainly from the US. In a global online mindfulness group, where I am a member (see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mindfull/>), one of the administrators posted that at the most recent count, there are 4596 variations of mindfulness programmes for schools. While this statistic cannot be verified I do not doubt that there are thousands of mindfulness programs all over the world, taking various shapes and forms.

An exponential rise in the number of programs seems to have occurred after 2011. When I searched in 2010, on the World Wide Web (WWW) for mindfulness or meditation programs for children I only received two research results, a Catholic meditation/mindfulness program based in Townsville in Northern Australia (see Campion & Rocco, 2009) and a mapping report by the Garrison Institute (2005), detailing programs in Northern America. However, MindBody Wellness (MBW) programs for children have existed for decades (R. Fisher, 2006). For example, at my own high school in the 1980s meditation was taught to children with learning difficulties and sometimes cultivated generally. In the 1990s, when I was on my practical placement for teacher training, my supervising teacher used guided imagery to help settle the children after they came in from lunch and to inspire creativity for writing stories and in addition I was taught during my education degree how to use MBW practices at the beginning and end of a lesson to create a harmonious lesson to enable the effective learning of second languages.

A search on the WWW for mindfulness or meditation programs or activities for children in 2016, is now, in my opinion, overwhelming. There are programs:

- connected to the environment (see <http://educationmattersmag.com.au/nature-mindfulness-lesson-plan/>);
- centered in visual art (see <https://www.facebook.com/Be-you-Creative-wholehearted-living-331911277200627/?fref=ts>);

- combined with communication and emotional intelligence techniques (see www.communicating-mindfully.com);
- embedded within specific religions or philosophies (see <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/bs-s02.htm>; Garrison Institute, 2005);
- app based (see <https://smilingmind.com.au/>);
- centered around the wisdom of yoga (see <http://www.yoga4classrooms.com/>; https://www.facebook.com/YogaToolsForSchoolsInc/?hc_location=ufi);
- retreat based (see <http://www.ime.org.au/ime/>);
- connected to poetry (see <http://heartprints.space/a-joyful-sound/>; <https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/resources/Pages/poetry.aspx>);
- premised on the contemplative power of sound (see <http://www.bamradionetwork.com/bloggers/how-parents-can-use-music-to-change-their-kids-lives-1>); and
- that teach mindfulness through movement (see <https://m.facebook.com/groups/1142255545814747/>).

From my experience in schools and out-of-school care settings, I have found that teachers may create their own activities, based on their own personal MBW practice, follow one program in its entirety or teach lessons from a range of programs. To give the reader unfamiliar with child-centric mindfulness programs a taste of the way mindfulness may be delivered in schools or out-of-care school programs, I will outline in the following sections: an Australian program, called, *Meditation Capsules*, which is used in school and out-of-care school settings in various countries around the world; a five week course that was implemented in a primary school in Dublin, Ireland, using a variety of material; and how specific mindfulness qualities may be cultivated in the classroom.

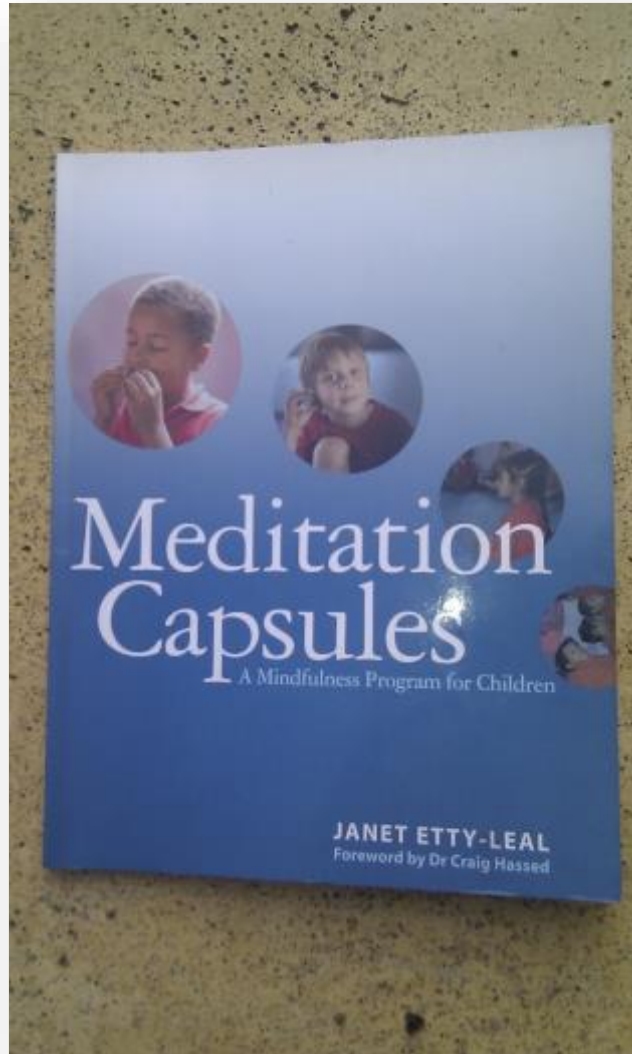
Meditation Capsules

Meditation Capsules: A mindfulness program for children was developed in Australia by Janet Ety-Leal (2010). The program is presented in a text book together with an accompanying CD in a familiar lesson-style format that teachers can readily grasp and put into action (N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012). The book (see Photograph 3-1) is divided into 10 sessions and sequentially builds awareness of how to implement mindfulness in the

classroom (N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012). ETTY-LEAL (2010) has integrated a range of techniques with core curriculum subjects to enhance academic performance, compassion and general wellbeing. The book shares with children and teachers:

- relaxation, meditation and self-awareness
- getting to know the body
- awareness of the breath
- understanding the stress response
- words and their emotional power
- the sense of sight, smell, sound, taste and touch
- the sense of humor
- observation of thoughts
- creativity
- stillness meditation

Meditation Capsules is designed to suit a range of ages from four to 18 years. The program and book caters for teachers who have no experience with meditation or practising mindfulness techniques, but also is designed to suit individuals with an extensive mind-body wellness background (N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012).



Photograph 3-1: Meditation Capsules Front Cover of Text

Using Multiple Resources to Create Mindfulness Programs

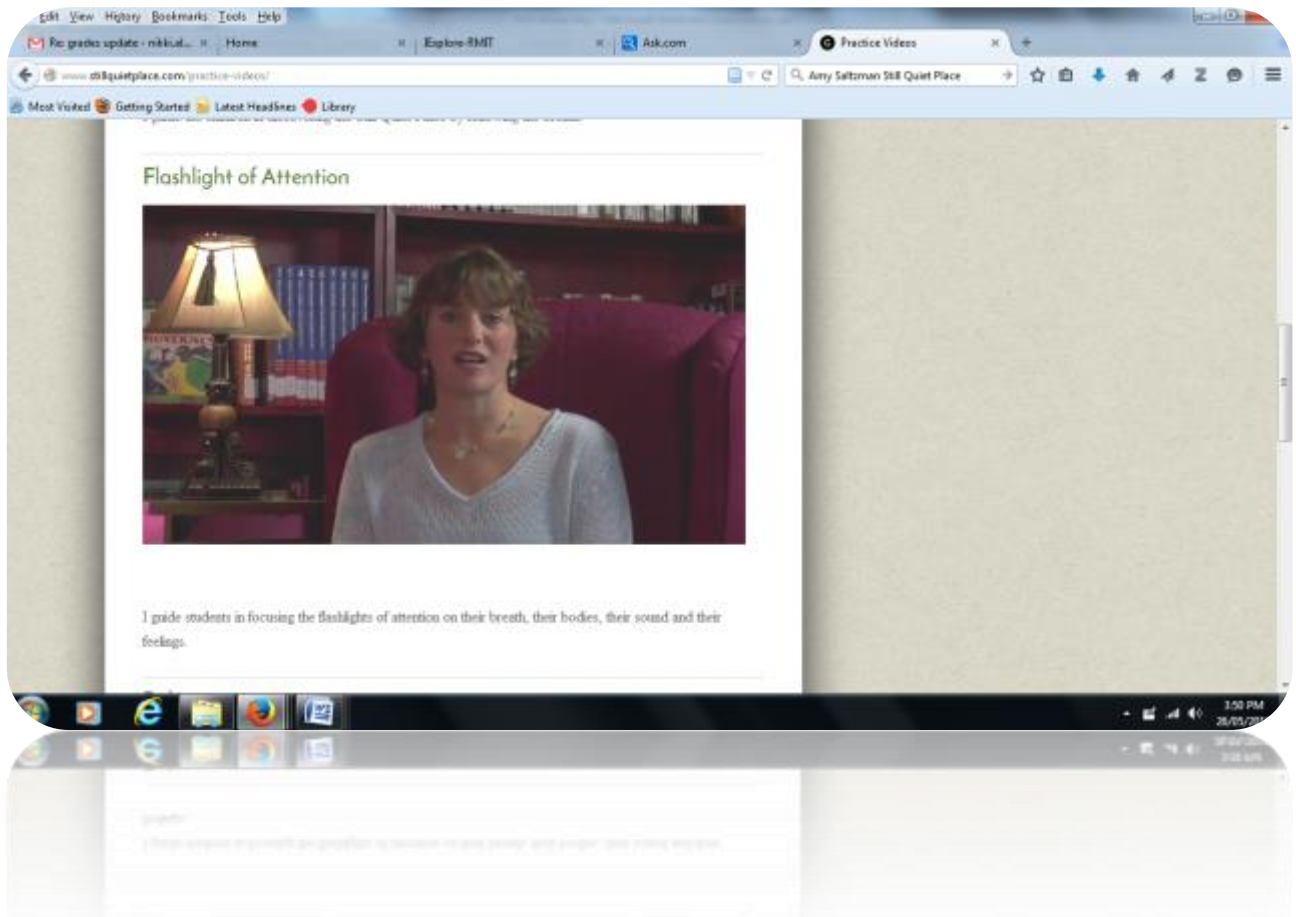
Many teachers use a range of resources from a variety of texts when teaching children mindfulness. For example, Costello and Lawler (2014), when implementing and analysing the impact of mindfulness with 11-12 year-old boys and girls from Dublin, Ireland, used a range of texts developed in the US. They developed a five-week program based around:

- *Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for children* (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002);
- “Mindfulness-based stress reduction for children” (Saltzman & Goldin, 2008);

- *Stillness in the classroom* (Sanctuary, 2008);
- *Zone for kids* (Mindfulness Matters, 2012); and
- *Still quiet place* by Amy Saltzman (2004), who is pictured in Photograph 3-2.

Their program, like ETTY-LEAL's, was designed to build mindfulness qualities sequentially over a five-week period. Each week's lessons focused on different MBW skills as follows:

- Week 1 – Breath awareness, focus on breathing in from the abdomen, rather than the chest; body awareness; mindful listening and paying attention to one's thoughts and feelings.
- Week 2 – Body scan meditation and muscle relaxation.
- Week 3 – Sense of wonderment inside oneself; bubble blowing and; letting one's thoughts come and go.
- Week 4 – Exploration of five senses; breathing for relaxation; focus on how to be confident.
- Week 5 – Guided imagery, nature and planting, loving kindness and talking to one's guardian angel.



Photograph 3-2: Amy Saltzman (MD) Guiding Children through a Short Meditation (Saltzman, n.d.)

How is Mindfulness Cultivated in the Classroom?

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, mindfulness may be cultivated in the classroom in a myriad of ways and different mindfulness activities may focus on developing specific mindful qualities. For example, loving kindness and compassion may be manifested in the classroom via sending loving kindness to students. US teacher Susanna Barkataki describes how she cultivates these qualities in the classroom:

This is the way I begin each day teaching fifth and sixth grade. I tap into my breath, and then envision myself, roots planted solidly and calmly down into the ground, head up in the infinite blue sky, tapping into the loving energy in the universe. I feel tranquillity, freedom, gratitude, and happiness; then I channel this energy towards my students. I look at the children, say their names in my mind, and send words of loving energy in the universe. I use traditional loving kindness phrases I have learned, sometimes modifying them for the situation. "May Miro be happy. May he

be well. May he have confidence. May he enjoy the basketball game this afternoon.” I turn my attention to each child one by one.

When I am doing this in the class with the students there in front of me, I smile a gentle smile at each of them in turn. They often seem to feel this energy and smile back at me, though I say the words silently in my mind. At home, I often can't help grinning with joy as I recall each child's face. I look forward to starting my workday with them. Sometimes, if I am feeling stressed or sad, it is harder to do this practice for others. I then turn my loving energy toward myself first. If I cannot muster enough joy to get further than that for a day or two, I know it is fine to take a break and care for myself (Barkataki in Hahn & Plum Village Community, 2011, p. 200).

In this example, we can see how Susanna develops the energy of loving kindness in the classroom. She is not engaged in meditation, or requiring the students to participate in meditation or mindfulness practices, but is actively sending them loving and kind thoughts and energy. This work is augmented in the program by sharing with children an activity called the “Two Promises”. Children are invited to join in activities where they consider:

- the nature of peace;
- how we can live peacefully with other people, with animals and the earth;
- what love means;
- how we show love to each other and the world; and
- how others show their love (Hahn & Plum Village Community, 2011, p. 135).

Some mindfulness practitioners and researchers may categorise the loving-kindness exercises as meditation practices. However, following Cardoso et al.'s (2004, 2008) suggestions, it may be more appropriate to classify these practices either as activities designed to cultivate mindfulness or MindBody Wellness practices.

Summary and Next Chapter

In Chapters Two and Three, I explored the concepts of mindfulness, meditation and the difference between the two practices, noting that the term “mindfulness” is now commonly used to describe a wide array of practices that were once formerly categorised as MindBody Skills, MindBody Medicine or MindBody Wellness. I also highlighted the importance of researchers in the field to understanding, delineating and differentiating between these practices and clearly explaining the interventions they are examining. In the following chapter, I go on to outline the methods utilised to explore the research question, “How do experienced MindBody Wellness practitioners make sense of teaching children

mindfulness?” While using the term “mindfulness” is not precisely accurate from an academic standpoint, I found that I was not able to use the term MindBody Wellness with the majority of my co-researchers, due to their lack of understanding of the terminology. I have thus respected “linguaging” and perspectives which resonate with the populous at large and used “mindfulness” to describe the wide range of MindBody Wellness activities my co-researchers taught children. The usage of the term “mindfulness” was not a key ingredient in how study participants made sense of teaching children mindfulness and they often named specific practices during our conversations and seemed to understand and differentiate between practices. For example, one participant Ben wrote in the demographic information that he ran an elective called “Chilled” where he taught meditation and yoga “to teach kids about mindfulness and relaxation”.

Chapter Four: Methods

Data Collection

Interview Questions

Trial Interview

Participants

Recruitment Process

Data Analysis

Evaluation Guidelines

Chapter Outline

The primary focus of this chapter is to detail my research methods. I gathered three types of data from the participants: demographic information (see Appendix E & F); interviews; and data illustrative of a teacher's practice, such as unpublished materials, worksheets, journals, art work and photos. Interviews provided the main source of data collected and examples of interview transcripts are provided in the Appendix section. In this chapter in following order I detail:

- interview questions and technique
- trial interview
- participant characteristics and commitment
- recruitment process
- mode of communication for interviews
- demographic information
- instructional climate
- data analysis and reporting procedures.

I then provide a synopsis of the methods to evaluate the qualitative rigour of the study.

Interview Questions and Technique

The interview questions and technique will, in any interview, have a significant influence on the experiences shared by participants and the data obtained. Interview questions and the manner in which the interview is conducted guide participant narratives and meaning making in a particular direction. Both of these interrelated aspects of the interview process, in my opinion, need to be considered and reported with care.

In terms of interview questions, the creators of IPA suggest that it is important for novice researchers to design an interview schedule in advance (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 58). Formulating questions prior to the interview gives the researcher the chance to think explicitly about how the interview may unfold and plan for any difficulties that could possibly be encountered, for example, the phrasing of complex questions, introduction of

sensitive topics and how to communicate with reserved participants (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). The researcher needs to take care with questions, trial them and mentally project forward to see where they may lead, for example, to closed-ended answers or generative narratives of experience (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that the schedule acts as a *basis* for a conversation (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). It is not “prescriptive and certainly not limiting in the sense of overriding the expressed interests of the participant”. It is essential that the interviewer encourage the interviewee to take the lead during the conversation. Therefore, interview data can be very different from what the researcher might have anticipated” (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, p. 8).

Prior to interviewing I devised an interview schedule (see Appendix L) which acted as a springboard for conversing with teachers. In practice, many questions that I posed to participants deviated from this schedule and I asked a variety of others. For example, I talked with teachers about:

- their favourite mindfulness activities they share with children;
- what time of the day they usually practise the techniques with children;
- how they integrate mindfulness with other learning programs;
- government policies alignment to mindful education;
- whether they had tried other techniques besides MBW practices to help reduce the student stress they were reporting; and
- the core mindfulness activities used in the classroom.

As well as asking questions, I also made statements, reframing and confirming what the participants had expressed. This method of conversing generated further conversation on the topic and led to exploring teachers’ meaning making in-depth. One of the most important questions that I asked teachers, often at the conclusion of an interview, was whether they would like to raise a salient point that we had perhaps missed during our conversation. This I believe led to rich insights and captured the essence of how they made sense of teaching children mindfulness.

The foundational IPA text provides limited guidelines about interview techniques. The creators do mention, that when interviewing, the researcher is not attempting to elicit “natural interactions” but rather endeavouring to prompt experiential details, interesting

narratives and conceptual frames of understanding (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). J. A. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that, in order to bring to life a rich data set embedded within a participant's experiential awareness, the researcher needs to be clear and confident, build trust and rapport with the participant, listen with focused attention, give the person the space and time to reflect on questions, and view the interview as a one-sided conversation.

From my perspective, these suggestions resonated well with wellness coaching techniques, articulated in one of the first wellness coaching manuals of its kind, by M. Moore and Tschannen-Moore (2010). Wellness coaching is described as “the art of creating an environment, through conversation and a way of being, that facilitates the process by which a person can move toward desired goals in a fulfilling manner” (Gallwey, 2000, as cited in M. Moore & Tschannen-Moore, 2010, p. 3). It is a process or a “way of being” with a client, student or interviewee that fosters self-awareness and generates a space for authentic communication.

In 2010, I completed a graduate wellness coaching course and began to learn the art of conversing with people to motivate: effective communication, positive learning experiences and in some cases positive behaviour change. I felt that the course's core text, by M. Moore and Tschannen-Moore (2010), expanded upon the recommended IPA interview techniques and offered a valuable framework to encourage participants to open up and explore their experiences. I was not looking to have a “simple chat” with interviewees but wanted to support and encourage teachers to investigate and reflect deeply on their experiences with children. However, I simultaneously wanted to create an environment where my research partners felt comfortable to open up, share and reflect, not a climate that induced panic and anxiety as can often be the case in interviews. My main objective during the interview process was not focused on research outcomes but was “squarely centred” around developing a positive relationship with participants, one that generated insight, awareness and empowerment.

Wellness coaching principles are used in a wide variety of fields, including education, where teachers are trained in the techniques to deliver optimal learning environments (RMIT University, 2011). The method is often used to help individuals move towards goals such as finding a different career path or manage health conditions. However, in the case

of the current research, I used the principles to generate a space for authentic communication and encourage the interviewees to reflect deeply on issues. I had not previously seen these principles specifically applied to interviewing in research; however, I felt they could enhance the employment of IPA. I also considered it important for an interviewer to discuss and reflect upon how he or she engages with participants, before, during and after the interview, as the interview style will have a profound influence on the information elicited. Table 4-1 highlights several wellness coaching principles that have impacted my “way of being” with interviewees.

Wellness coaching is an art, much like other skills, such as tai chi, meditation or riding a bike. It requires practise, enquiry and reflection to master the art and become adept at the practice. A friend, an avid tai chi practitioner, related to me that his tai chi teacher’s teacher, who was in his mid-90s at this stage, considered himself to be still a beginner in the art, after a life-time of devotion to the practice. He had much more to learn! I attempt to apply this philosophy to all of my endeavours. I aimed thus to inhabit the wellness coaching way of being with interviewees, but I also held the view that I may fall well short of the wellness coaching mark. The text by M. Moore and Tschannen-Moore (2010) talks about becoming masters in wellness coaching practice, whereas, I consider myself always to be a beginner with something new to learn.

Wellness coaching principles were not the only framework influencing how I interacted with teachers. IPA analysis guidelines also shaped the way I conversed with teachers. An article entitled “‘We could be diving for pearls’: The value of the gem in experiential qualitative psychology”, written by J. A. Smith (2011b), the creator of IPA, affected how I interviewed mindfulness instructors and analysed my findings. J. A. Smith when reflecting on his experience of “doing IPA”, recognised the pivotal role played by a single utterances or small passage when analysing interviewee transcripts. He writes:

... I have found a single extract to have a significance completely disproportionate to its size. And this is what I mean by a gem. It may be that the passage takes focal concern on first reading and engages considerable analytic effort at that stage. Or it may be that the passage intrigues or mystifies but pulls me back a number of times during the analysis process. Either way these short utterances and passages prove extremely fertile to the research, offer strong insight to the experience for this individual and often for the group of participants as a whole.

Proportionately, gems, almost by definition, are in minority, so there may be, in a

particular transcript, just one gem, but its value is much greater than the part of the transcript that it represents. And what do these gems do? They offer analytic leverage, they shine light on the phenomenon, on the transcript as a whole. (J. A. Smith, 2011b, pp. 6-7)

J. A. Smith proceeds to classify gems into three different types: shining, suggestive and secret. They are located on a spectrum as Figure 4-1 depicts. A “shining gem” is already clearly apparent in the text; the researcher does not need to be particularly attentive to see it and the participant is aware of its meaning. The “suggestive gem” is something that needs attention; the researcher needs to peer to find it, although the participant has some awareness of the utterance’s meaning. “Secret gems”, as J. A. Smith (2011b) describes, have “a chink that is manifest. It would be easy to miss it; we must be very attentive to see it. And then there is much more peering involved to get at the meaning” (p. 13).

In the interview process I found myself specifically seeking out gems – somewhere located between suggestive and secretive. When searching for a gem, I would sometimes visualise myself diving. I was swimming into the depths of the ocean and hoping that the participant would allow me the opportunity to bring forth their hidden wisdom. I could feel this wisdom, like a fragment of their soul calling out to me; pulling me closer to explore deep into the ocean depths – the area where the light starts to dim and you enter a new and foreign world. At these moments, I felt, on some other level that the mindfulness instructors recognised my search – almost like they could see me diving deeper into the layers of meaning that occupied their worldview.

I wondered at times if I was probing too deeply. Would they permit me to bring into written being their pearls of wisdom, their realisations, their soul’s calling? With some participants it took two or three questions to uncover the pearl. They were not used to having someone dive into the depths of their unconscious awareness. When a second question would lead me a bit closer to the elusive pearl but beyond its reach, I thought to myself, “Will I get stuck in this part of the ocean? Will I have to go back to the surface?”

Table 4-1: Wellness Coaching Principles

<i>Interview Objective</i>	<i>Method</i>
Establish trust and rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold unconditional positive regard • Empathy • Be humble • Slow down – give time and space for reflection • Pay full attention • Under-promise and over deliver • Let the interviewee find the answers • Confidentiality • Honesty
Interviewer presence that generates self-awareness and reflection of experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful presence • Mindful observation • Mindful listening • Mindful communication • Interviewer integrity • Reflective questioning • Empathy • Warmth • Affirmation • Calm • Zest • Playfulness • Courage • Authenticity • Reframe participant statements to search and clarify the essence/meaning of their dialogue
Open-ended enquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask open-ended questions
Develop relational flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and reflect continuously on where interviewees may be on Prochaska's and DiClemente (1986) five stages of behaviour change – are they ready to answer certain questions (see Appendix K)? • Detect interviewees' emotions/feelings and frames of understanding through intuition – honour your intuitive insights • Immerse yourself in the interview – be in the moment
Limit interviewer dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for the participant contributing 85% of the dialogue – interviewer 15%
Respect different learning styles, personality and intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice the language interviewees use, for indications of their preferred communication mode • Tailor interviews to suit interviewees' preferred communication modes and personality

J. A. Smith (2011b) likens the search for hidden gems to philosopher Husserl's call to go back to the things themselves (referred to in Chapter Two). The "thing" being the experience in consciousness – stripped or pared of the extraneous (J. A. Smith, 2011b, p. 7). I felt like the participants were allowing the barriers to come down, the barriers that we all put in place to operate in this world, to protect ourselves from ridicule and condemnation, the judgment that guides much of human action. They opened up.



Shining gems are clearly apparent – no need to peer!

Suggestive gems – need attention – need to peer to find them!

Secret gems – have a chink that is manifest – lots of peering to uncover!

Figure 4-1: A Spectrum of Gems (adapted from J. A. Smith, 2011b)

They knew on another level that I was on a search for authenticity, and no matter what

they had to say I would accept it. When I first started the interview process, I knew I was searching for gems, but I was not aware of the transformation and release unearthing the gem would bring to both the giver and the receiver. I knew when my eyes glistened with tears I held a pearl in my hand.

Trial Interview

Before diving into the depths of the ocean to explore the essences of teachers' experiences, I checked out my scuba diving gear. I conducted a trial interview with an experienced Australian mindfulness instructor, Janet ETTY-Leal (see <http://www.meditationcapsules.com/>), who kindly agreed to answer a series of questions about teaching children mindfulness. The trial interview was conducted via email for a period of six to seven weeks prior to recruiting participants. In addition to the email interviews, Janet provided a range of illustrative material, such as photos, email correspondence, interview reports, program outlines and student evaluation surveys, as well as feedback about the interview process. Each of my co-researcher's four email responses took approximately one hour to complete. I have included the interview, together with other illustrative material, with other participants' texts in the analysis and reporting process with her written permission.

The interview was a valuable experience for informing and refining conversations with other study participants; most importantly it gave me confidence. Even though I have been carrying out interviews in various contexts, on and off for over 20 years, I had no idea of how I would *perform* in this research project. Thoughts crept into my mind, such as: "How will the participant react to the question?"; "Has the question employed enough sensitivity?"; "Was the question too challenging?" and "Would they have preferred that I had asked something else?" The interview was such a rewarding experience that I immediately wanted to conduct more interviews. We both felt exuberant after our conversations and it felt like I was on the "right track".

The trial interview also led to other insights about how I could improve the process with other study participants. I felt that I needed to limit my dialogue and ask teachers just one question at a time. Janet's responses to one question, I felt, led to a whole range of other questions – questions that were not on my interview schedule, but had the capacity to

capture the essence of how she made sense of teaching children mindfulness. I wanted when interviewing to follow teachers' "carriages of thoughts". For example, on a train, one carriage follows the other; I wanted to jump from one carriage to another, with the train running in its natural direction. I did not want to veer onto another track of my own making. However, some participants asked if I could email them several questions at once and I naturally adjusted to their lead. I think they wanted to know where the journey would end and that it would not be too long!

In the analysis of the trial interview I unearthed a number of themes. This confirmed what the creators of IPA suggest, that it is wise to limit participant numbers as data can become unwieldy and there is the potential to lose important insights (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). I found that some themes were readily apparent but as J. A. Smith (2011b) noted, others required a bit of digging to bring the thought forms and experiential accounts to the surface. I felt that the conversation was in some respects, similar to an archaeological dig. During the interview I found myself carefully brushing away layers of conscious conversation to uncover an elusive gem that was hovering in non-conscious awareness, just waiting for someone to uncover it.

I was also concerned about the length of time that email interviews consumed, not from my own perspective, but from the perspective of the participant. I made a mental note to be mindful of the time it might take each teacher to respond to questions via email, as I did not want to overtax them with questions. It is easy in a phone or face to face interviews to keep to a time limit, but is much more of a challenge when conducting email conversations.

I was generally quite pleased with the interview questions and the responses I received from the trial interview. However, after analysing the interviewees answers I decided to design back-up questions for specific questions that were slightly re-phrased, but revolved around the same topic of enquiry. For example for the question, "What appealed to you about cultivating mindfulness with children?" I devised questions of a similar nature such as:

- How did you start sharing mindfulness with children?
- What motivated you to start sharing mindfulness with children?

I discovered during the interview process that participants would ask for further clarity in regards to questions. For example, one teacher, in an email interview posed the following question:

Do you want me to focus just on the Art based mindfulness I teach, or the mindfulness/meditation I also teach or both?

The answers will probably be similar for both, but also different, as different experiences led me to each practice which I now teach. Let me know so we can get started.

Lastly, I felt that Janet took a leading or an active role during email conversations and seemed comfortable with the process. I felt like I hardly had to do anything. It was such an easy and enjoyable experience. This perhaps affirmed that wellness coaching principles can enable interviewee empowerment, generate extensive narratives, and establish trust and rapport between the participant and researcher. Or, it was perhaps a function of Janet's high level of meta-cognitive awareness. Or, a combination of both! In the next section I describe the other teachers who also joined in the conversation about how teachers make sense of teaching children mindfulness.

Participants

Sample Characteristics

There are a range of strategies associated with sampling in qualitative research (Flick, 2014). When using IPA, researchers sample purposively, with the aim to recruit participants who have a common experience that they personally consider to be momentous – an event or life experience of significance and meaning (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Participants in the current study share the common characteristic of having an established personal MBW practice and experience teaching mindfulness to children in mainstream schools and or out-of-school care settings.

Source of Participants

Potential candidates were located from various sources, for example: online mindfulness group discussions; weblogs; web sites; mindfulness books and journals; education conferences and other media. Prior to applying for ethics approval, I located approximately 30 prospective interviewees from the English-speaking countries of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. I needed to extend the search

beyond the borders of Australia as, although I pinpointed a number of experienced mindfulness instructors, I could not be assured that they would all agree to take part in the study.

I initially wanted to restrict the sample to university-qualified teachers, working either part-time or full-time in a school setting. However, I found in my search for potential participants that limiting the population to these criteria limited my recruitment potential. As the Garrison Institute (2005) discovered in a mapping report of school-based mindfulness instruction, experienced mindfulness teachers have a wide range of qualifications, with schools employing counsellors and other experts to conduct programs. When searching for potential subjects I also found that experienced instructors often teach children from five through to 18 years of age, in school and out-of-school care settings, train teachers how to teach mindfulness and in some cases also investigate the program's efficacy. As a result of these factors I decided to widen the criteria to take into account that child-centric mindfulness instructors have a range of qualifications and experience.

Participant Recruitment Process

The recruitment process started in February 2014, when ethics permission was obtained from the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee to interview participants in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. I approached sixteen teachers (twelve females and four males) directly via their email or postal addresses. Initially an invitation to participate/letter of introduction was sent to potential interviewees (see Appendix B). Twelve teachers responded positively to the initial invitations in February through to May of 2014. Further information about the study along with consent forms was then sent to interested participants (see Appendix C and D). From February until May 2014 a total of 11 consent forms were received, from one male and ten female mindfulness instructors. During 2013 to 2014 eight teachers (one male and seven females), including the trial interviewee, participated in the study.

I informed teachers in the introductory letter that the aim of the study was to find out about their experiences and perspectives of teaching mindfulness in school and out-of-school care settings. I explained to the teachers that there was a range of options for participation (see Figure 4-2), with the minimum requirement being to complete a

demographic information sheet and participate in a one-and-a-half hour interview/conversation, which could be conducted face to face (if the researcher lived near the participant), via Skype, phone or email, or a combination of communication modes (see Appendix I for an example transcript of each communication mode.)

Options for Research Participation

1. **Interview** – participate in 1 (one) to 3 (three) interviews around an hour and a half each via Skype, face to face, via email or a combination to suit your needs.
Expected time commitment: 1.5 hours per interview
2. **Demographic Information** – fill in 1 (one) form regarding information about yourself e.g. education background.
Expected time commitment: 15 – 30 minutes
3. **Other Illustrative Material** – provide other material illustrative of your practice. For example, a video, journal or other reflections.
Expected time commitment: 30 minutes to 1 hour

The options for research participation are outlined further in Appendix C.

Figure 4-2: Options for Research Participation

Participant Choices

I gave teachers a range of options for participation for a number of reasons. A pivotal motive for *choice* was the hope that by providing a range of options for how the research journey could potentially proceed, participants would feel empowered to take an active role in the process – determining the duration of participation, the communication mode and data provided. A range of communication modes was also offered in order:

- to accommodate the possibility that some teachers may be living in different countries and states of Australia than the researcher;
- for participants to choose a method that aligned with their learning styles, preferences and intelligences; and
- to enable teachers to choose a mode which best suited their schedule.

The email communication option was specifically chosen in an effort to allow participants the time to ponder and contemplate questions, with the potential for a higher order level of reflection and meta-cognition than would otherwise be achieved via face to

face, real-time interviews. A back and forth dialogue occurred between myself and participants during email interviews, where if necessary, I could clarify points or delve deeper into the teachers' meaning making. Burrows (2011a), in a case-study, found that developing an online connection with her research partner (participant) led to a deep level of intimacy. Through the medium of email, the participant "could respond in the privacy of her own home, in her own time, with time to reflect upon the content" (Burrows, 2011a, p. 41). Conversations became "a form of therapeutic letter writing" (Burrows, 2011a, p. 43). The researcher and the participant came together in a virtual space to experience, understand and interpret a series of events that would have a profound impact on both their lives. Power relationships were diffused; however, autonomy was retained.

The potential benefits for conducting interviews via email are additionally supported by a research study reflecting on the advantages of different communication modes. A research participant in the study, where subjects were given the choice of either responding by email, telephone or face to face, remarked:

I'm looking forward to doing the interview... it is a much more relaxed and productive way to do it (through email). This way, I can do it when things are quiet and I'm in the right frame of mind. I love to write and by sharing my story, it really helps me. Each time I do it, I learn something new about myself. I notice things I've resolved, things I'm still working on and things that still bring out strong emotions even years later (McCoyd & Schwaber Kerson, 2006, p. 397).

The researchers of the study, McCoyd and Schwaber Kerson (2006), also noted that there was less social pressure in email interviews, as there were no visual cues to create judgment. This reflective evidence also counters Lowndes (2005) supposition that email interviewing is less intimate than traditional, face to face interviewing, considered to be the "gold standard" (McCoyd & Schwaber Kerson, 2006, p. 390).

However, as much as I appreciate the benefits of email interviewing, the time/cost it saves in transcription and the depth and connection that can be reached, I felt that some participants would like to connect with me face to face. For example, one teacher responded:

As far as the interview goes I always prefer face to face but being here 5 days a week until about 4.30 every night doesn't leave me much time, not sure if you're near [suburb name]? Or [suburb name]? Otherwise we might have to do the interview/s over the phone. I don't mind when we do it. Do you think it would be

better to do before, during or after the MBSR course? Whatever works best for you is fine for me.

Interviewing face to face has a number of advantages over other modes of communication, as it offers a smorgasbord of rich non-verbal data (McCoyd & Schwaber Kerson, 2006). It is additionally in real time. The researcher and participant can laugh together, and have synchronous moments – a teacher can pull out a book or resource and show you his or her latest inspiration for lessons. It allows for connection on another level.

Similarly phone conversations allow the researcher and participant to connect in real-time and are convenient. Gillham (2005) points out:

Misunderstandings can be clarified, cues can be picked up from tone of voice, prompts and probes can be used, and there is engagement: a sense of mutual responsiveness which can be highly productive in the quality of the interview content. (p. 102)

There are thus advantages and disadvantages encountered when using different communication modes. As mentioned previously, I wanted participants to feel empowered and as comfortable as possible during interviews; I therefore offered a choice in regards to communication. It was not an either/or choice (e.g., a choice between email or phone) as per the McCoyd and Schwaber Kerson (2006) study but an opportunity to engage via various means, which is perhaps indicative of how we interact and communicate as humans in certain countries and cultures. The invitation responders' choices of mode of communication are listed in Table 4-2. As can be seen, consenting participants had a range of preferences.

Table 4-2: Invitation Responders' Choice of Communication Modes for Interviews

<i>Communication Mode</i>	<i>Participant Number who Chose this Option</i>
A combination of all options	5
Skype only	0
Email only	2
Phone only	0
Face to face only	0
Phone and email	1
Face to face and email	1
Skype and email	1
Phone, face to face, email	1

Teachers were given the option of participating in one to three sessions. IPA researchers predominately conduct one 1 to 1½-hour interview session (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). The single (one-off), one-to-one, interview forms the staple means of data collection within most kinds of qualitative research (Flowers, 2008, p. 24). It has the following advantages:

- It is a simple research design.
- It is how most qualitative research proceeds.
- It requires minimal commitment by the participants.
- There is minimal threat of participant attrition.
- It may be easier for the researcher to step into a person's experience for only

one point in time (Flowers, 2008).

Disadvantages include:

- The researcher may be anxious and not able to establish rapport in a short period of time.
- The researcher must manage the cognitive load of trying to remember everything the participant has uttered in order to probe and funnel for more information.
- There is less time to clarify information (Flowers, 2008).

After discussion with my supervisors, I decided to give teachers the option to participate in one to three interviews, as I anticipated that some teachers may not be able to commit to three interviews. The choices that consenting participants (not all participated in the interview process) made are listed in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3: Participant Session Option Choice

<i>Interview Session</i>	<i>Participant Number who Chose this Option</i>
All three	7
Session A only	2
Session B only	1
Session C only	0
Session A & C	1

Participant Commitment

Seven teachers from the 11 who returned consent forms participated in the interview process. Interviews commenced in February of 2014 and were finalised in August of 2014. Participant interview commitment, duration of the process, mode of communication and illustrative material provided is listed in Table 4-4 alongside teachers' pseudonyms. The

test interviewee details are also included in Table 4-4, making in total, eight participants who discussed their experience of teaching children mindfulness. Face to face, Skype and phone interviews were transcribed by a transcriptionist and myself and were checked numerous times for accuracy.

Table 4-4: Participant Research Commitment

<i>Name</i>	<i>Teaching Position</i>	<i>Interview Start and Finish Date</i>	<i>Mode of Communication</i>	<i>Illustrative Material Provided</i>
Angelica	Specialist primary school teacher (5 to 11 years of age)	April to May 2014	Skype conversation followed by emails clarifying meaning in regards to Skype conversation. Angelica additionally sent me information via email giving updates me on the progress of the her school's mindfulness program.	Journal Examples of mindfulness practices used with children
Ben	Primary school teacher (10 to 11 years of age)	May 2014	Two consecutive emails sent by the myself. One email was sent to Ben with a range of questions, as per his request. I then sent a follow-up email to clarify meaning in regards to some of his responses.	
Caro	Middle school teacher and counsellor (12 to 18 years of age)	February to August 2014	Consecutive emails asking one questions one at a time, followed by a face to face conversation, an email clarifying meaning from the face to face	Report on an evaluation of the mindfulness program she developed for her school Flyers to promote

			conversation, followed by a phone conversation.	mindfulness program Student questionnaire examples Extracts from journal
Faith	Out-of-school program developer and teacher (12 to 15 years of age)	April 2014	One email sent asking a variety of questions as per the participant's request. No follow up needed.	Thesis Journal article
Daniella	Out-of-school program developer, special needs support, primary and high school teacher (4 to 15 years of age)	February to June 2014	Email asking one question, followed by a face to face conversation and then two phone conversations. The last conversation was used to clarify meaning.	Art work
Taylor	Primary school teacher (5 to 8 years of age)	May 2014	One email asking three questions as per participant request, followed by another email clarifying aspects of the responses.	
Tilly	Primary school teacher (5 to 6 years of age)	May 2014	Email asking a couple of questions, followed by a phone conversation.	Student mindfulness questionnaire examples
Janet	Special Needs, Primary and High School Teacher (5 to 18 years of age)	Test Interviewee December 2013 to January 2014	Four emails asking specific questions.	Photos of mindfulness activities Web site meditations Report on an

				evaluation of her mindfulness program in two schools Student evaluation surveys Other email correspondence
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Demographic Information

In order to help the reader understand the range of participants and the situations which findings may be relevant, Elliot, Fischer, and Rennie (1999) advise researchers to detail participant characteristics such as: country of origin, cultural background, gender, age, social class, meditation experience, teaching background and experience teaching mindfulness to children. I therefore designed a demographic information sheet based on Elliot et al.'s (1999) suggestions (see Appendix D and E) which was subsequently checked by my colleague Angela Bucu, with whom I was working on another study, where a similar form was used. My supervisors then verified the demographic information sheet and made additions and suggestions. I gave the information sheet to participants after the first interview in most instances, except when participants asked to see the form prior to the interview.

The participants and the trial interviewee (the research partners) were aged from 25 to 59 years, with the average age being 42 years old. Seven participants, including the trial interviewee, were born in Australia and one in Germany. Teachers predominately answered that their cultural background was Australian. One person used the term Anglo Saxon; one, Caucasian; another participant had Greek heritage and one teacher's father was from Holland. One Australian teacher resided in New York, with all other participants, at the time of interviews, living in city locations in Australia or towns that were in commuting distance from state capitals. Mindfulness instructors worked in government and non-government schools, located in city centres and the outer suburbs. Some schools where teachers were employed had religious affiliations (listed in Table 4-5).

The educational background of teachers varied. Older participants tended to have multiple qualifications and degrees in a wide range of fields, including business, graphic design, social work, holistic counselling, psychology, horticulture, environmental studies and wellness. Six participants had education degrees, with one participant trained in teaching mindfulness with children and using meditation therapy with clients. The highest qualification of a participant was a Doctorate in Philosophy.

Participants' teaching experience in schools and out-of-school care settings varied from two years to 25 years. All teachers taught primary school-aged children, with two additionally teaching high school students. Teachers' experience of MBW varied and was difficult to ascertain from the demographic information sheet. Some participants left this area blank; others listed the nature of their daily practice, for example, "I practise mindfulness meditation daily for varying amounts of time," and "I practise guided imagery and use relaxation techniques once a month," while others listed how many years they had practised and had been aware of MBW techniques. For example, participant Ben wrote:

As part of my spiritual practice I have been learning and using meditation for the last 14 years. As a child my mother practised meditation so I have always been aware of it. I regularly use relaxation techniques and practise 3-4 times a week. Although over the years I have let this slip a bit. I have also attended formal Buddhist meditation classes, Tai Chi and Yoga classes. Currently I am learning Tai Chi more formally and have started undertaking photography as a more active form of mindfulness.

However, during the interview process it became easier to ascertain the approximate number of years teachers had been practising MBW and teaching mindfulness with children. This information is also detailed in Table 4-5. All participants mentioned having a regular mindfulness practice, but they also practised at least one other modality, such as yoga.

Instructional Climate

The climate of mindfulness instruction varied for the participants and between the participants. For example, two of the teachers worked in a range of schools; including special needs, private fee-paying as well as government schools, located in various socio-economic areas. Some teachers had worked in a range of schools and one participant was employed in a school that specifically recruited students from a wide-range of backgrounds, including refugee status. One participant mentioned that in a school where

she worked for a period of 2-weeks, that many of the children were not receiving breakfast at home and the teachers at the school were providing food for the students from their own personal income. In another school, where a participant taught mindfulness on a regular basis; self-harm, student fights and suicide were common occurrences, before mindfulness was introduced. A researcher, Lefroy, who was working on a different research project, but in the same school where one of the study participants was teaching, recorded in her observational notes that while many of the children at the school were well loved and had a happy home and school life, there were others for who life was a struggle. She wrote, "Their home life is full of conflict. Their parents can be abusive. They do not know if they are loved or valuable" (personal communication, June, 15, 2012). Other schools where participants instructed were underpinned by either values of peace and conflict resolution, or the principles of positive psychology.

While the climatic conditions varied and were influenced by a complex interaction of forces, there were a number of common threads that tied teachers' stories together. These factors included a high level of noise in the school environment, a lack of space to practice mindfulness, and a staff culture that endorsed the cultivation of mindfulness. For example, it was sometimes hard for teachers to conduct mindfulness lessons due to either a lawn mower being started up on the school grounds or other children screaming as they went to classes. Participants said that it was essential to have other staff as well as the Principal support mindfulness instruction, with two of the participants having recently left workplaces where mindfulness principles were actively discouraged.

Table 4-5: Individual Participant Demographic Information

<i>Name</i>	<i>Teaching Position</i>	<i>Years Practising MBW</i>	<i>MBW Practices</i>	<i>Years Teaching Mindfulness</i>	<i>Learning Facilities' Spiritual Beliefs</i>
Angelica	Specialist primary school teacher	4 years	Relaxation techniques Guided imagery Meditation Mindfulness	2 years	Secular
Ben	Primary school teacher	14 years	Relaxation techniques Meditation Spiritual practices Tai Chi Yoga Contemplative Photography	2 years	Secular
Caro	Middle school teacher and counsellor	7 years	Yoga Meditation Mindfulness	2 years	Faith-based
Faith	Out-of-school program developer and teacher	6 years	Yoga Meditation Mindfulness	2 years	Secular
Daniella	Out-of-school program developer, special needs, primary and	8 years	Meditation Mindfulness Intuitive Process	6 years	Secular, post-secular and faith-based

	high school teacher		Painting		
Taylor	Primary school teacher	2 years	Yoga Meditation Mindfulness	2 years	Secular
Tilly	Primary school teacher	20 years	Meditation Mindfulness	3 years	Secular
Janet	Out-of-school program developer special needs, primary and high school teacher	40 years	Guided Imagery Mindfulness Meditation Niwa – mindful dance movement Yoga Arts-based Mindfulness Native American Healing practices Tai Chi/Chi Kung	15 years	Secular, post-secular and faith-based

Data Analysis and Reporting

There is not one prescribed, single method for analysing or reporting data when working with IPA (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Each individual will approach analysis and reporting in their own unique way. However, the foundational IPA text and a number of articles on the topic provide researchers with comprehensive guidance. Analysis and reporting of data typically follows an inductive and iterative process drawing on a number

of interrelated strategies (J. A. Smith, 2007, as cited in J. A. Smith et al., 2009, pp. 79-80):

- identification of themes
- convergence and divergence
- in-depth reflection and analysis
- analysis of the whole and the part
- connection to other texts and academic literature

In the following sections I explain each of these processes in more detail, predominately within the context of the current research findings.

Identification of Themes

Foremost in an IPA researcher's mind will be the identification of emerging themes within the data set. Directly after each interview the creators of the methodology recommend that the author carefully read through the participant's text, take notes and identify salient points, reflections that grab the reader's attention as described earlier in this chapter – the search for the hidden gem. This pattern proceeds for each participant and then the researcher starts to weave the emergent patterns together, reading texts numerous times, in a didactic process.

The creators of the methodology define a superordinate theme as “a construct which usually applies to each participant within a corpus but which can be manifest in different ways within cases” (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 166). For example, the first super-ordinate theme that emerged into conscious awareness during the interview process was “spirituality”. Janet in our email conversation wrote:

For many decades my personal practice has been a blessing in my life. A blessing: for so many reasons. I have realized the attitude or mindset that we bring to the practice is so important. First and foremost, my practice is a devotional one. I am happy to also think of it as a 'discipline' – a word that now often seems to have spurious connotations. I recently heard that the latin origin of the word means 'to follow'. It is comforting and sustaining for me to have precepts and practices (that hugely enrich my life) to follow. Space is created, on a daily basis, for connection to self-compassion, wise reflection and renewal. The mindset I have regarding my practices is that they are creative investments to nurture and care for my mind, body and spirit.

The word “devotional” struck one of my supervisors who said that she immediately connected the term with religion and then she thought, “No, she is referring to something spiritual, not associated with religion.” I immediately understood what she was trying to convey and the term devotional became one of my secret gems. The theme of spirituality was substantiated within the body of the whole of Janet’s text, as I could see how her exploration of different belief systems and practices, followed by personal internal reflection and meditation influenced the way she shared mindfulness with children and the practices she created. For example, Janet has studied Native American wisdom and applies principles and practices from American First Nations cultures when teaching mindfulness with children. A fragment of this wisdom is exemplified by the use of the talking (speaking) stick¹¹ in her classes.

Janet related later, unprompted, how the talking stick is used in the classroom:

An ongoing joy of being a Mindfulness teacher is to share countless moments of discovery with children. These experiences absolutely confirm my belief in teaching Mindfulness in a ‘holistic’ way, with connection to all of the senses, embracing the mind, body and spirit.

Classes are literally ‘peppered’ with gems: arising from every aspect of the lesson. It is delightful to hear unique, lateral ideas and responses as the children take their turn to use the ‘Speaking Stick’. Without fail, their contributions are unique, authentic, creative and soulful. Ideas and concepts are subtle and expansive. It is a thrill to witness all the children honouring and reflecting upon every word!

I questioned Janet a bit further about the “talking stick” and whether she could provide a photograph (see Photograph 4-1). Janet replied:

Peter's beautiful 'Speaking Stick'. The children and I decided it was better to call it a Speaking Stick, rather than a Talking Stick, as they said talking can be superficial, but when you speak you really are clear, tuned and purposeful! Peter loves making these sticks and they are a labour of love - so much time and tender care is invested, but they are hard to sell (so we are stock piling them!!). Most people just do not get the energy that has gone into them. He makes them from pruned cuttings from our beautiful citrus and fruit trees. Attached is a picture of the one I currently use in my lessons).

¹¹ Please refer to the glossary for an explanation of this term.



Photograph 4-1: Speaking Stick used in the Classroom with Children

At first, I was somewhat perplexed as to why the children preferred the term “speaking” to “talking” and after discussing the topic with some teacher friends we thought it may be due to the way “talk” is used in the classroom. Teachers commonly use the phrase “Stop talking” during the school day. Children mimic this phrase to each other and it is often used in a negative way, as an indication that you are doing something that someone does not approve of. Conversely, the verb “speak” is often used in a positive light. For example, teachers often say phrases such as, “Would you like to speak now, Sarah?” when they are asking a child to discuss some aspect of school work, something of perceived value and importance.

Spirituality additionally emerged as a central theme in the second interview with teacher and school counsellor, Caro. However, its manifestation while related and inextricably tied to Janet’s account, was slightly different, as J. A. Smith et al. (2009, p. 166) noted may occur. Sharing mindfulness with children enabled Caro to feel connected

with her workplace organisation and express herself authentically. These feelings of transcendence that she describes during our interviews were central to how she made sense of teaching children mindfulness. In the academic literature the feelings and experiences that Caro explained are commonly known as “workplace spirituality” (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

As I continued to interview participants the theme of spirituality continued to arise in different ways for each person and I started to build a picture of the super-ordinate theme with its sub-ordinate manifestations (see Figure 4-2). Super-ordinate themes were identified in three main ways:

- by the participants themselves;
- when I, or my supervisors stumbled upon a secret gem; and
- when I unearthed them by taking note of my feelings.



Figure 4-2: The Emergent Theme of Spirituality

I was continually overcome by strong feelings in each interview and allowed myself to connect with and be with these feelings. The feelings acted as confirmation of super-ordinate themes and understanding experiences that were central to participants’ meaning

making. The feelings would reverberate in my body, each with its own unique code or hum.

I took particular note of the feelings that were generated in me during the interview process and when re-reading or mentally recounting conversations. I then watched as I cognitively processed these feelings into coherent themes – I was in receiving mode. I would hear words such as “creativity in motion” and “spirituality”, like they were coming from outside of me to be interpreted within. I would madly write down the information as it arose, my mind whirling at a faster speed than my hand could coherently write. This process enabled me to link teachers’ conversations together, to present a unified voice, but at the same time preserve each person’s unique qualities and experiences.

The process felt very much to me like weaving stories together, while highlighting salient issues. The teachers’ stories were connected, like the plant fronds that form a hand woven basket together. A poem from a Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Elder (First Nations Australian) speaks to what I felt in my heart when piecing the stories together, when lovingly weaving the basket. Auntie Ellen Trevorrow in *Ngarrindjeri Lakun* (Ngarrindjeri Weaving) tells:

Stitch by Stitch
Circle by Circle
Weaving is like the
Creation of Life

All things are Connected (Ngarrindjeri Tendi, 2006, p. 8).

Convergence and Divergence

Apart from identifying themes it is considered critical to show where participants’ sense making converges and diverges (J. A. Smith et al., 2009; J. A. Smith, 2011a, p. 24). Researchers need to indicate the prevalence of a theme and the corpus needs to be well represented in the reporting stage. J. A. Smith (2011a) summarises:

Extracts should be selected to give some indication of convergence and divergence, representativeness and variability. This way the reader gets to see the breadth and depth of the theme. For papers with small sample sizes (1-3), each theme should be

supported with extracts from each participant. For papers with sample sizes of 4-8, in general, extracts from half the participants should be provided as evidence. For larger sample sizes, researchers should give illustrations from at least three or four participants per theme and also provide some indication of how prevalence of a theme is determined. The overall corpus should also be proportionately sampled. In other words, the evidence base, when assessed in the round, should not be drawn from just a small proportion of participants.

...there should be a skilful demonstration of both patterns of similarity among participants as well as the uniqueness of the individual experience. The unfolding narrative for a theme thus provides a careful interpretative analysis of how participants manifest the same theme in particular and different ways.

An interpretative commentary needs to follow each extract. (p. 24)

In an analysis of teachers' texts, convergences and divergences were readily apparent in relation to a number of themes I will outline these when I present the themes.

In-depth Reflection and Analysis

When using IPA it is necessary to pay attention to the detail, such as how words are used and how often certain terms are used. The researcher needs to repeatedly read interview transcripts and other illustrative material, searching for new layers and deeper levels of meaning (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Upon re-reading texts, I continually found myself, noticing new elements in a text. It was like some aspects would raise their hand up and say, "Look at me. Look at me", and then the next time I dived into the text a new word would be calling for my attention. For example, when first reading Caro's interview transcripts the theme of "workplace spirituality" surfaced, with an emphasis on how she could be her own true being at home and in the workplace. However, when re-reading her account, on another day, for perhaps the third or fourth time, I focused on the word "share". In a follow-up interview, Caro extended her articulation of this concept. Not only was she able to be herself at work and relinquish various masks, but she was also able to *share* this way of being within her whole school environment. *Sharing* mindfulness with children and staff appeared to be a meaningful and worthwhile goal for Caro, even though she had to get up early each morning to do so!

Analysis of the Whole and the Part

When analysing texts using IPA, the researcher additionally needs to focus on each interviewee and then the lens needs to be readjusted to take into account other participants' views and how they are connected (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Perspective also

needs to be given to the whole of an individual's text as well as the parts and how the parts combine to form the whole. One example of paying attention to the whole and the part is to examine the overall writing style of a participant and their specific word usage and how these factors interconnect to form teachers' sense making.

Connection to Other Texts and Academic Literature

Academic literature and other texts (e.g., blogs) may serve as a backdrop, like in a play, for the central experiences expressed by participants. And these may be discussed when reporting participants' experiences or in a separate discussion area (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). I have integrated a range of relevant personal narratives when reporting findings, many derived from my own teaching practice. The narratives demonstrate that the central themes have validity and applicability beyond the recruited participants, extending to the experiences and insights of students, teachers and the wider research community. I liken this to viewing a play that is full of colour, life and characters. There is commonly a central actor, "the star", and within the context of this research the stars are the research participants. Off to one side of the stage lie supporting actors. Our supporting actors are for example, teachers sharing their experiences in blogs, mindfulness discussion groups¹² at conferences and on the television or in books on the topic. Located to the back are more supporting characters, for example, birds chirping in the background. The birds are like other voices portrayed in similar research, for example, other teachers interviewed about their experiences of sharing mindfulness with children. We gradually extend further back into the play's scenery – to the moon twinkling in the night's sky. The moon symbolises other researchers' or philosophers' comments pertinent to teachers' texts and the sky a wider body of literature related to the area. No voice is more important than another's – even though the star shines and occupies the centre of the stage.

When giving life and context to the star's performance, the creators of IPA do not suggest providing an exhaustive literature review of the area, but instead recommend focusing on literature that resonates with or highlights the participants' experience and the

¹² Reported and referenced according to the online ethical guidelines provided by Markham and Buchanan (2012).

researcher's interpretation of their worldview (J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

The problem of how to assess qualitative research has not yet been solved (Flick, 2014, p. 480).

Methods for Evaluating Qualitative Rigour

There are a range of alternatives for assessing the procedures, results and reporting of qualitative approaches to research (Carter & Little, 2007; Flick, 2014; Tracy, 2010). In the current study I have applied a number of methods. The first “port of call” was to ensure commensurability between the methods, methodology and epistemology and to delineate and articulate each clearly, while being mindful of their interconnectivity. Carter and Little (2007) argue that reviewers can forgo assessing academic work with checklists if the researcher demonstrates internal consistency between the methods, methodology and epistemology. However, I feel the quality of research can be further enhanced by engaging with broad criteria established for qualitative research, guidelines which “may serve to reassure traditional quantitative researchers that qualitative research is methodologically rigorous” (Elliot et al., 1999, p. 217) – such as those proposed by Elliot et al. (1999) or Tracy (2010).

Additionally, in line with J. A. Smith’s (2011a) views (the creator of IPA), I also perceive a need to apply “method-appropriate criteria” (Flick, 2014, p. 481), taking into account the nuances and differences between qualitative approaches. Reviewers of IPA studies have discussed a number of issues that are relevant for evaluating the quality of work in the field (see Brocki & Wearden, 2006; J. A. Smith 2011a). I have combined these issues together with Elliot et al.’s (1999) and Tracy’s (2010) suggestions to form ten pertinent elements that need to be addressed and kept in mind prior to and during data collection as well as when reporting findings:

- 1) participants
- 2) researcher
- 3) research focus
- 4) interviewing skills
- 5) meaningful coherence
- 6) conceptual frameworks

- 7) analysis and reporting
- 8) writing
- 9) transparency
- 10) ethics

In the following sections I summarise each element.

Participants

Participant numbers in an IPA study need to be small in comparison to other methodologies, such as the randomised controlled trial. A group of 12 individuals who share a common experience of import is considered to be a large sample size in IPA (J. A. Smith, 2011a). Focusing in-depth on data from small numbers of participants is a critical aspect of the methodology, an approach that is focused on individual experience rather than population experience. Researchers need to be careful when choosing participants and locate individuals who are committed to the research and articulate, and have an interest in sharing their experience to help others (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). In order to help the reader understand the range of participants and the situations in which findings may be relevant demographic details need to be presented (Elliot et al., 1999).

Researcher

The researcher needs to respect their own personal ethics and values when researching. Their voice needs to shine and be heard through the entirety of the work. Readers need to be able to understand the lens through which participants' experiences are being interpreted. When using IPA, it is recommended that the author reveals aspects of their background, preconceptions, biases and how they construct knowledge (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). It is also advisable for the researcher to describe the dynamic relationship with each participant as it develops through the interview process (Birbeck University of England, 2011).

Research Focus

The research focus in IPA studies needs to be specific rather than general – study populations need to have a common interest or experience. For example, in the current research project interviewees had long-term MBW experience and were teaching children the practices.

Interviewing Skills

Interviewing skills are a key ingredient in IPA studies. However, in most studies, authors fail to relay how the interview process evolved or how they engaged with participants (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). This limits the ability of other researchers to replicate the study and further limits our knowledge about effective interviewing skills that suit IPA and qualitative research in general. I have outlined my interviewing techniques clearly in this chapter and I report examples of interviewee dialogue in the findings chapters and appendices.

Meaningful Coherence

Meaningfully coherent studies extend beyond ensuring commensurability and interconnectivity between the methods, methodology and epistemology. They also achieve their stated purpose; accomplish what they espouse to be about (Tracy, 2010, p. 848) and in my opinion attentively connect relevant literature throughout the entirety of the study.

Additionally, when reporting the results of IPA, it is necessary to provide a cohesive picture, in diagrams and words of the central themes associated with participants' experiences. J. A. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that this overview of findings should precede transcript extracts and analytical and intuitive interpretations of the text. This helps the "reader to get a broad sense of the whole, before getting into the detail of the first theme" (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 109). After the main findings are presented, in order to bring the whole project together they recommend illustrating the relationships between themes using a structure, frame or gestalt (J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

Conceptual Frameworks

As mentioned in the methodology section in the introduction, it is recommended when using IPA that the researcher forgo using pre-existing theories or models to guide the development of the research process (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Similar to the concept of "beginner's mind" in mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005), researchers are asked to set aside their cherished belief systems temporarily and allow the data to "speak for itself" (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). This openness and expansive way of thinking and perceiving permits the researcher to be receptive to new possibilities, and helps prevent them closing down novel ways of thinking, or trying to match findings with pre-existing theories. In mindfulness

traditions, this way of thinking is described as clear and uncluttered (Hardin, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Cultivating beginner's mind, in my opinion is a hallmark of good IPA work. As the research process proceeds and the interviewer listens to participants' views, he or she may find models or research that helps articulate, explain and illuminate findings. The usage of other research and models is also thought to serve as a credibility check (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

Analysis and Reporting

As already outlined in this chapter, effective analysis and reporting when using IPA is also contingent upon:

- identification of themes;
- showing convergence and divergence in participants' experiences;
- in-depth reflection and analysis of interview transcripts;
- analysis of the "whole", the "part" and the connection between the "parts" and
- connecting findings to related texts and academic literature if appropriate (J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

Writing Style

Engaging and effective writing is considered paramount in writing up IPA research results (J. A. Smith, 2011a). As mentioned previously, the researcher needs to describe the dynamic relationship as it develops with the participant through the interview process (Birbeck University of England, 2011). In some respects this pushes the boundaries of traditional academic conventions as it lacks distance. The creators of the methodology argue that as the reader of your finished work was not alongside you during the process researchers must present results in a captivating and engaging manner (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 109). They write: "you must present your results in a full narrative account which is comprehensible, systematic and persuasive to that reader who is coming to your study for the first time" (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 109). The person reading your words needs to feel like they have been a part of the research and inhabit the researcher's and participants' world for small glimpses of time in their respective lives.

Transparency

Transparency in research can be accomplished via a variety of means, such as the explicit publication of subject selection, interview techniques and the appropriate disclosure of interview transcripts (Cotterill, 2013). Another method is to ground reporting in examples of verbatim transcripts (Elliot et al., 1999), an integral aspect of IPA reporting (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

IPA is inevitably subjective (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). It is unlikely that two researchers working with the same data will analyse and interpret participants' meaning making identically (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). I therefore consider it important when presenting findings that the reader is empowered to make sense of teachers' texts according to their own perspective. Readers may find that they instinctively interpret participants' data differently to my own perspective, in line with their own unique worldview and level of consciousness. This means that, when presenting themes, I have made a concerted effort to showcase mindfulness instructors' conversations and included as much of the participants' data as possible (an example of a full verbatim interview transcript and the sections that were used when reporting findings is provided in Appendix G and H). Credibility thus does not lie in one researcher's account, matching with another researcher's, or the field in general, but rather allowing the data to speak for itself.

Ethics

Multiple paths lead to ethical qualitative research, including procedural, situational and relational ethics (for a detailed description see Tracy, 2010). The researcher needs to ensure that they attend as best as possible to these interconnecting ethical requirements, ensuring that co-researchers are treated with respect and dignity throughout the entirety of the research and reporting process.

Summary and Next Chapter

In this chapter I outlined the methods used to explore how teachers make sense of teaching children mindfulness as well as the methods used to evaluate qualitative rigour. In the following chapter I provide an overview of the findings.

Chapter Five: Overview of Findings

*Super-Ordinate
Themes*

Defining Spirituality

Defining Wellness

Sub-ordinate Themes

Your inner wisdom is actually quite humble and quiet. For these reasons, you need to become quiet to really hear what your wisest self already knows (Bowley, 2014, p. 10).

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I present an overview of the main findings. I outline and pictorially represent super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes and define and discuss some of the terms used to make sense of teachers' meaning making. In the final section of this chapter I explain how each super-ordinate theme is presented.

Super-ordinate Themes

During 2014, I conversed with eight teachers about their experiences of teaching children mindfulness. The teachers who honoured me with their time worked in a range of schools; government and independent, as well as out-of-school care settings. All but one of the instructors worked in Australia, with one Australian teacher working in New York. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodology, was used to interview teachers and analyse a range of illustrative material. The research question posed was, "How do teachers who are experienced MBW practitioners make sense of teaching children mindfulness?" An interview schedule was devised prior to interviewing; however, the questions, as is typical in an IPA study, ended up covering a wide range of topics, such as:

- the motivation to teach;
- how teachers started teaching mindfulness;
- their MBW practice;
- mindfulness activities practised in the classroom;
- favourite mindfulness activities;
- children's reactions to practising mindfulness;
- how teachers defined and understood creativity; and

- colleagues' views of practice.

After analysing and interpreting teacher' texts for approximately one year, I found that four super-ordinate themes (depicted in Figure 5-1) captured the essence of how experienced MBW practitioners made sense of teaching children mindfulness:

- Spirituality
- Creativity
- Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing
- Being a Mindful Role Model.

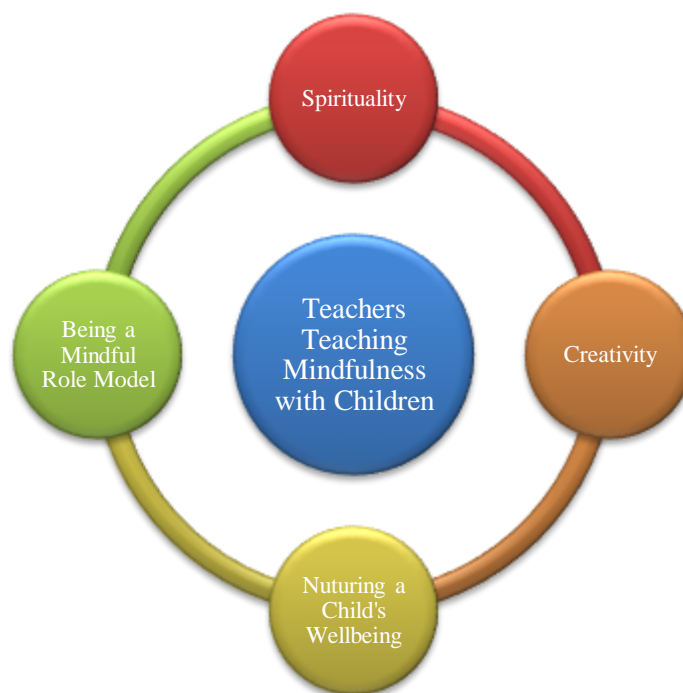


Figure 5-1: Super-ordinate Themes

The themes serve as a gateway to understanding how the teachers, as a group, make sense of teaching children mindfulness. Each teacher is unique, as is each individual, with a myriad of different belief systems governing their worldviews, yet my research partners shared the common characteristic of teaching children mindfulness and this mutual attribute united their stories.

The teachers differed in their opinions and meaning making at times, however, more often than not, their views synchronised and therefore weaving the threads of their stories

together was, for me, a harmonious process. It often felt like the teachers were all in the same room and they would follow up and affirm what the other was saying. I imagine if they were all in the same room it would be hard to break up the party – they would get on so well!

Spirituality, creativity and wellbeing, constructs exemplifying the themes that emerged, are all complex entities that have over the centuries been subjected to varying interpretations. Therefore, before I discuss the findings I will define these terms. As I noted in Chapter Three when discussing the difference between meditation and mindfulness, definitions can often be a function of the researcher's own worldview and reasoning and thus might not address how the term is commonly used. They are thus not definitions in themselves, but opinions. Therefore, when describing and defining these multifaceted concepts I have attempted to synthesise a range of views about how the constructs are commonly perceived and articulated, particularly in school contexts.

In the next section, I will outline the concept of spirituality and then move on to discussing wellness theory. However, I define creativity only briefly in this chapter and within the context of wellness. The reason why I do not examine creativity comprehensively here is because one of the participants, Daniella, considered the concept critical to how she made sense of teaching mindfulness. Daniella spent considerable time re-defining the term vis-a-vis Western definitions and thus creativity is defined and re-defined in the findings section, through the context of Daniella's meaning making and also as it relates to other participants in the study.

Defining Spirituality in School Settings

Spirituality is described as a concept that resists definition and is said to mean different things to different people (Bone, Cullen, & Loveridge, 2007, p. 344). I therefore first explore what spirituality can mean to people within school settings. I then report study participants' perceptions of spirituality and religion based on data collected from their demographic information sheets.

Spirituality is a growing area of academic enquiry (Coholic, 2011; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Multiple views of the construct abound –

influenced by individual, group, cultural and religious belief systems (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; K. Moore, Talwar, & Bosacki, 2012). It is logical that divergent perspectives coexist (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002), given the contrasting worldviews that have evolved and solidified on this topic over the centuries – in all locations on earth.

The concept is considered to be integral to humans' motivation for survival (Ai, Cascio, Santangelo, & Evans-Campbell, 2005), and wellbeing (Bone et al., 2007; Grieves, 2009) and something that the majority of citizens in the US are yearning for (Thoresen, Alex, & Harris, 2002). Since the late 1980s, nourishing a child's spiritual wellbeing has become a primary objective of mainstream school educational policies and curriculum guidance in many countries around the world (N. J. Albrecht, 2014; Bigger, 2008). However, there are a variety of ways in which the term "spiritual" is used in educational settings, influenced by: educational policies and practices; school belief systems; and how individuals within the community commonly perceive the term. In this section, I will present an overview of some of the different notions of spirituality that exist and are actively promulgated in the Australian school sector.

First Nations Spiritual Perspectives

First Nation spiritual perspectives are now considered in Australia's largest state of New South Wales to be a prominent feature in a child's education (Queensland Government, n.d.). In 2013, over 5% of full-time Australian students were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, with over 40% of the student population in the Northern Territory being First Nations Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b). Schools vary in how they educate and incorporate First Nation culture and spirituality. For example, in the Catholic education sector, policy guides schools to: "recognise the individuality and dignity of each young person, and foster the development of each student's unique potential and spirituality" (Catholic Schools Office, 2013). Curriculum has been developed to support First Nations culture, spirituality and heritage (Catholic Schools Office, 2013).

The English word "spirituality" has become an important and reverential word to First Nations Australians. It speaks to the core of Aboriginal identity – informing relationships to the natural world, human society and the universe (Grieves, 2009). Grieves (2009) explains:

Aboriginal Spirituality derives from a philosophy that establishes the wholistic notion of interconnectedness of the elements of the earth and the universe, animate and inanimate, whereby people, the plants and animals, landforms and celestial bodies are interrelated. These relations and the knowledge of how they are interconnected are expressed, and why it is important to keep all things in healthy interdependence is encoded, in sacred stories or *myths*. These creation stories describe the shaping and developing of the world as people know and experience it through the activities of power ancestors. These ancestors created order out of chaos, form out of formlessness, life out of lifelessness, and, as they did so, they established the ways in which all things should live in interconnectedness so as to maintain order and sustainability. The creation ancestors thus laid down not only the foundations of all life, but also what people had to do to maintain their part of this interdependence – the Law. The Law ensures that each person knows his or her connectedness and responsibilities for other people (their kin), for country (including watercourses, landforms, the species and the universe), and for their ongoing relationship with the ancestor spirits themselves. (p. 7)

First Nations spiritual perspectives tie closely with environmental concepts, where environmental wellbeing is equated with spiritual wellbeing. The concepts are also an important facet of how a number of teachers in Australia have been found to define their personal perspective of spirituality (J. W. Fisher, 1998). First Nations Australian concepts of spirituality appear to play an informing role in a child's education; however, a number of other spiritual beliefs also have an impact on how we educate children. Religious schools dominate the non-government school sector in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a) and as such their belief systems affect how teachers, students and other members of the school system define, understand and practise spirituality.

Religious and Post-secular Spiritual Perspectives

Religious views of spirituality are those that are specific to a particular religion (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002, p. 155) and thus explanations of the term vary according to denomination. Prior to the 1980s, close to 90% of students in the non-government sector attended schools associated with the two major faith groups, Catholic and Anglican (Buckingham, 2010, p. ix). In 2006, this proportion dropped to just over 70%, with the remaining students attending schools affiliated with other religions (Buckingham, 2010, p. ix). "The most substantive increases in enrolments have been in Islamic schools and new classifications of 'fundamentalist' Christian denominations" (Buckingham, 2010, p. ix).

Spirituality is viewed as an integral part of religion (Jacobs, 2013) in schools and each faith defines the concept according to its own doctrines and traditions. As it is not within the scope of the current work to define spirituality according to each religious group, below

is an example of how the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane (n.d.) defines and applies the concept:

Spirituality defines one's whole way of life. As such, spirituality can be defined as a way of being, seeing and acting.

What is distinctive about Christian spirituality is that it is a way of being, seeing and acting that has its source in, and takes its inspiration from, the person and vision of Jesus Christ. It is therefore a spirituality that has its source in our communion with God, and is forged in communion with others and with all of creation. It is a spirituality of relationships.

Characteristics of a Catholic Christian spirituality also include:

- A belief in the Trinity as the model of communion between people
- A commitment to liturgy, especially the Eucharist, communal and personal prayer
- A spirit of collaboration
- An ecumenical commitment to unity
- An inclusive attitude to the world
- A readiness to dialogue with all people of good will
- A passion for social justice and human rights
- A view of the natural environment as God's creation to be loved and cared for

In Australia, religious education is not limited to the non-government sector. Some government schools also provide religious education (Maddox, 2014). For example, in the state of Victoria, school students receive two main forms of government-funded religious education through: the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP) and Special Religious Instruction (SRI) (Good Schools Guide, 2013). The NSCP is a Commonwealth Government program (introduced by the Howard government in 2006) and provides funding to assist schools nationwide to establish chaplaincy and pastoral care services. "Chaplains provide pastoral care as well as spiritual guidance for school students, staff and parents. It is up to individual schools to determine the role of the chaplain in their school" (Good Schools Guide, 2013). Programs implemented by chaplains in schools include meditation courses, based on mindfulness principles (Rodwell, Wong, & Lefroy, 2012). The courses are taught in a post-secular manner, which can be defined by: a

renewed interest in the spiritual life; a relaxation of the secular suspicion towards spiritual questions; a recognition that secular rights and freedoms of expression are a prerequisite to the renewal of spiritual enquiry and spiritual and intellectual pluralism, cherishing the best in all spiritual traditions and a common heartedness with others (Canda, 1998, as cited in Todd & Coholic, 2007; King, n.d.).

SRI incorporates 30-minute weekly lessons on religion funded by the Victorian Government. “By law, Victorian government schools must provide SRI where an approved instructor is available and has approached the school” (Good Schools Guide, 2013). An example of a program undertaken includes a Buddhist education initiative, introduced in ten metropolitan government primary schools. The program commenced in 2004 and focused on imparting Buddhist principles and practices through storytelling, plays, meditation, mindful movement, loving kindness visualisations, connecting with the body and observing and understanding the implications of interconnectedness (S. E. Smith, 2010).

Secular Spiritual Perspectives

It is not clear how many government schools are promoting spiritual concepts through religious instruction programs; however, secular views (distinct from religion) of spirituality are also now prevalent in educational policy and frameworks (N. J. Albrecht, 2014; Bigger 2008). Some of the characteristics attributed to spiritual wellbeing (N. J. Albrecht, 2014; Wellington College, n.d.) include:

- feeling a sense of freedom;
- seeking meaning and purpose in life;
- enhanced feelings of interconnectedness with self, others and the universe;
- thinking and awareness beyond materialism and the self;
- living in the moment;
- taking the time to participate in contemplative activities
- paying conscious attention to each aspect of life;
- feeling at peace;
- the ability to transcend and observe life with detachment;
- achieving balance and symmetry amongst all aspects of life;

- listening to your own inner guidance when approaching tasks;
- the ability to receive and give love;
- understanding the connections with people and the planet that transcends physical boundaries; and
- awareness and appreciation of one's place in the world.

This view of spirituality corresponds closely to my own, except that I am aware that many of the people I teach hold strong religious or philosophical views, which I respect, so I also add that spirituality may be described as a connection with self and others, the universe and a higher power that is self-defined – either within or without a particular faith orientation (Coholic, Loughheed, & Lebreton, 2009, p. 30).

Spiritual Pedagogy

Apart from secular, post-secular, Indigenous and faith-based conceptions of spirituality, a minority of schools in Australia, approximately 1-2%, “deliberately and determinedly” embed spirituality in to every aspect of the teaching and learning process (Bone et al., 2007). These schools are frequently described as providing “holistic education” and their principles and practices are informed by the classical figures (Ron Miller, 2006) of Maria Montessori (for more information see Tregenza, 2008) and Rudolf Steiner (Steiner Education Australia., n.d.). Reverence for space, silence and spirituality is cultivated in the school's every day activities (Bone et al., 2007).

Does Religion Inform School Choice?

Although, in Australia, schools promote a variety of religious and spiritual beliefs, surveys show that “religion is usually not the most important factor for parents in choice of school” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013c, p. 13). The decision of where to send a child to school is overshadowed by the school's behaviour management policies, educational quality and capacity to maximise student potential (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013c). However, only 7-9% of students reported no religion in Catholic primary schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a, p. 14) and fundamentalist Christian schools are reported to only enrol children with practising Christian parents (J. W. Fisher, 2001). This suggests that a majority of children who attend faith-based schools subscribe to the faith of the school. In government schools just over half of the children report

belonging to a religion (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013c, p. 13).

Teachers' Spiritual Perspectives

No statistics could be located to help understand the nature of school staff's spiritual and/or religious beliefs. However, interviews with teachers in Australia reveal that those working in faith-based schools are more concerned with a child's spiritual life, in relation to their connection with God, spirit and the "joy of the Lord", in comparison to teachers working in government schools (J. W. Fisher, 2001).

In the case of the current study participants, teachers were given an option to describe their religious affiliations and/or spiritual connections (see Appendix D, "Demographic Information Sheet"). About half of the participants left these sections blank, indicating either a reticence or inability to discuss/label specific spiritual/religious beliefs. In relation to the "Faith/Religion" question, participants answered as follows: "not applicable"; "Greek Orthodox", "raised as a Catholic" and "Spiritualist". In the question on "Spiritual Links" two participants replied in the same manner, as having an interest in Buddhism.

Having explained spirituality in the context of school settings, in the next section I discuss the emergence of wellness as we have come to understand and recognise it today. I have written about and taught the topic of wellness at an undergraduate and graduate level since 2009. My colleagues and I have posited that wellness models, theory and philosophy may serve as a framework to understand some aspects of child-centric mindfulness programs (see N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012). Therefore, it could be considered that I have a bias towards wellness theory. However, when conducting this research, I carefully set aside the "idea" of using this theory – as is recommended when using IPA (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). It soon, however, became apparent that wellness theory and models could help frame participants' meaning making and therefore in the following pages, I present a synopsis of wellness philosophy, theories and models particularly suited to understanding wellness interventions in school contexts.

I first define the concept and discuss its origins and then move on to discussing core wellness principles, models and characteristics. I then outline the wellness framework I will use to present results for the super-ordinate theme, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing.

What is Wellness?

Please note that the original version of this section was published as follows: Albrecht, N. J. (2014). *Wellness: A conceptual framework for school-based mindfulness programs*. *International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society*, 4(1), 21-36. Retrieved from <http://ijw.cgpublisher.com/product/pub.198/prod.161>.

Due to copyright restrictions, I have provided an abbreviated definition of wellness below. Other information related to the conceptual framework of wellness can be found at: <https://rmit.academia.edu/NicoleAlbrecht> and https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nicole_Albrecht

Wellness, a term often used interchangeably with well-being (Mackey, 2000), is not a new concept. It is a state of being that humans innately strive for and have theorised about for centuries (Cohen, 2010; Compton & Hoffman, 2013), with key tenets often forming an integral role in First Nations culture (Weaver, 2002). Wellness is today commonly described as:

an active, lifelong and ever-lasting process of becoming aware of choices, making decisions and taking responsibility towards achieving a balanced and fulfilling life. It is multi-dimensional in nature, unique to the individual and centred on the premise that the mind, body, spirit and community are all interrelated and interdependent (Ager et al., 2015, p. 898).

The term has been used in the English language since the 1600s, but it is only in the last two decades that the concept has received significant attention (Albrecht, 2014). Dunn (1961) was one of the first authors to expand upon and clearly elucidate the relevance of wellness to society (Albrecht, 2011a; Miller & Foster, 2010). He coined the term “high-level wellness” and in a series of lectures, journal articles and a book outlined his philosophy and interpretation of the construct (Albrecht, 2011a). Dunn’s work was influenced by prominent psychologists such as, Maslow, Rogers and Allport (Dunn, 1961) and his work in turn inspired models of wellness by Ardell, Hettler, Hinds, Jourard and Travis and Ryan (Palombi, 1992).

Dunn argued that while health organisations’ policies and statements stress the importance of understanding individuals as a physical, mental and social unity; health professionals, in practice have only paid lip service to these edicts and have done very

little to actualise a holistic vision of wellbeing. In order to ground and enhance societal and the planet's wellbeing he emphasised that all members of the community need to work collaboratively and systematically through research, measurement, education, model design and practical implementation to enhance wellness in the following areas: environment and sustainability; mind-body harmony; creativity; altruism and love; ethics and compassion; communication; ageing; workplace; families; interpersonal relations; and physical health (Dunn, 1957). He believed the key to success in enhancing wellness lay in education and the dynamic and harmonious relationship between students and their mentors. Dunn (1957) suggested that schools need to teach wisdom rather than just curriculum outcomes and teachers need to cultivate compassion, peace and mind-body harmony in the classroom.

Dunn's conception and interpretation of wellness is now prevalent throughout a wide range of disciplines, including education (Albrecht, 2014). Wellness models are being used in school settings to: connect and make coherent a range of educational initiatives, projects, policies and practices; enhance and measure improvements in students' well-being; identify learners who may be at risk; encourage and engage members of the community to support and improve student and societal well-being; and guide research initiatives and program development (Albrecht, 2016b; State of South Australia, 2007).

Building on a range of wellness models Ager and I developed a seven-dimension wellness educational model (see Ager et al. 2015; Albrecht, 2014), which is depicted in Figure 1. The figure shows that a student's wellbeing (spiritual, environmental, emotional, social, cognitive, creative and physical) is influenced in school environments by four domains of education practice: 1) learning environment – the ethos/culture and aesthetics of the school, infrastructure and physical environment; 2) curriculum and pedagogy – the twin process of teaching and learning; 3) partnerships – the numerous relationships that exist to support learners; and 4) policies and procedures – system and local statements and directions on significant issues that affect learner well-being. Global consciousness and sustainability, depicted on the outer rim of the diagram, is an awareness that we are connected to a global family and that sustainability in our own lives depends on and transcends borders (Ager et al., 2015).



Figure 5-2: Student Wheel of Wellness (Ager et al., 2015, p. 899)

The wellness framework I have described in this section helps frame teachers' meaning making in relation to the third super-ordinate theme to be presented, Responsibility for Nourishing a Child's Wellbeing. In the next section I explain the sub-ordinate themes connected to the four inter-related super-ordinate themes:

- Spirituality
- Creativity
- Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing
- Being a Mindful Role Model.

Sub-ordinate Themes

Within each super-ordinate theme lie inextricably related sub-themes that form the essence of teachers' meaning making. They are as follows:

Theme 1: Spirituality

Notions of spirituality were found to be an integral aspect of the teachers' practice, with four sub-themes emerging (depicted in Figure 5-6):

- The Devotional Nature of Practice
- Connection
- Workplace Spirituality
- Rituals.



Figure 5-3: Super-ordinate and Sub-ordinate Themes of Spirituality

Theme 2: Creativity

The theme of creativity reverberated to varying degrees throughout participants' texts with three sub-themes emerging (depicted in Figure 5-7):

- Defining Creativity
- Creativity in Motion
- A Congenial Environment.

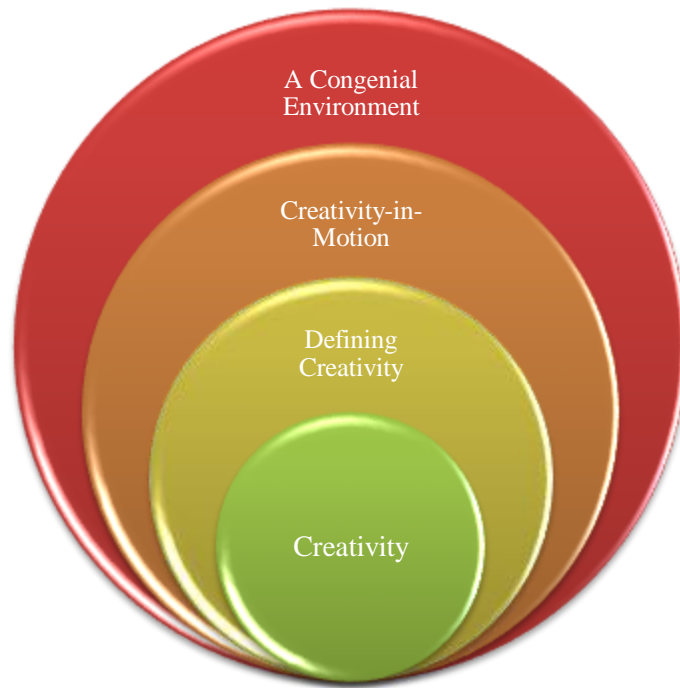


Figure 5-4: Super-ordinate and Sub-ordinate Themes of Creativity

Theme 3: Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing

Within the super-ordinate theme of Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing, four sub-themes emerged (depicted in Figure 5-8):

- Teaching Students Mindfulness at a Young Age
- Holistic Vision
- Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing
- The Learning Environment.

The wellness dimensions and characteristics detailed in this chapter will be used to help frame teachers' meaning making.



Figure 5-5: Super-ordinate and Sub-ordinate Themes of Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing

Theme 4: Being a Mindful Role Model

Within the super-ordinate theme of Being a Mindful Role Model, three sub-themes emerged (depicted in Figure 5-9):

- Incorporating Formal and Informal Practices
- Cultivating a Mindful School
- Mindfulness: A Personal Journey.

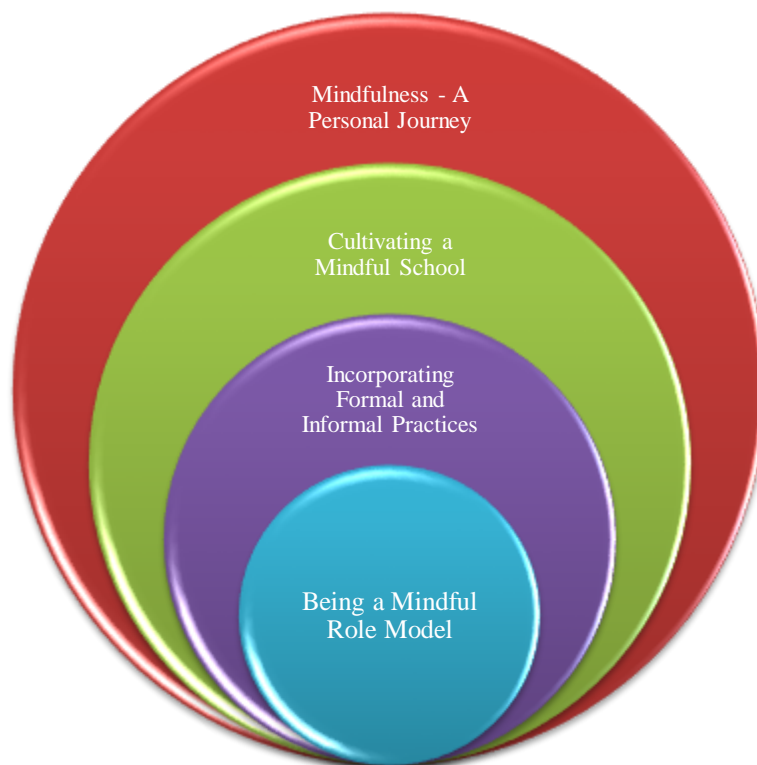


Figure 5-6: Super-ordinate and Sub-ordinate Themes of Being a Mindful Role Model

How the Findings are Presented

In the following chapters the four themes are presented, with each theme receiving its own dedicated chapter. I first present the super-ordinate theme of Spirituality, then Creativity, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing and lastly Being a Mindful Role

Model. I analyse, discuss and interpret participants' meaning making with the assistance of a wide range of literature, including my own autoethnographic accounts. I have chosen literature that helps to articulate and explicate how participants made sense of teaching mindfulness. Consistent with the epistemological foundations of this thesis, an open and flexible transdisciplinary mind set guided the selection of material. That is, I did not impose any disciplinary boundaries when choosing relevant texts. I hope you enjoy the journey of reading and reflecting on the teachers' wisdom as much as I have.

Chapter Six: Theme 1: Spirituality

Sub-Themes

*The Devotional Nature
of Practice*

Connection

Spirituality at Work

Rituals

Chapter Outline

In this chapter, as the title suggests, I report findings related to the super-ordinate theme of Spirituality. I found that notions of spirituality were integral to how teachers made sense of teaching and practising mindfulness. Four sub-themes emerged:

- The Devotional Nature of Practice
- Connection
- Spirituality at Work
- Rituals.

MindBody Wellness (MBW) practices were found to hold a central role in both participants' personal and professional lives. Teachers felt that devotion to a MBW routine or discipline encouraged them to feel grounded and spoke to the core of their being. This devotion was closely tied to feelings of connectedness among participants. *Connection* seemed to occur first on a *personal* level and then extended out to *others*.

A heightened sense of connectedness enabled teachers to form closer ties with children and they were able *truly* to listen to, acknowledge and respond to student voices – providing a firm foundation for effective learning. However, running like an undercurrent throughout the interview process were ripples of discontent – a *disconnection* from some of the rules governing educational policy and practice and the way society functions as a whole. This was an important aspect of how teachers made sense of mindfulness instruction with children. Mindfulness practices were perceived to help alleviate some of the problems caused by *mindless* policy, practices and pedagogy. I felt like teaching children mindfulness acted as a non-violent form of resistance.

In this chapter, I delve deeper into each sub-theme and share how teachers make sense of teaching mindfulness. I discuss the sub-themes related to my research partners' meaning making within the context of a variety of relevant literature to help give depth, explanatory power and validity to the results. For example, a model from consumer marketing by Rook (1985) on rituals was particularly helpful in understanding the key elements driving how one participant taught mindfulness, which demonstrates that we may need to call on frameworks and gestalts from a wide range of disciplines to help us make

sense of child-based mindfulness instruction. I also draw on autoethnographic methods in order to help convey my feelings, thoughts, experiences and memories elicited when reading and interpreting participants' texts, that is, how I made sense of teachers making sense of teaching children mindfulness – the double hermeneutic. My reflective storytelling starts with the first sub-ordinate theme to be presented: The Devotional Nature of Practice.

Sub-ordinate Theme: The Devotional Nature of Practice

The first sub-theme to emerge into conscious awareness within the super-ordinate



theme of Spirituality was the devotional nature of practising MindBody Wellness (MBW) techniques. Janet related:

For many decades my personal practice has been a blessing in my life. A blessing: for so many reasons. I have realized the attitude or mindset that we bring to the practice is so important. First and foremost, my practice is a devotional one. I am happy to also think of it as a “discipline” – a word that now often seems to have spurious connotations. I recently heard that the Latin origin of the word means “to follow”. It is comforting and sustaining for me to have precepts and practices (that hugely enrich my life) to follow. Space is created on a daily basis, for connection to self-compassion, wise reflection and renewal.

The mindset I have regarding my practices is that they are creative investments to nurture and care for my mind, body and spirit.

As the trinity of mind, body and spirit are embraced by Mindfulness practices, it is wonderful to include a range of practices. My early morning ritual is to sit on a meditation stool or *zafu* and enjoy a stillness practice. A segue to this practice is to sit with a large singing bowl and gently let my focus shift from outer to inner awareness. I feel that the quality of my day really depends on this practice!

Janet's text above is rich with terminology that some readers may associate with religious activities. However, on the first reading of the text, I made no association with the words I have underlined and religion. They did not grab my attention. Being a Japanese teacher, I was actually more impressed that she had spelt "*zafu*" correctly and italicised the word. My focus on the *zafu* then led me to visualising Janet basking in her early morning ritual, setting herself up for the day to be at calm and at peace with the sometimes frantic world she occupied, featuring student bullying, student suicides, student apathy and disconnection. And that's just the students!

I remember at one of the schools where we both worked, the Student Wellbeing Officer rushing in to our meeting hurriedly stating that he just put out another fire. My mind immediately jumped at the word "fire" and I thought perhaps they had had an actual fire in a science laboratory. I saw rooms going up in flames. I wasn't even close.

I said alarmed, "What you have just had a fire at the school?"

"No," James, the wellbeing officer laughed, one of the laughs where you in fact mean the exact opposite, more a reluctant resignation to the circumstances. If you didn't laugh you would scream in frustration, a luxury only afforded to children in public. "we just prevented another suicide."

I took a deep breath, released it and politely enquired, "Is this a regular thing? Putting out fires?"

"Oh, about once a week," he replied in a matter-of-fact way, like I didn't understand the half of it.

Only I did. When I first walked into the school I was frightened – all I could feel was fear. I could smell it, as the saying goes. I felt it in every cell of my being. The students

were permeating aggression and I thought, “God, I hope I don’t get beaten up just finding my way to the meeting room.” I then thought, “Be brave, Nikki. Find someone nice to show you the way to the meeting room”. The fear soaking through the schoolyard disoriented me, like a frightened rabbit caught in the head lights; I had no idea which way to turn. Well, back to my car would have been a relief. I knew the escape route, but I had adult responsibilities – a meeting.

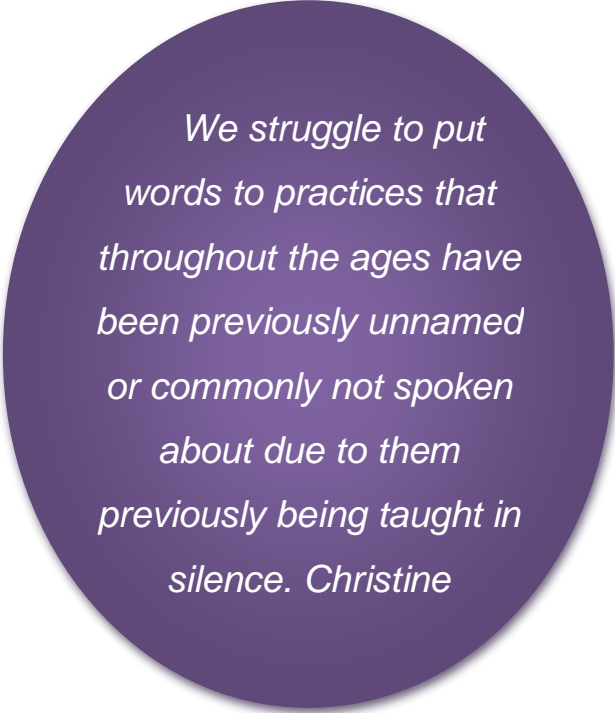
Like a chant, I kept repeating to myself as I took each step through the fog of fear, “Find someone kind to show you the way,” until I bumped into a beautiful young girl of about 14 years of age, with very heavy make-up, but that was the standard at this school. This was not the elite private system, where make-up is banned. She immediately smiled at me, her eyes met mine, she reassured me and showed me the way. Our souls met for that brief moment in time and she knew on some other level that I was there to help dissolve the fear.

I rarely have to physically step into the fog of fear, but Janet treads the path day after day. So, I pictured her fortifying herself. Her daily devotional ritual gives her the nourishment to sustain being in worlds that are sometimes quite alien to our own. She is there to help, but it takes a toll. She tries to bring this essence, the energetic vibration from her morning ritual to her *mindful* encounters with children and the time taken to self-nurture is an important aspect of how she makes sense of teaching children mindfulness. Janet reminds herself of this way of *being* each day before she faces the chaos.

The religious connotations of Janet’s terminology were thus not the focus of my attention upon my first reading of the text until my supervisor drew my attention to the word “devotional”. As mentioned in Chapter Four, my supervisor said that she associated “religious activities” with the word “devotional”. She then thought, “No, she is not referring to religion but something spiritual in nature.” Her utterances became a secret gem for me. I wanted to make sense of her interpretation of Janet’s experience. I felt it was important. Perhaps I was engaging in a “triple hermeneutic”, as Cotterill (2013) notes can sometimes occur when engaging with IPA. I was trying to make sense of someone trying to make sense of the participant’s words and through this process I hoped to discover how Janet was using terms such as “devotional” and “blessing”.

I pondered and researched the usage of the word devotion for months. I came to the conclusion that Janet's practice spoke to the core of her soul, allowing time and respect for internal reflection. I felt that the term "devotional" was being used in a reverential sense, but a sense free of set (or set free of) doctrines and beliefs. Her "discipline" went beyond being a substitute for religion, transcending dogma and doctrines. I discussed Janet's usage of the word "devotion" with former Master of Wellness student and yoga teacher, Christine Barnes. She wrote:

From my point of view a devotional technique is different from identifying oneself as being in/part of a religion and practicing religious techniques. Yoga predates religion as we understand it and there are many religions that have embraced some of the



We struggle to put words to practices that throughout the ages have been previously unnamed or commonly not spoken about due to them previously being taught in silence. Christine

Bhakti (devotional) arm of yoga practices or techniques e.g., use of incense, chanting etc. We struggle to put words to practices that throughout the ages have been previously unnamed or commonly not spoken about due to them previously being taught in silence. The shift today is to discuss, write down, and over-dissemble in order to change what is an internal, non-verbal technique into an intellectual one. It is my experience that Mind Body practices tap into ancient techniques and energies that have been commonly associated with "spiritual exploration" (Hasselle-Newcombe, 2005) and sometimes called "mystical religion" Troeltsch (1912) which are terms that were introduced by Troeltsch and developed by Campbell (1978). My experience has been similar to that found in Hasselle-Newcombe's research findings that dedicated practitioners of yoga discover an

increasing sense of meaning and purpose. Unfortunately in our modern culture we tend to relate this to religion. This may be why instructors such as Janet describe their practice as “devotional”. For me devotional means techniques that are used to search for the experience of connection with every aspect of me (whatever me is), energy and the environment. (personal communication, March 5, 2014)

It can be seen from Christine’s comments that similarly to me, she felt that Janet’s usage of terminology traditionally and commonly associated with religious practices transcends the dogma of religion. Some of the respondents in Hasselle-Newcombe’s (2005, see Figure 6-1) study (which Christine felt resonated with her experiences), likewise felt that their yoga practice transcended religion, making remarks that align with post-secular notions of spirituality, such as “No religion – but I feel I am interested in the best of them all”. (pp. 311-312). “No religion – but I respect all religions – I wish there was just one” (p. 314).

Participants in Hasselle-Newcombe’s (2005) study made the following comments signifying, like Janet, the importance of a MBW practice to their lives:

It [yoga] underpins my life, grounds it, gives it a meaning and a rootedness.

Gave me a sense of purpose. Gives a meaning to being alive; brings a measure of sanity.

It is the central core in some ways – a regular practice is something secure...it is part of my identity. (pp. 311-312)

Other study participants related in a similar manner, the importance and meaning of MBW practices to their life. Daniella, in an email interview, shared:

Process painting or art-based mindfulness became the vehicle for my journey of discovery to the real me.

What I discovered throughout my journey of exploring my creativity was that practicing mindfulness was the vehicle that allowed me to access my creativity and the deepest parts of my heart and soul.

Daniella later concluded in a phone interview: “And without having awareness and practising mindfulness I would imagine it would be very difficult to be aware of what you are feeling in your life and be awake. How could you?”

Details of Hasselle-Newcombe's Study

In 2002, Hasselle-Newcombe (now called Newcombe) disseminated a questionnaire at the Iyengar Yoga Jubilee Convention, Crystal Palace, London. Approximately 750 practitioners attended the conference, and 188 yoga enthusiasts filled out the 17-page long survey, which included multiple choice, open-ended and Likert scale questions – including questions from the European Values Survey (see Appendix M for examples of survey questions).

Newcombe writes: "I think the fact that these were distributed at a weekend event where there was a fair amount of 'dead time' where people were hanging about the venue between sessions with nothing to do, but with a very high personal investment in the activity gave me such a relatively high response rate to such a ridiculously long survey!" (personal communication, May 16, 2014).

The survey participants' average age was 47 years; they had been attending approximately one class per week and practising three to five hours at home for between 11 and 15 years. Multiple choice and Likert scale questions were analysed using basic chi-square tests for statistical significance and thematic analysis was employed to analyse open-ended questions.

Figure 6-1: Details of Hasselle-Newcombe Study

Angelica shared similar feelings to both Janet and Daniella. In a journal documenting her first steps into MBW practices she described:

As my awareness of 'self' increased, I learned about the need to check in with 'me' periodically in the day, and to notice my sleep patterns and dreams. I began to take the time to stop and note my environment, my emotional reactions, my energy and my mental wellness. Perhaps the greatest gift has been the development of my spiritual well being. Guided Imagery and mindful meditation have especially contributed to this. I feel more equipped to deal with my thoughts and feelings because of my modality experiences. Through practicing MBW techniques I made the choice to participate in the rediscovery of my body, mind and spirit. This was freeing, empowering, rejuvenating and harmonic. It spoke to the core of who I am, and taught me to embrace every part of me. Now I am aware that enlightenment



does not just have to happen after pain, loss and despair. MBW has taught me about transcendence.

I now understand that healing and growth may also happen through guided imagery, meditation, and other interventions, and that practicing loving kindness to myself and others restores balance to my body, mind and spirit.

Allowing my 'self' to behold the 'gift of time', and gently reminding myself that healing is a process has helped me to find harmony within.

On a similar note, Ben related the following in an email interview when asked about his motivation for bringing mindfulness into the classroom:

I was working in a very stressful environment, surrounded by quite a negative

atmosphere. I found it hard to maintain my positivity and health. I also found it difficult to model correct behaviour to my students. This led me to make a deliberate effort to practice meditation and mindfulness practices with my students as a way to heal them and myself.

Angelica, Ben, Daniella and Janet reflected on the centrality of MBW practices to their lives. And their accounts return us to the concept of “remembering”, described in Chapter Two. Daniella shared via email:

We all started out knowing exactly who we were from a very young age, but slowly conditioning, measuring up and life makes us forget.

The “core” that Angelica and other instructors spoke of is in Buddhist philosophy described as “basic goodness” – the natural, clear and uncluttered state of our being (Hardin, 2011, p.15). Hardin (2011) writes:


It is natural in the sense that it does not have to be created or maintained in any way. It is already here. It is clear because it perceives perfectly, without any distortions, whatever is happening at this very moment, like a flawless digital video camera. It is uncluttered because it is empty of all the schemas and paranoia of the ego’s story lines. (pp. 15-16)

Daniella in a face to face interview, in a similar vein to Hardin (2011) shares:

Arts-based mindfulness exposes how you live life – without judgement, without interpretation. The awareness through the process is how you live life.

All of the research participants emphasised the importance of MBW practices to their lives. Practising mindfulness or meditation was for them like drinking water. If one day, they perhaps consumed Diet Coke or Red Bull, instead of cups of herbal tea and water, they would feel drained – thirsty; a small part of their souls would shrivel up and die, only to be rejuvenated when they returned to practice. Like drinking herbal tea and water is not everybody’s “cup of tea”, some instructors felt, likewise, that not everyone will want to or is ready to engage in meditation or mindfulness. Caro, in a face to face interview said, “Yeah...but you know it’s not for everyone, But I mean I can’t imagine living my life without it now...”

However, not all the teachers used terminology that is commonly found in religious contexts such as “blessing”, “devotional”, “spirit”, or “ritual”. Daniella even mentioned that she did not “really like” using this type of terminology, but she wrote, “it’s a way of describing it”. In analysis of participants’ texts, about half of the instructors used “spiritual vernacular” (for example, words such as blessed, holy, sacrosanct, ritual and sacred) fluidly in conversation. And I will shortly discuss how Angelica used the term “ritual” and ritual behaviour in respect to teaching children mindfulness, but first I will discuss the sub-theme of “connection”.



*I can't imagine
living my life without
it now. Caro*

Sub-ordinate Theme: Connection

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Sub-Ordinate Theme: Workplace Spirituality

In Chapter Four, when demonstrating the emergence and categorisation of themes, I highlighted the sub-theme of workplace spirituality. Caro was actively given permission and encouragement to bring mindfulness practices in to her faith-based workplace. She

even discussed mindfulness in her interview for the position of teacher/counsellor at the school. Caro remarked in our face to face interview:

But when I came here I talked about it [mindfulness] in my interview, as something I was passionate about and I talked about it in a spiritual sense.

Researcher question (Nikki):

Was that because of the religious angle...because they are quite big on meditation?

Interviewee response (Caro):

Yeah, yeah.

Researcher question (Nikki):

When I used to work at an Anglican school, the priests used to come in and they used to talk about meditation and that's when I got the impetus to start doing it in the classroom. I thought if they can talk about it, I can do it too. So, you framed it in that spiritual sense, almost like spiritual wellbeing?

Interviewee response (Caro):

Yeah, yeah.

We can see from Caro's account that the school saw integrating mindfulness as congruent with its religious background and as a vehicle to enhance spiritual wellbeing. In an email correspondence, Caro wrote:

It is great to have my passion supported here at school and to be able to be who I really am at work as well as at home.

In a follow-up face to face interview, near to the close of our time together, I asked Caro:

Is there anything you would ask yourself? Is there something you would like to really share about your whole journey?

Caro's response:

I'm just loving it more now that I am able to share it.

Researcher question (Nikki):

That's the thing I really picked up on in your last email, when I was diving in there and it was spirituality at work. The way you are at home could be the way you are at work too. And what a beautiful thing that is.

Caro's response:

Yeah. Coz, it's like we wear all these masks. You have to be someone...well it doesn't have to be like that, but sometimes you are someone different at work than you are at home and in your counselling relationship with students, you wear a different mask again than when you are in a staff meeting and it continues. But now...

Researcher question (Nikki):

You've got a mindful mask. Not a mask but you are openly mindful?!

Caro's response:

Yeah. And you can take it wherever you go. I say, I love my job. I hate getting up early in the morning. I do, but I don't....but, I love what I do and I love being able to share this and being able to bring it into work.

For Caro, it was vitally important that who she was at home, was encouraged and supported at work. In the school environment Caro felt that she was given the freedom to be herself.

Janet likewise communicated that she now has taught in Catholic, Jewish, Anglican, Presbyterian and Muslim schools. She brings her unique version of spirituality to the school-yard through mindfulness and this has been supported and encouraged, irrespective of a school's religious or non-religious foundation. However, Ben felt that he could not bring his understanding of spirituality into the classroom. He wrote in an email that one of the challenges of teaching mindfulness was sharing it in a way that did not contradict family values or was not misconstrued as religious education:

Trying to teach concepts and ideas in a secular way so that I am not teaching values in a way that would contradict family values or using language that might be misconstrued as religious education.

Ben created mindfulness programs that he felt were palatable to the government system. He affirmed that in a state schooling system, mindfulness needs to be taught in a secular manner that respects individual and family belief systems. His own spiritual belief

systems were not given freedom of expression in the state system, but were nourished in a community outside of the system. He thus, unlike Caro, had a mask, perhaps only half a mask, but a mask nonetheless. Other participants saw mindfulness and yoga as congruent with atheism and since they were working in government schools, which did not promote religion, but encouraged secular notions of spirituality, their beliefs and MBW practice were viewed as being compatible with those of the workplace.

Rituals help us tap in to the greater depths of feeling, meaning, and belonging that life has for us (Huntley, 2005, p. xiv).

Sub-ordinate Theme: Rituals

“Ritual”, a term often used in relation to religious practices in both lay and academic circles (Collins, 2005; Rook 1985), was used in conversation by both Janet and Angelica during interviews. Janet shared:

As the trinity of mind, body and spirit are embraced by Mindfulness practices, it is wonderful to include a range of practices. My early morning ritual is to sit on a meditation stool or *zafu* and enjoy a stillness practice.

As I mentioned previously, when initially reading Janet’s text my attention did not gravitate towards the word “ritual” or the way in which she expressed the term. However, Angelica in our Skype interview stressed the term “ritual” and the importance of rituals in the classroom and I started to take notice of the word and the context in which it was being used. Our conversation follows:

And then ... the way we do it now we’ve ended up with a whole little ritual before I start teaching.

The challenge as a teacher is always the amount of time you give to these things. But I find if I don't commit the time then the lesson isn't as productive.

Researcher questions (Nikki):

So, is mindful breathing, is that the core activity you use? Or are there other mindfulness techniques that you are using with the children?

Interviewee response (Angelica):

Ah...I use quite a few and I’m hoping to document it all, I think and put it into some sort of program that I am going to write myself. I’ve been looking at the difference between say 15 minutes at the beginning of every lesson and a 10-week intensive kind of program, like the Meditation Capsules. I’m really interested in the difference between them. But what I do is bring in the senses. So we are all sitting around and I have the aromatherapy on, first of all. I’ve a little demister in my room and I have an app on the phone that has the flute that just plays all day long in the classroom

(*Beautiful*). Yeah, and I can change it. In fact they wanted a little change from that the other day so they chose a little butterfly one with some birds (*ahhh*) (Angelica laughs). And then we have the Tibetan bowl (*yes*), and then we put their, I ask them to put their arms out to feel the loving kindness in the room (*Oh, that's beautiful*). Yeah. Arms out and palms up. And then um, they... you know I touch them, I just stroke...you know as I'm sitting there leading it. I stroke the palm of their hand and just go around the circle and do that (*Oh, that's nice...hmm*). Yeah, and then we do the Tibetan bowl, we ring that and, you know, each child does that because it's only small groups and they love that because there is a different vibrational sound obviously that comes with that. And then um...so that's kind of the ritual because they all get to ring the bowl, or ding the bowl as they say and then I lead them in the breathing. It's very simple. And I do some other things, some other wellness things too, to use your words, "to create a well space" before we begin the lesson.

Researcher questions (Nikki):

And is there anything, like I've asked you a few questions, and this might be a hard thing to answer, is there anything that you would ask yourself about the whole process. Um..you know of teaching...like is there anything that is really important that stands out that you'd like to communicate with people? And I'm probably putting you on the spot and you might just like to ponder that one if you don't feel like you have an answer at the moment.

However, it turns out I didn't put Angelica "on the spot". She immediately knew which aspect of teaching mindfulness with children was the most important to her and what she wanted to share with readers or listeners.

Interviewee response (Angelica):

Um...I think actually establishing a ritual, as I've sort of mentioned has really worked. So they know what to expect with that and they can take leadership.

Researcher questions (Nikki):

Oh, so, is the ritual almost like a routine? It's a lot nicer word for it word for it (*yeah*). But it's establishing a routine for the children? This is the way it goes. So you don't change things all the time?

Interviewee response (Angelica):

Right. So it's an established routine with things that we do at the beginning of the lesson and that isn't changed. So then they know what they need to do. And we can ask, "Who wants to be teacher today?"

At this point in time, I was feeling like I was “not up with” the “spiritual vernacular” of mindfulness instruction. I was using neither “devotional” nor “ritual” when discussing MBW practices. When I used the term, “routine” to replace “ritual” in conversation with Angelica, I felt like I was throwing a “wet blanket” on Angelica’s rich use of language and that the word “routine” did not have the capacity to convey what she was trying to describe. It was like I had become a rigid and inflexible accountant or administrator coming in and dousing the flames of Angelica’s passion for teaching mindfulness by using the inadequate term “routine”. I felt robotic and reductionist.

Once again, similarly to the term “devotional”, I needed to ponder the word “ritual” and how it was being used. I have to admit, I don’t think I have ever been keen on the term, as it was commonly used in horror movies when I was growing up and there was a recent television program called *Real Life Rituals* where reporters travelled the world showcasing bizarre rituals, focused on maiming the human body. However, this was not the way Angelica was using the term and I immediately dropped any pre-conceived notions or judgements about the word and once again, like with the term “devotional”, I contemplated how and why the word and its actions held importance to Angelica. Now, this may seem like a fortuitous pattern, but once again I did not have to wait long to receive a few more clues. About a month later, in an online discussion in my undergraduate “Introduction to MindBody Wellness” course, 19-year-old psychology student Ashley Clancy used the term in reference to learning the art of meditation. She wrote:

During my first attempt at meditating, I had previously set my alarm half an hour earlier so I had the opportunity to wake up early enough to practice a fifteen-minute meditation session before I ate breakfast or continued any other morning ritual. I closed my eyes and focused on my breathing, I slowed it down until it was producing a rhythm. On the days I had homework to complete I would focus on the target of observation in the present moment (being my course work) which enabled me to block out distractions from my past. I would normally complete this ritual sitting down in my room; however, on some occasions I would go to the extent of lighting candles to complement the mood. (personal communication, April 15, 2014)

Now, I thought, if my young student Ashley is using the term, it must be a regular part of language use amongst this age group and so I started scouring magazines in my local organic shop, ones that the owner’s daughter, of a similar age to Ashley, had purchased. I discovered that the term “ritual” was regularly used in fashion magazines in reference to

beauty rituals. Models and fashion designers were using the word to describe *routines* they would use before a high-pressure event, such as a fashion show, to help calm their nerves, such as journal writing and connecting with the breath.

I realised after reading Ashley's discussion and finding the term "ritual" used frequently in popular culture magazines that my initial understanding of the word was myopic and imposed restrictions upon my interpretation of Angelica's interview. I thus searched academic databases and other popular literature on the topic. A popular book titled *Real Life Rituals* (Huntley, 2005) that I found at my local library introduces the nature and meaning of rituals as follows:

We live in a deep and sacred mystery that cannot be fully understood intellectually but can be experienced when we open ourselves to the flow of life in and through us. This mystery is safe, supportive, and unifying. It overflows with beauty, wisdom, and spiritual direction. We can more easily access the mystery when we sink into it, rather than think about it.

Ritual does just that. Sinking you into the mystery of life, its power lies beyond the words that are spoken or the ceremonial objects that are used. It allows you to see the ways that we are all the same and the ways in which we are all unified with life. In addition to teaching respect for your own path, reverence for all living beings, faith in natural cycles, and comfort with the unseen side of life, rituals allow you to viscerally experience respect, reverence, faith and comfort.

Our lives are rife with changes, some disappointing and others joyful. Our loved ones pass on; our children grow up and leave home; our jobs and health challenges us. We experience so much on a superficial level and then wonder why life doesn't hold more meaning for us. Rituals help us tap in to the greater depths of feeling, meaning, and belonging that life has for us. (p. xiii-xiv)

I felt like the words on the pages of Huntley's book captured how Angelica was using the term. A journal article by Rook (1985), which had received over 500 citations according to Google Scholar in June 2014, helped to give additional depth to and provide a framework for understanding Angelica's mindful rituals.

Rook (1985) defines and elaborates on the construct, providing models and gestalts in order to understand the term's usage and associated behavioural manifestations. He defines ritual as follows:

The term ritual refers to a type of expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple behaviors that occur in a fixed, episodic sequence, and that tend to be repeated over time. Ritual behavior is dramatically scripted and acted out and is performed with formality, seriousness and inner intensity (Rook, 1985, p. 252).

Rook used Levy's (1978) multidisciplinary framework to classify ritual experiences by identifying five primary sources of behaviour and meaning: human biology; individual aims and emotions; group learning; cultural values and cosmological beliefs. Table 6-1 (marginally modified) identifies the primary behaviour source, the ritual type and examples. Using Levy's framework, Angelica's mindfulness practice would be classified as "cosmological", described by Rook (1985) as the richest source of human ritual experience. This type of ritual is commonly associated with religious practices but is also applied to secular and post-secular situations (Rook, 1985).

Table 6-1: A Typology of Ritual Experience

<i>Primary Behaviour Source</i>	<i>Ritual Type</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Cosmology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious • Magic • Aesthetic 	Baptism, meditation, Mass "healing", gambling, Performing arts, tea ceremony
Cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rites of passage • Cultural 	Graduation, marriage, Valentine's Day, Christmas Day, Coming of age initiations
Group learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic • Small Group • Family 	Elections, trials Pancake Day, office luncheons, business negotiations
Individual aims and emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal 	Grooming, household rituals
Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal 	Greeting, mating

Source: adapted from Rook (1985, p. 254)

Distinguishing features of ritual behaviour include:

- The experience is framed around a string of episodic events.
- The string of episodic events lies in an exact fixed sequence.
- The ritual behaviour is performed in the same way each time it is practised, serving as a mnemonic device to elicit specific thoughts and feelings from the individual.
- The ritual serves to include or exclude individuals from community membership.
- The ritual triggers an immediate behaviour response, facilitating interpersonal interactions (Rook, 1985).

We can see that Angelica's "15 minutes of mindfulness" has the hallmarks of ritual behaviour. She felt that the mindful ritual encouraged whole class connection, or perhaps "heart-based connection" as, Hunter (2012, p. 16), writer on myth and ritual, describes. Hunter (2012) suggests that these types of ritual activities have the ability to counteract competition and ego gratification that separates us from everyone else cause adolescents to feel lost and act in ways that harm themselves and the community. Angelica's ability to provide whole-class connection through ritual behaviour once again reminded me of the Einstein (1950) quotation I used in Chapter Two. It seemed that Angelica's routine freed students from what Einstein describes as the "optical delusion of reality" and was providing students with a "new manner of thinking" to be in the world. The actualisation of this level of consciousness, as discussed previously, is the optimal aim and intention of both wellness (Dunn 1961; M. Cohen, 2010; J. W. Travis & Ryan, 2004) and mindfulness (Bodhi, 2013). And striving for this way of being is considered to be an innate drive of the human condition (M. Cohen, 2010).

Angelica was not keen to alter the routine or try new practices. She mentioned in the Skype interview:

I think the 15 minutes that I spend every lesson, is something that is working very well for me at the moment and the kids like the predictability of that actually, as well. Umm...I would like to try some of the things in the ah...Meditation Capsules program, like the bubbles, blowing the bubbles and a few things like that, so um....

Because I am sort of doing it as an addition to the curriculum (laughs), you know, I'm very aware, as many teachers are, of the pressures of time in the classroom and I can only do so much and at the moment it's just perfect.

Angelica noted that children, teachers and parents were overwhelming supportive about how she was integrating mindfulness in the classroom and I will discuss this further in Chapter Nine. However, she mentioned that there was some resistance:

I had a teacher walk past one day when I was doing the breathing and he said, he was an older teacher, and he said, “Oh, you keep having séances in there.” (*both laugh hard*). So you know there’s an element, there’s going to be...they say 40...usually in general public or whatever it is, 40% of the audience will have resistance. So, I kind of think that if there is a trusted staff member with something like mindfulness it would be useful.

Janet and Angelica were the only two interviewees to use the term “ritual” in their email and Skype conversations. However, Daniella, who as mentioned previously was reticent to use “spiritual terminology”, wrote in her email conversation about the sacred space that an art-based mindfulness practice facilitates:

As I believe we are all born creative, being creative and self-expression is a burning flame in my heart and soul. To be able to fully access this deep place inside of myself, the real me, I need to pay attention to what I'm feeling and thinking. Practicing mindfulness while expressing myself creatively enables me to access the real me, to authentically express myself from a place of truth.

After allowing myself to explore, invent, play and paint without any rules or technique, I learned to trust my intuition and followed my inner voice. The process is like a 'creative meditation in motion', being present and in the zone.

Hunter (2012) describes the act of creation, “the habit of going into the studio or study to do creative work” as a direct connection with the divine – the evolution of “ritual space” (p. 27). Daniella’s arts-based mindfulness practice assisted with the formation of this sacred space, for both herself and her students. The space generated in Daniella’s case was slightly different in nature to the space described by Angelica. Hunter (2012) postulates that ritual space will differ for each person, as it is a representation of our unique characters. For example, some may find the space emerging in nature, while for others a special room or an altar in the home provides the point of entry to connection. Janet communicated that mindful rituals can take place anywhere:

TM and yoga provided starting points for my own spiritual practice. When my daughters were babies, a friend introduced me to the work of Thich Nhat Hahn, for which I am eternally grateful. Mindfulness provided a wonderful way to evolve and develop my practice and a fruitful opportunity to connect to simple, joyful and

creative ways to share the practice with my girls. Mindfulness also afforded a natural connection to my background as an Art teacher. So there were no 'boundaries' for times and opportunities for Mindful practice and discoveries. Mindful connection took place wherever we were: in the garden, at the beach, in the car, engaging in art activities, during mealtimes and beautiful rituals emerged at the end of the day in the bedroom.

Hunter (2012) hypothesises that in order to create ritual space we must first be "mindful of what moves us to connect us with the eternal" and then "to see ourselves as more than merely part of the daily struggle to survive and gain wealth" (p. 27).

From Angelica's descriptions, it appears that other teachers were responding to the energy of the sacred space in her classroom, which she termed a "mindful classroom". In the Skype conversation she shared:

Umm, and I think probably the bigger impact that I've had is more on the mindful classroom. You know teachers don't often go into other teachers' classrooms to observe them, I mean they are always welcome, and when they do walk in they often say, "Can I stay?" if they are getting a book or something... (*both laugh*). But what's popping up everywhere now is, this umm you know umm, awareness of the environment they are creating in the classroom and they have seen that in my room so that has sort of moved over to other classes. So that's nice.

Research questions (Nikki):

Yes, that's fantastic. I've got this image of all the teachers just hanging around, getting a book and saying, "Oh this is really nice in here,"... (*both laugh*) and you going, "Oh, I have a big class now!"... *Nikki laughs*

Interviewee response (Angelica):

Yeah, exactly. And the funny thing is that every single person that comes into my room says, "Oh, oh, it's nice in here," and "Oh, it's calm in here."

Angelica's "15 minutes of mindfulness" enabled students and teachers to have direct experience with mindfulness. As noted previously, we can only at best gain a distant understanding of mindfulness through reading on the topic (Grossman, 2008) or discussing the topic with a friend. Likewise, Hunter (2012) points out:

Real wisdom always has to be felt and experienced, or it won't have value. During a conversation with a wise friend, he or she may tell me some snippet of wisdom I can use. The same thing may happen online. I can look up great quotations by people, from the most famous to the obscure, read them and get a little boost of energy

from that. I've also noticed, though, that a few days later I've forgotten many of these quotations; even worse, I'm not using the wisdom in them. (p. 104)

Ritual behaviour, from Angelica's and Daniella's descriptions seemed to offer an effective means to embody mindfulness. Hunter (2012, p. 105) believes that rituals contain meanings that need to be thought about and understood, triggering humans to earn the meanings and cherish them. And as Angelica noted she is currently not sure which is more effective as a means to convey mindfulness: ritual activity or following programs designed by other instructors.

Summary of Main Findings

Spirituality concepts played an important role in how the participants made sense of teaching children mindfulness. Some of the main findings arising from the interpretation of their texts are summarised below:

- MBW practices were central to teachers' lives and were pivotal in helping to manage their daily work-life balance.
- The practices catalysed the integration of the whole person – his or her mind, body and spirit.
- Taking an inner journey through the cultivation of mindfulness enabled participants to find greater significance, beauty and meaning in their life.
- Some participants used spiritual terminology fluidly in conversation, whereas other teachers were reluctant to use spiritual concepts. For example, Daniella wrote "on a more evolutionary, spiritual or personal growth level, (I don't really like these labels, but it's a way of describing it), ultimately how I started sharing mindfulness".
- After experiencing the benefits of MBW practices, teachers felt a natural inclination to share the practice with others.
- Being able to teach mindfulness to children and other colleagues heightened participants' sense of wellbeing and feelings of connectedness.
- Teaching mindfulness in the classroom helped to diffuse discordant power relationships that can sometimes exist between students and teachers.
- A majority of participants found that some of the rules and conventions

governing educational practice were antithetical to cultivating a mindful way of being in the classroom.

- When teachers were encouraged by management to teach mindfulness they felt validated and had a heightened sense of connection to their workplace. The converse was true, when a mindful way of being or teaching mindfulness was discouraged by authority figures.
- Some teachers taught mindfulness in a post-secular manner, whereas others taught the practice in a secular manner, due to not wanting to contradict family belief systems.
- Ritual behaviour was used to impart mindfulness to children.

Summary and Next Chapter

In this chapter I presented findings related to the super-ordinate theme of Spirituality. Notions of spirituality were found to be an integral to how teachers made sense of teaching children mindfulness, with four sub-themes emerging:

- The Devotional Nature of Practice
- Connection
- Workplace Spirituality
- Rituals.

In the following chapter, I communicate findings related to the super-ordinate theme of Creativity. Creativity is thought by some academics to be intimately tied to spirituality (Ron Miller, 2006; Horan, 2007) and like spirituality it is considered to be an interrelated dimension of wellbeing. In the next chapter the reader will discover how the participants made sense of this dynamic connection when teaching children mindfulness.

Chapter Seven: Theme 2: Creativity

Sub-themes

Defining Creativity

Creativity in Motion

*A Congenial
Environment*

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I present findings from the second super-ordinate theme, Creativity. The theme reverberated to varying degrees throughout participants' texts with three sub-themes emerging:

- Defining Creativity
- Creativity in Motion
- A Congenial Environment.

For one study participant, Daniella, exploring her own creativity was the catalyst driving her motivation to teach children mindfulness and she placed particular emphasis on defining the concept. Thus, Defining Creativity emerged as a sub-theme and also played an integral function in the remaining sub-themes.

In the second sub-theme, Creativity in Motion, I discuss the creative energy that emerged for teachers through the *action* of teaching children mindfulness. The last sub-theme, A Congenial Environment – a term coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1996), deals with extrinsic factors which participants felt encouraged or discouraged child-centric mindfulness instruction.

The Theme's Emergence

Once again, I did not initially ask interviewees questions about the connection between creativity and mindfulness. It was neither in the forefront or background of my mind when planning interview questions. However, the potential for creativity to be a super-ordinate theme was sparked during the trial interview process with Janet. Creative notes could be heard in the lyrical quality of Janet's dialogue and she used the word "creativity" frequently in her email interviews. This is not surprising given she is an artist and art teacher. Despite the concept of creativity flowing abundantly during Janet's interview, the emergent theme did not start to congeal until I reflected on my face to face interview with Caro. Caro was brainstorming a myriad of ways to bring mindfulness to the whole of her school and I felt her

creative juices spilling over and reaching everyone around her.

The theme was cemented when interviewing Daniella. For Daniella, exploring her own creativity was the catalyst driving her motivation to teach children mindfulness. She wrote in an email: “Sharing Art-based mindfulness with children was born from exploring my own creativity.”

I found through emails and conversations on the phone with Daniella that her philosophy of creativity was additionally central to the way she lived life and how she taught mindfulness. In the next section, I start to define creativity.

What is Creativity?

Creativity, similarly to the concepts of mindfulness and spirituality, attracts various patterns of interpretation and definition (Klausen, 2010) and defining the concept plays an integral role in Western creativity research (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). The field of creativity is described as complex and vast – vital to the progress of human civilisation and the development of human reasoning processes (Jung, Mead, Carrasco, & Flores, 2013, p. 1). Jung et al. (2013, p. 1) posit that any truly plausible definition of creativity must be applicable not just to humans and not just to exceptionally talented humans, but also to other species and across evolutionary time. Any truly plausible definition of creativity, in my opinion, additionally needs to take into account that many of us co-exist in multicultural societies, where contrasting philosophies inform our understanding of the concept. In the first sub-theme presented in the next section, I try to make sense of how Daniella makes sense of a concept that acted as a trigger for her teaching children mindfulness and in so doing delve into greater detail about how some of the study participants define and understand creativity.

When we think in a cautious and sequential way and are worried about real or imagined criticism, our spread of activation becomes narrow, like a tributary. When we think more freely and are motivated by enthusiasm for our opportunities, rather than by fear of consequences, our spread of activation becomes wide, like a river (McKenzie, 2013, p. 111).

Defining Creativity

I felt that Daniella re-defined creativity in contrast to modern Western conceptualisations of the term. Key elements in Western definitions, are novelty (producing a creative product, a course of action or an idea that departs from the familiar) and effectiveness or usefulness (it works, in the sense that it achieves some end – this may be aesthetic, artistic or spiritual, but may also be material such as winning or making a profit) (Cropley, 2001, p. 6; Niu & Sternberg, 2006). However, Daniella said that completing aesthetically pleasing artworks was not “very creative at all”, if it was geared towards producing an end product – a sharp contrast to modern definitions of the term. Daniella told in our first email interview:

I had a yearning to be creative so I decided to paint for an art show. I wanted to 'get creative' and I found nothing creative about the experience, instead I felt pressure to perform, I feared judgement and how would I 'measure up' as an artist. The whole experience did the opposite, it shut me down, clammed me up and I felt contraction in my body.

Having been 'well trained' as a graphic designer and being able to produce technically correct and aesthetically pleasing artworks, it felt restrictive, surface orientated and not very creative at all.

So I felt a very deep desire to explore further and enrolled in an Intuitive or Process painting¹³ class in 2007 and fell madly in love with the creative process. I could have fun and not worry about the 'product' or end result, enjoying the process and exploring

¹³ See glossary for an explanation of this term.

my creativity on a deeper level. How far could I go? I loved it so much that I trained for a year learning to teach the painting process and I still attend a class weekly. The class involved many other aspects including meditation (which was my introduction to meditation and mindfulness) and lengthy philosophical class discussions on many varied topics.

After allowing myself to explore, invent, play and paint without any rules or technique, I learned to trust my intuition and followed my inner voice. The process is like a 'creative meditation in motion', being present and in the zone.

There were so many interesting aspects to explore in Daniella's text (underlined) in order to understand how she made sense of creativity. I have underlined a few of the "gems" that were drawing my attention. Pondering which "gem" to focus on left me feeling a bit scattered – they were all connected, but I needed to focus on one gem at a time. After quite a long time deliberating, I settled on playing with "creativity on a deeper level". I wanted to understand in more detail what Daniella meant by a deeper level of creativity. How many layers of creativity are there?

In a follow-up phone conversation, when trying to unearth these hidden levels of creativity I made the following half statements/half questions, which as inept as they seem to me now and did then, thankfully triggered further discussion on the topic:

And like what you said before, it's like a whole new level of creativity. You know you were distinguishing that from you know the end product – producing something. It's like a different level of creativity to you.

Interviewee response (Daniella):

When you are not worried about the outcome or impressing anyone you are actually empowered – you are free to really explore. It's like layers and layers, like that onion. What happens in the process, the conditioning creeps up, just like in meditation – the monkey mind creeps up. Usually it is three things that usually comes up: you want to give your painting meaning; you are judging it – worried about what it will look like and you want to control it, because that's the end-product, because it hasn't come out the way you want. So, you want to control it. So, those three things come up. Every time that comes up, you are aware of those three things, let those go and then you are actually free to really explore and that's when it becomes really fun – the energy moves.

... if you really want to explore on a deeper level... because a lot of the time I can combine both. If someone wants me to do a painting that they are going to hang on their wall then I can use a visual process, or technique and my own intuition. But I know it's going to be seen and it has got to be suitable for a home then I'm not about to have it full of explicit images (*Nikki laughs*). It's still being creative but it's not totally free. There would be no limit to what I put on the page then (*Exactly*). That's when it ignites the authentic self and you go, "Yeah." The energy shifts. That's when you start to umm be authentic and express yourself authentically (*Exactly*).

Daniella explained that deeper levels of creativity come from feeling free. To find your way to this deeper level she said "you need to surrender and let go and not have any technique involved or anything like that so you just feel free and safe to be able to tap into that space". Letting go or non-attachment is described as one of the most important principles to embrace when engaging in intuitive painting (Bowley, 2012).

When discussing creativity with Daniella in the second phone interview, a Microsoft Smart Art shape flashed into my mind (see Figure 7-1). I pictured at the centre, the "deep level of creativity" that she was describing. Daniella said that in order to reach this level of creativity a person needs to use his or her intuition, spontaneity, curiosity, playfulness, awareness and presence. She described this as the "creative process". Taking note of how you feel in each moment guides you to understand whether you are engaging in deeper levels of creativity.

The outer circle in Figure 7-1, represented, in my mind, a superficial level of creativity – the creativity that would fit well into modern conceptions of the construct – the level of creativity that Daniella described as not being "very creative at all". At this level of creativity producing a novel product is a central focus in the artist or creator's mind. A specific technique may be involved and the artist may also be targeting a competition, with accompanying rules and regulations, where he or she will be judged. The artist is not totally free to explore his or her own personal creativity – what lies at the core.

The more the artist gets caught up in the end product, the further he or she will turn away from the "self". Feelings of disempowerment may creep in, a need to control the work and beliefs of either being better than everyone else or not being good enough may permeate the whole project – the "paranoia of the ego's story lines" sets in (Hardin, 2011, p. 15). Much of

our society's structures, I feel, encourage and demand "surface-level creativity".

Lying in between "surface-level creativity" and "deep-level creativity" is a level of creativity that is not completely restrictive, however, neither is the creator totally free. Daniella gave the example of undertaking a commissioned painting. She may combine a visual process, or technique together with her own intuition. But as she knows it's going to be seen and it has to be suitable for a home she is not accessing deep levels of creativity. She said that it is still being creative but it is not totally free (see title page and Photographs 7-1 and 7-7 for examples of Daniella's art work).

I felt that Daniella wanted to create a space for children where they felt safe to explore who they really are. This was the crux of how she made sense of teaching mindfulness with children. Daniella created an environment of unconditional love from which children could grow and learn. I felt this was perhaps true for all the study participants.

The text from one of Daniella's phone interviews exemplifies this insight:

Yeah...and I think, but I think generally the children that come in extremely anxious, twisting the brush when they start with high anxiety and um, wanting to ...because they've been conditioned to perform, and then when we do some breathing and relax into the body, and they know it's a safe place and it's okay and it's impossible to make a mistake and there is no right or wrong and we take all the pressure off. And I think when they actually just pick up a colour and then the energy shifts; that moment I can see through their breathing and the way they are walking to the paints and back, um, that they are really in the zone and they are present.

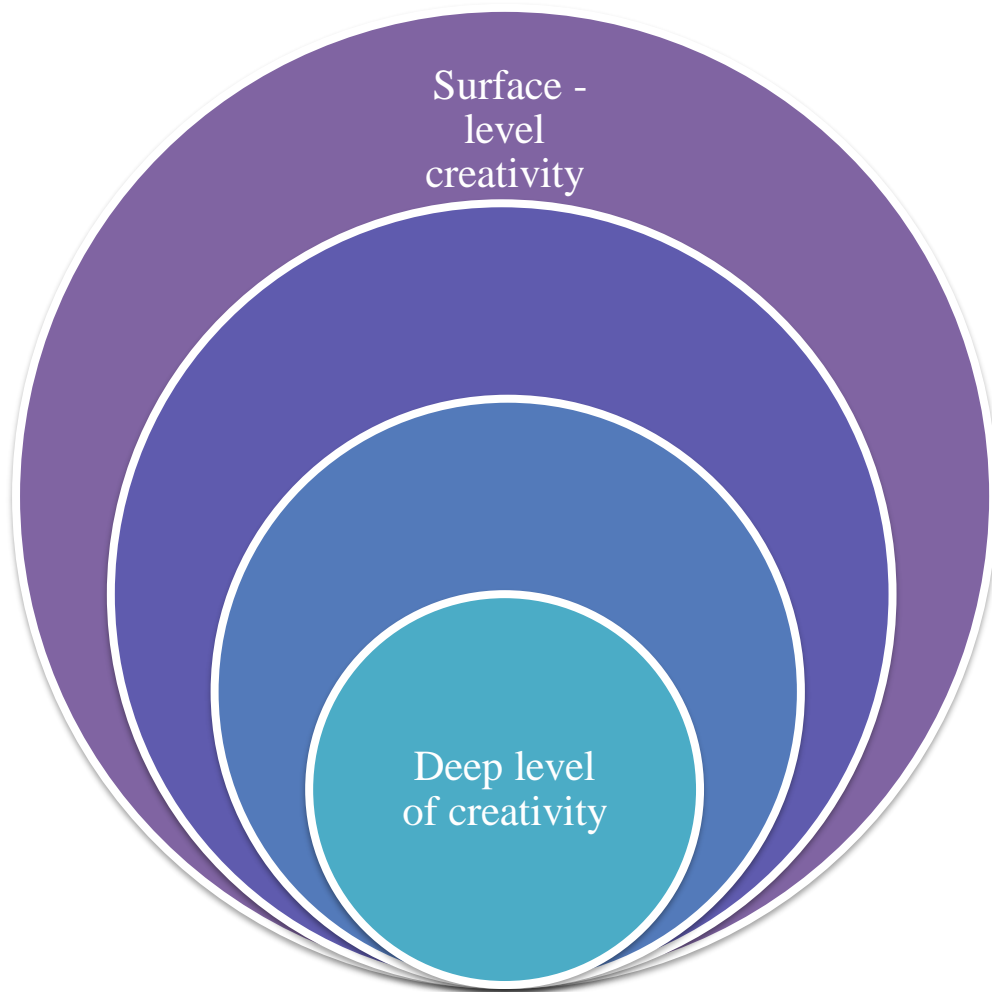


Figure 7-1: The Different Layers of Creativity



Photograph 7-1: An Example of Participant Daniella's Art Work

When they enter this zone, when an individual's energy shifts, Daniella calls it, "creative meditation in motion". I could relate to the way she talked about "energy shifts". I have felt the energy shifting over and over again when teaching MBW and observing mindfulness lessons. I could feel that she was really tuning into the children, using her intuition to guide her teaching – using energetic vibrations as her barometer and interpretation of mindful states. I could identify with what Daniella was saying as this is how I first connect with people (whether they know it or not) and my environment – on an energetic level. I feel whether a person's thoughts are chaotic, over-excited, depressive and so on and then use this as a cue for my own relational behaviour. Often if you just silently recognise that someone is all over the place, acknowledge the state, sit with it and allow it without judgment, they start to gravitate back towards a state of harmony. When I taught children in schools, I would not bother teaching what I was there to teach, Japanese, until we were all in a harmonious state as a unified whole.

Children, in my opinion, connect with this vibration much quicker than adults and I would only need to think, "Wow, you are all over the place," and then do some simple body movements silently (that we had practised together previously) and the whole class would come back into alignment and we would begin the lesson. I have to be honest here, the main reason I did this was (although I have a deep caring for children as a given) I could not stand the chaos that was within their minds transferring into my mind. I could not teach in an environment where students could not concentrate; we would all be wasting each other's time.

Shifting the energy from chaos to peace, is like being in a room filled with smoke and opening up the window to let in some fresh air. However, with energy the atmosphere can change in an instant. So given my natural inclination to focus on energy, my next question to Daniella follows:

Researcher question (Nikki):

You can really feel that energy shift, can't you?

Interviewee response (Daniella):

Because they are in sheer delight and they might just be painting the whole...like I had a little Asian girl come in who is really “over-scheduled” and um, she does piano and dance and Chinese and all these different lessons, but she spent the whole lesson just putting light blue on the page, filling the whole of the page. And she started singing, and the joy she had, just...she was in, actually almost in another universe just in that blue. And then she went and got another darker shade of blue and went over that blue and then she wanted to choose gold to make it all glisten. And the joy... but all it was to the outside was a blue page, but it was the process, she was completely with the blue, with the brush, feeling and breathing and really in the zone.



Photograph 7-2: An Example of Participant Daniella's Art Work

She emphasised that the end-product or its novelty has little significance when accessing this “deeper level of creativity”. It becomes a by-product. The process, the feelings and the energy are more important. Daniella was creating an environment that enabled children to

escape from a *mindfull* way of being to a *mindful* way of being.

Daniella's understanding of deep-level creativity is not congruent with either modern Western or Eastern definitions; however, it marries with some of the ancient Taoist Eastern conceptualisations of the term as well as a model of creativity that combines Eastern and Western concepts. The Taoist classics tell us that "the creative process is the process of the inner apprehension of *dao*, when all the distinctions between subject (self) and object (non-self) vanish" (Niu & Sternberg, 2006, p. 31). It requires silence, meditation and self-cultivation, where the person returns to the root of his or her being (Niu & Sternberg, 2006). The highest stage of creativity is achieved when people set themselves free from (transcend) preconceived ideas and enter a "state where everything breaks through the shell of itself and fuses with every other thing" (Niu & Sternberg, 2006, pp. 31-32).

Similar to Daniella's understanding of creativity, ancient Eastern conceptualisations also describe varying levels (states) of creativity (Niu & Sternberg, 2006). Varying states of creativity are similarly featured in Horan's (2007) model which integrates both yogic and Western scientific perspectives and is known as the Ocean Model of Creativity and Intelligence. In the model, creativity is said to manifest in three different but interconnecting subtle states: crystallised, fluid and vacuous, as depicted in Figure 7-2.

Crystallised creativity is an embodiment of the end product of a creative action, regardless of whether it receives outside recognition; for example, one of Daniella's paintings or a new way of teaching curriculum content. Horan (2007) describes the end product as dynamic and fluid in nature, like waves on the ocean surface; however, as the word "crystallised" implies, the creative product has structure and uniqueness – the picture is a tangible asset, the new way of teaching may be a documented method. While a painting has form and is restricted by its form, it is also a dynamic structure. For example, it may be perceived differently by different people. If the same piece of art work is observed mindfully each day, the viewer will notice different aspects of the painting; it may look different, and evoke different feelings and memories (Gradle, 2011). It takes on a life of its own.

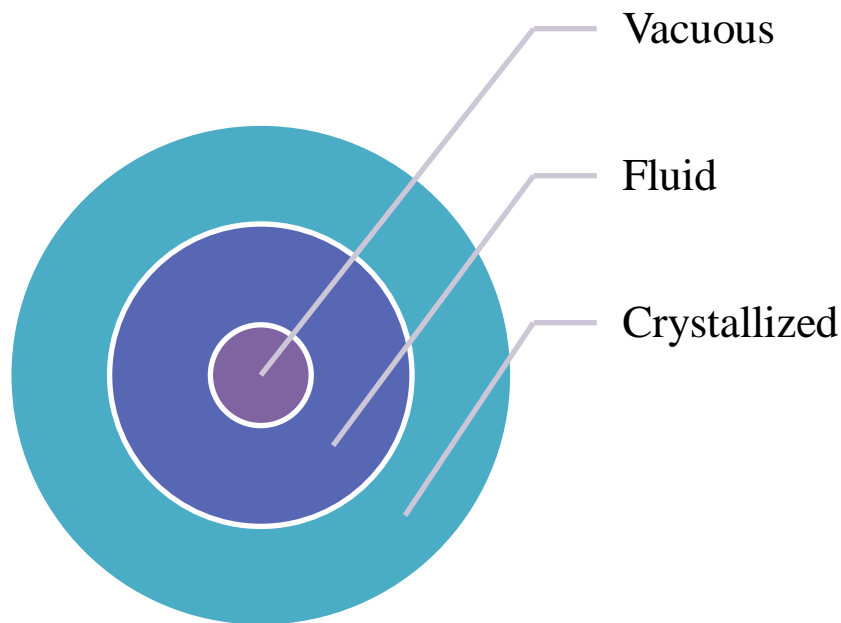


Figure 7-2: The Ocean Model of Creativity and Intelligence

Likewise, the new way of teaching will not retain its original identity; it will morph, grow and change with the unique attributes of each teacher who uses the methodology and the children who interact with it. The method will never be stagnant – like a wave bobbing around on the ocean’s surface.

Crystallised creativity is said to arise from fluid creativity (Horan, 2007). Fluid creativity implies adaptability and the ability to move away from, or around constraints, like a stream of water flows around rocks (Horan, 2007, p. 183). “Fluid creativity embodies curiosity and imagination: curiosity as the intention to explore the unknown and imagination as an expression of new ways to combine information” (Horan, 2007, p. 183). I will discuss fluid creativity and how it relates to my co-researchers in greater detail in the next sub-theme, Creativity in Motion.

Fluid creativity has its source in vacuous creativity. Vacuous creativity is the intentional emptying of all limiting thought, memory, and affective constructs so that the self is reflected

in its most pristine state (Horan, 2007, p. 183). This state resonates with what Daniella described as deep-level creativity, a state or way of being where she feels truly creative. When in this state every moment is thought to be an act of creation (Horan, 2009). Surrender of the limited sense of self (transcendence), through heightened awareness, inhibits attachment to personal constructs of reality and opens perception to a myriad of unforeseen possibilities and harmonious connection with each moment in time (Horan, 2009, p. 202).

Janet, like Daniella, also stressed the ability of a mindfulness practice to reconnect an individual with a deep level of creativity, the vacuous state as Horan terms it. Janet writes in an email:

I definitely believe that a Mindfulness practice ENABLES creativity. In fact, I constantly find that in the everyday rhythms of life, when the balance is lost through excessive work/life demands, the creative juices literally feel 'squeezed out'. I find it is always such a joy to just reconnect to some time and space to 'be creative' again. I feel as if that is our natural state. There is nothing to get ... nothing to add! When we remember to reconnect to nature, the evidence is everywhere. Sadly, creativity is a state that some people have not yet discovered within themselves. It is my absolute joy to enable this discovery! Burdens of fixed/stringent attitudes and beliefs can also dampen and bog down mind/body/spirit. Simple Mindfulness practices provide portals of remembrance of our true nature and our boundless possibilities.

Janet's conversation is in tune with Daniella's. She emphasised that being creative (i.e., using intuition, spontaneity, curiosity, playfulness, awareness and presence) is our natural state and we only need to re-connect with our *natural* environment and witness the creativity in nature to remember this. Janet's conceptualisation of creativity, I believe, once again marries with Chinese philosophy, which discusses "the unity of nature with human thought" (Niu & Sternberg, 2006, p. 30).

Simply put, in ancient Chinese thought humans and nature are actually the same. All the principles (called *li*) that apply to *nature* could also apply to *man*. Thus humanity could experience the process of the development of the universe, just as could the universe itself, or every other being in the universe ((Niu & Sternberg, 2006, p. 30).

Janet's philosophy has a profound impact on how she teaches mindfulness. I feel it may be the pivotal premise from which she creates all of her mindfulness lessons, like the stem of

a flower from which petals bloom. She reminds children, that what we witness in nature is also true of ourselves. We can create the right opportunities for growing inside – so that we can feel calmer, stronger and happier. Janet brings polished acorns into the schools she visits for children and discusses the extraordinary intelligence of nature.

The acorns serve as a reminder of the “seed within them”. Reminding children of their connection to nature and this natural state of creativity in their being reminds me of holistic education writer, Ron Miller’s (1990) definition of spirituality:

A basic premise of holistic education is the belief that our lives have a meaning and purpose greater than mechanistic laws described by science, and greater than the “consensus consciousness” of any one culture. This transcendent purpose is a creative, self-guiding energy which we ought not attempt to suppress. No ideology, no social order devised by wealth- or power-seeking factions should be allowed to corrupt the delicate, miraculous unfolding of this creative energy.... Ultimately, a spiritual worldview is a reverence for life, an attitude of wonder and awe in the face of the transcendent Source of our being. (p. 154)

Ron Miller (2006, p. 6), when reflecting on this definition, 15 years later, writes the primary issue at stake here is the choice between recognising “a creative, self-guiding energy” and holding to some self-interested, self-assured ideology or culturally conditioned belief system, a system that Janet stressed drains creativity.

From analysing mindfulness instructors’ texts, it seems that modern models and definitions cannot adequately explain creativity from the perspective of artists who are also experienced and devoted MindBody Wellness practitioners. Ancient Chinese conceptualisations align more closely with how teachers make sense of creativity and in the last section of this chapter, A Congenial Environment, I present a model which I feel captures how some study participants perceive creativity.

Creativity in Motion

Janet and Daniella were the only two participants to discuss creativity in respect to their mindfulness practice explicitly; however, I felt the pull of its energy strongly when connecting with Caro. I noticed during our face to face interview that she was highly intuitive. I would

often not need to finish a question or even start a question before Caro would reply to my unvoiced thoughts. When reading Caro's text for the first time I had to write notes in sections such as "intuitive moment", as I thought anyone else reading the text would wonder what was going on. The text from her journal below, shared in the previous chapter, indicates that she was acting from a place that Daniella would describe as "creative meditation in motion":

I love sharing mindfulness with the Year 12's and having a plan when I go into each session but not having to follow that plan. To go where I feel it needs to go is great.

I could feel the energy of creativity driving how she approached the integration of MBW practices in her school. Caro, as mentioned previously, was brainstorming how to bring mindfulness to the *whole* of her school and I felt her creative juices spilling over and reaching everyone around her. The counsellor /teacher was connecting with her inner self and using her intuition to discover how best to share mindfulness with students and teachers. There were some restrictions, for example, she did not have her own room, so her levels of creativity wavered at times, but this was the energy that I felt best characterised how she was teaching mindfulness. It seems, as Janet has noted, that mindfulness enables creativity.

The type of creativity that I felt Caro was *embodying* is discussed and tested to some extent in Western models and instruments (Horan, 2007). Table 7-1 lists test-defined (facets of creativity commonly measured in creativity tests) properties of the creative person. Horan, in *The Ocean Model of Creativity and Intelligence*, describes this type of creativity as "fluid". It embodies curiosity and imagination: curiosity as the intention to explore the unknown and imagination as an expression of new ways to combine information (Horan, 2007, p. 183).

Daniella (as reported in the chapter on the super-ordinate theme of Spirituality) expressed a similar notion to Caro in an email conversation. She said that a mindfulness practice allowed her to access her creativity and the deepest part of her heart and soul. I felt generally that teachers' creativity was ignited through MBW practices and being able to share this way of being with children gave further impetus to this self-guided energy. For example, Ben wrote

Table 7-1: Test-defined Properties of the Creative Person

<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Personality</i>
Goal-directedness	Active imagination
Fascination with a task or area	Flexibility
Resistance to premature closure	Curiosity
Risk taking	Independence
Preference for asymmetry	Acceptance of own differences
Preference for complexity	Tolerance of ambiguity
Willingness to ask many (unusual) questions	Trust in own senses
Willingness to display results	Openness to subconscious material
Willingness to consult other people (but not simply to carry out orders)	Ability to work on several ideas simultaneously
Desire to go beyond the conventional	Ability to restructure problems
	Ability to abstract from the concrete

Source: adapted from Cropley (2001, p. 124)

on the demographic information sheet:

I started an Elective last year called Chilled. This was one session per week for 5 weeks. After which a new group of children started. I used elements of Meditation and Yoga to teach kids about mindfulness and relaxation.

As we have already seen with Angelica and her rituals, the teachers were developing unique methods to teach children. Texts and training may have acted as a springboard for activities, but they were accessing as Daniella terms it, the deepest parts of their hearts and souls to connect with children and from this wellspring emerged stimulating activities that were authentic and engaging. In the next section I go on to describe how environmental factors encourage or discourage child-based mindfulness instruction.

A Congenial Environment

A congenial environment is an instrumental factor in the success or even the adoption of new or novel programs in schools (Cropley, 2001). We can see from Caro's face to face interview account below that she feels mindfulness instruction in schools is perceived as something new or novel, a creative act – it strays from the norm.

I think it's also that newness, I guess about it [mindfulness]. It is everywhere now and you hear about it all the time and there are all these different programs, but for some schools still, they have no idea what it is.

I found when analysing participants' texts that extrinsic/environmental factors and their relation to teaching mindfulness consumed a significant proportion of their conversations and played an important role in how they made sense of teaching mindfulness. Environmental factors include such things as: how colleagues support or do not lend their support to teachers teaching mindfulness in schools; whether policy statements support the integration of mindfulness in schools; and how the wider community or media perceives child-centric mindfulness instruction.

Western creativity researchers have designed models to show how an individual's potential for creativity and actual level of creativity may be impacted by their surrounding environment. The models are termed "holistic". Some of the leading academic writers in this field consider it imperative to consider the concept holistically, that is, recognise that creativity arises from the interaction between a range of elements (Cropley, 1997; Treffinger, Sortore, & Cross, 1993; K. K. Urban, 1997). "No single component alone is sufficient or responsible for the whole creative process that leads to a creative product" (Cropley, 2001. p. 146).

Academics such as Cropley, Treffinger and K. K. Urban believe many Western definitions and models of creativity are too narrow in their conceptualisation (Cropley, 2001). I similarly felt that taking a holistic view was integral to understanding how my co-researchers made sense of teaching children mindfulness.

In the following sections, I briefly outline a holistic model of creativity known as “the Componential Model of Creativity”. I adapt this model to demonstrate how some of my co-researchers made sense of the concept and then describe how environmental factors shape child-based mindfulness instruction.

The Componential Model of Creativity

The holistic model (the Componential Model of Creativity) was developed by K. K. Urban to demonstrate how personal creativity arises from the interaction of a variety of elements (Cropley, 2001). The model shows that individual creativity is influenced to varying degrees by the dynamic interplay between internal/individual factors and exogenous factors, such as the school where a teacher works and the media. Contributors to the model, describe a wide variety of individual characteristics that influence creativity and interact with exogenous factors. Individual factors are divided into six main categories or components as follows:

1. general knowledge and thinking base
2. specific knowledge base and specific skills
3. divergent thinking and doing
4. focusing and task commitment
5. motives and motivation
6. openness and tolerance of ambiguity (Cropley, 2001; K. K. Urban, 1991).

Each category has related sub-components, listed in Figure 7-3:

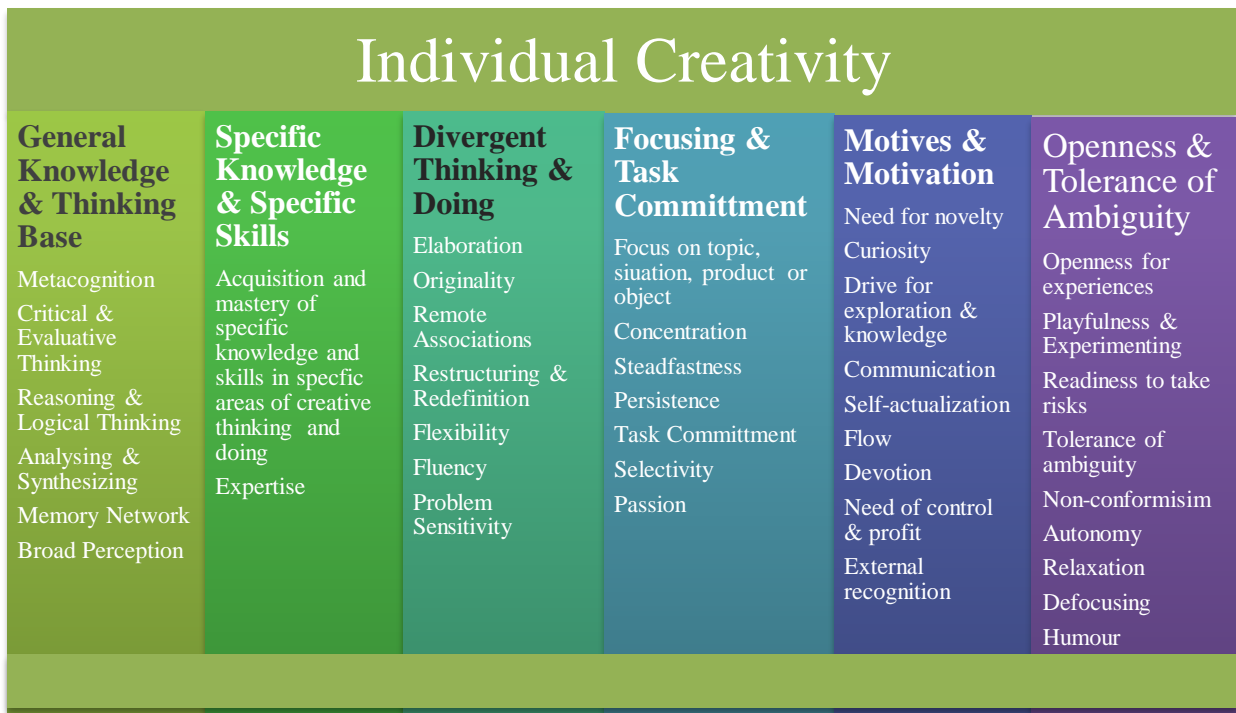


Figure 7-3: Individual Creativity Factors

In “the Componential Model of Creativity” the first three components are considered to be cognitive in nature and the last three represent personal properties. Findings from the current study suggest that participants feel that many of the personal properties listed in the componential model are important in the creative process, with the exception of the need for external recognition or profit. However, both Daniella and Janet did not stress the cognitive component when discussing creativity; rather, they emphasised the interaction between mindful awareness, spirituality and environmental connection. Figure 7-4 depicts my interpretation of how participants made sense of internal factors relating to their creativity. Similar to the previous model, I have divided individual factors into six main categories or components as follows:

1. mindful awareness
2. spirituality

3. environmental connection
4. focusing and task commitment
5. motives and motivation
6. openness and tolerance of ambiguity

Sub-components are once again outlined in Figure 7-4 under each heading. As can be seen components 1-3 from the componential model have been replaced with components that Daniella and Janet believe are integral to the creative process.

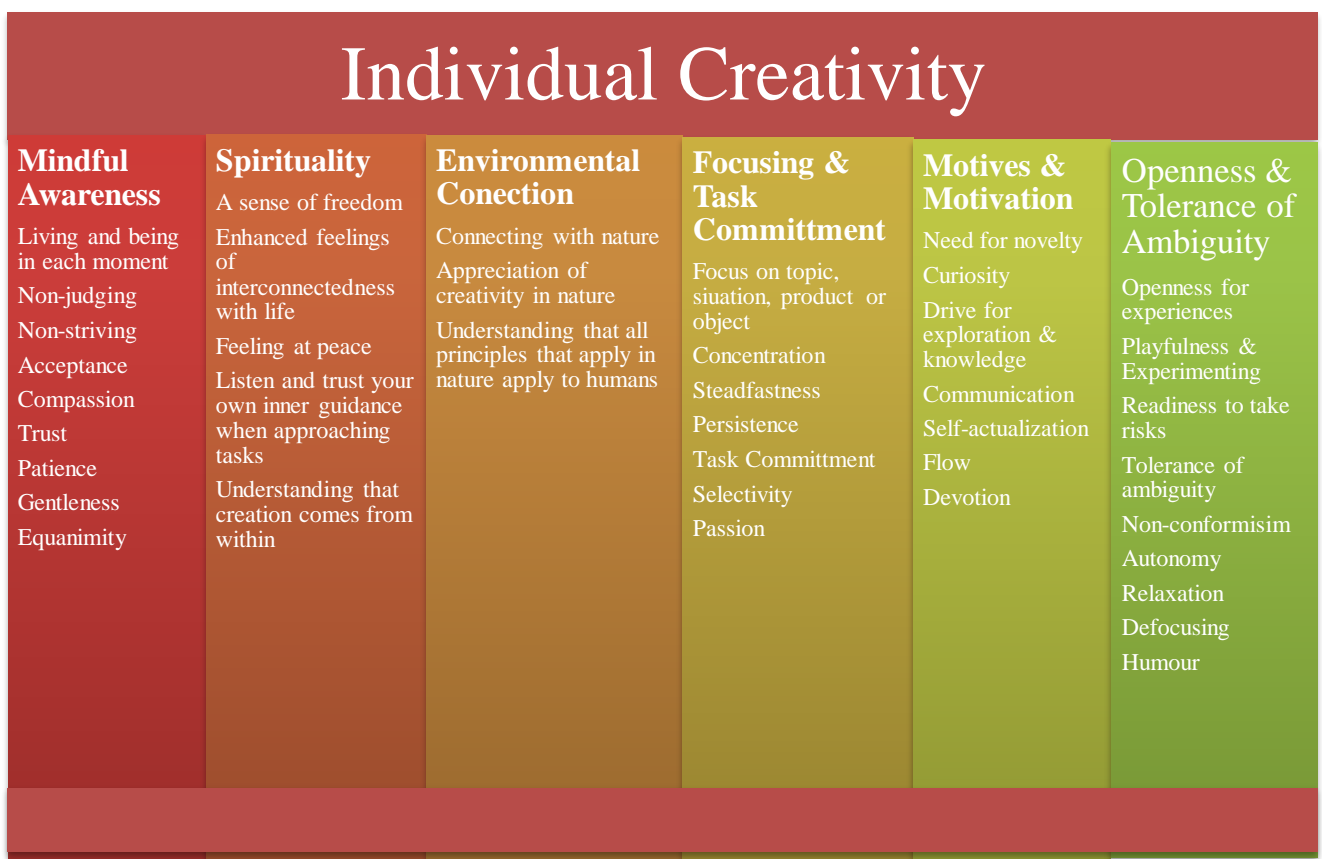


Figure 7-4: Individual Creativity Factors – A Mindfulness Teacher’s Perspective

In holistic models, individual personal properties only form part of the picture when viewing creativity – individual creativity is not seen to exist within a vacuum. For example, a principal

may want to introduce mindfulness into his or her school; however, if she or he is faced with parents opposed to the idea, the novel program may not eventuate. A Western holistic approach to creativity recognises that individual creativity influences and is influenced by a range of environmental factors and a person's level of creativity derives from these interacting forces (Cropley, 2001). Environmental systems that may have an impact on creativity occur at the:

1. local dimension: family, peer group, colleagues, neighbourhood and local community
2. institutional dimension: education practice (learning environment, curriculum and pedagogy, partnerships and policy and procedures), religion, government and business/industry
3. global dimension: politics, culture, global events, natural environment, media and wider community (synthesised from Cropley, 2001; Myers & Sweeney, 2008; State of South Australia, 2007).

Figure 7-5, which I have called, "the Mindfulness-based Holistic Model of Creativity" shows the range of factors that contribute to the creative process. Optimum conditions for creativity exist when all dimensions are favourable (Cropley, 2001).

When conversing with teachers I found that a number of environmental systems affected how, when and if teachers engaged in mindfulness instruction with children. In the following sections, using the guidance of the Mindfulness-based Holistic Model of Creativity I examine and interpret teachers' texts in the local, institutional and global dimensions.

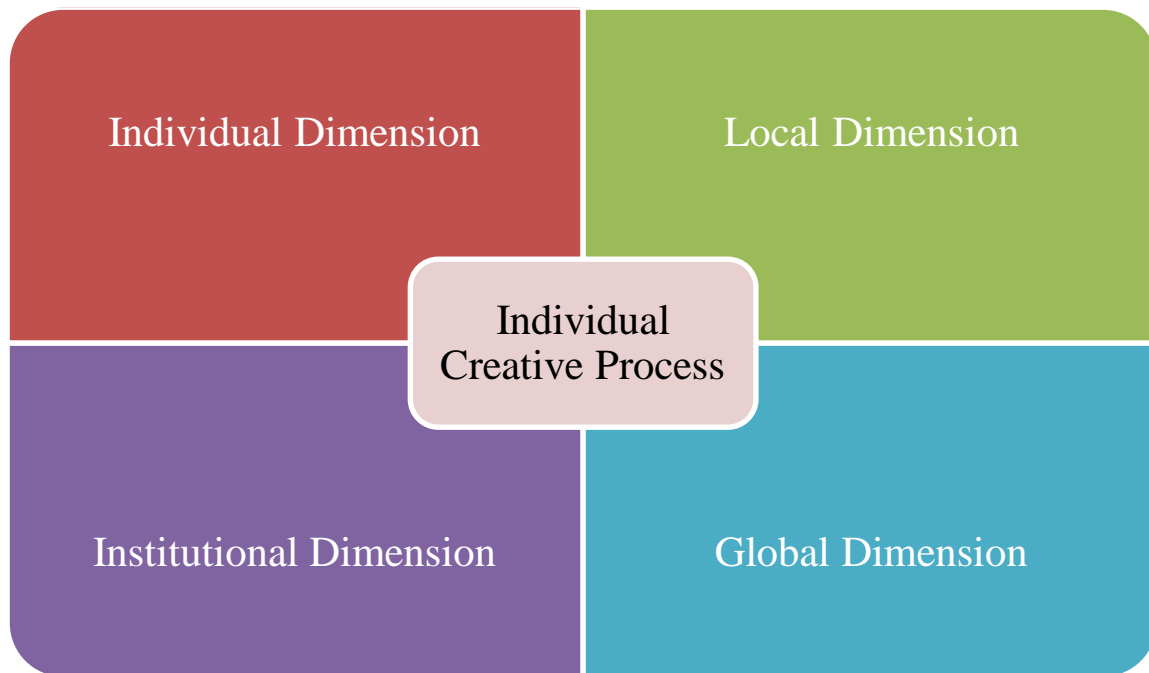


Figure 7-5: Mindfulness-based Holistic Model of Creativity

Local Dimension

Caregivers

I found in the analysis and interpretation of participants' texts that children's caregivers played an important role in how teachers made sense of teaching mindfulness. Caregivers' opinions and support of child-centric mindfulness instruction mattered to teachers. Angelica said that parents were overwhelmingly supportive of her mindful initiatives. In our Skype interview she told:

I've just come out of parent-teacher conferences and I've been teaching for 25 years. I've never had in all my years of teaching, parents be more grateful for what I am achieving with their children. So they are seeing in terms of achievements right now, enhanced academic performance. Now I've had kids go up three reading levels since September, which is really fabulous for the kids with literacy issues. So ah, yeah I'm just finding, I've never had so many comments that I've had, and it's just because I've changed my whole technique in the classroom.

What's happening is parents of the kids I teach are actually feeling a difference with their own children and they are actually talking to the home room teachers about it. So it's beginning, but it's a long, slow process.

Parents noticed that Angelica's mindfulness rituals were translating into improved academic performance and she also mentioned that parents were "feeling a difference" in their children. What exactly this difference was is difficult to ascertain without interviewing parents. However, a case study of a mindfulness program introduced in several government schools in Australia (see Figure 7-6) may shed light on how some parents are feeling about their children learning mindfulness. Parent and teacher Caroline, discussed the impact the program had on her daughter, Jenna. Caroline felt mindfulness enabled her child to cultivate important and necessary life skills, much like trial interviewee, Janet's notion of the "spiritual ballast", which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. She wrote:

I've seen her [Jenna] use it [mindfulness] when she plays competitive tennis. Like most strong-willed children she can easily get out of control. She can get angry with herself very fast, start whacking balls and throw the match. I suggested to her to try thinking about how she could calm herself down. 'Like when we meditate,' Jenna recalled. I have watched her over the past year calm herself, breathe, slow down, regroup. Because she has the experience, she knows what it feels like.

It's interesting seeing her with her friends. Jenna is very much gung-ho, enthused, motivated and can't stop herself, her friends pull her back. So being able to do that for herself is such a great skill.

She has some resources to deal calmly with situations, just knowing that she has a 'secret weapon'. Using breathing meditation, you can go anywhere. Meditation is crucial, and the discussions. Doing the Happiness Scale is fantastic, taking a moment to connect with self and how you feel inside. To choose to look at what you have got and appreciate what you have got.

The stories are good. That all people get sick and so on is important to know. Parents often try to protect children but children need to learn that people don't lead perfect lives. That's unrealistic. For me it is about empowering my children to make choices. Children are often disempowered in the society. Jenna had an issue with her music teacher, and I asked her to see if it was entirely the teacher's fault, did her actions such as talking contribute? 'Yes.' You can change what you say and how you act, and if you stay calm you can change situations. How empowering is that!" (S. E. Smith, 2010, p. 176)

Buddhist Voices in Schools

The study involved analysis of a Buddhist education program conducted in ten metropolitan government primary schools in Australia's second largest city, Melbourne. The program commenced in 2004 and focussed on imparting Buddhist principles and practices through storytelling, plays, meditation, mindful movement, loving kindness visualisations, connecting with the body, and observing and understanding the implications of interconnectedness. This was the first time Buddhist classes had been offered in the Victorian government school system (S. E. Smith, 2010). Using action research methodology, Buddhist teachers developed and refined the program together with Smith to be suitable and engaging for all children, irrespective of belief systems. Unlike the current study, the teachers were all volunteer Dharma practitioners with five or more years' experience. The majority were not professional teachers, but completed a two-day teacher induction program prior to instruction. Data was gathered from 2006 until 2007 with a focus on understanding and interpreting teachers', parents' and students' perceptions in relation to the spiritual educational initiative (S. E. Smith, 2010).

Figure 7-6: Buddhist Voices in Schools

Caroline felt that mindfulness played an important and necessary role in the school curriculum; however, my co-researchers perceive that parents hold contrasting opinions. For example, Janet remarked:

With a small number of children a big challenge I face is the beliefs and attitudes that come from parents (eg that Mindfulness is a waste of curriculum time, is unproductive etc.).

In Daniella's case, parents were actively enrolling their children in her after-school program, obviously because they perceived it to have value, however, they were having trouble grasping the concepts and sometimes mitigated the work that occurred in the arts-based mindfulness program. Our conversation follows:

Researcher questions (Nikki):

Has there been any challenges associated I don't know, within classes or with parents, or um...?

Interviewee response (Daniella):

Right. Yes. The challenge that really stands out is when, um...coz for the...it's when the *parent* doesn't quite understand the painting process and it means that they actually have to be mindful of themselves and look at their own relationship with the language they use, um their relationship with creativity. So they almost have to look at themselves to be able to understand... and what languaging and their attitudes are toward being mindful, or aware, or creative, so that they can work with the children in the process. And the challenging thing is when, through the class the child has shifted their energy and they are feeling that pure joy in the moment and the parent comes in and undoes it all by going straight into the head and says, "So what did you paint?" and "What's that?" and "Oh, I thought you were going to paint something for Grandma (*both laugh*)... It's her birthday". You know, so and they know about the process and I've given them material to read, so that they can respond to the process, but they have ignored it and the child's completely gone into being, into their head, self-conscious and bit of joy that they were feeling has gone straight into "I'm not measuring up".

Researcher question (Nikki):

It must be quite confusing for them because you're saying one thing and a few seconds later they get something completely opposite, um coming from their parents?

Interviewee response (Daniella):

Well that's where they are educating their parents and saying, "Well Mum, it is what it is". [Laughs]... "It's not a cat. It's actually a wombat and we're not meant to make comments coz you might hurt my feelings, or you might not be ...that's why we don't judge it or give it meaning Mum, remember?"

Researcher question (Nikki):

So the children are really being the teachers?

Interviewee response:

Yes, absolutely and that's what really inspired me to want to teach the adults too because, um you know the adults need to know about the painting process and the mindfulness so that they can work with their child. Coz I was so frustrated about that actual issue.

Researcher question (Nikki):

So are you getting a few of the parents coming and learning now?

Interviewee response:

Well I teach an adult class now and that's been going tremendously well. We do...we start...you know it's a bit different to the kids' class and they come in and we have a class topic about the painting process, or being present, or you know a topic, and then we do a short meditation and then in that gentleness we walk towards our easels and paint for the rest of the time. And then we have a follow-up at the end of the class.

Researcher question (Nikki):

And that's the parents by themselves, yes?

Interviewee response:

So, it's some parents that have got children doing the kids program and some parents that don't have...they are just interested for themselves.

Researcher statement (Nikki):

Oh that's beautiful. It complements it. It gives it a holistic approach where it's not just the children, it's the parents.

Interviewee response:

Absolutely, and they are helping each other. Like I said, it's so wonderful to have the

kids remind the parents ... [laughs] (*I love it, yeah. I love it. It's really empowering for them*). It is. "You know, Mum, we don't make a comments. We don't judge. It is what it is and I had so much fun doing it." So then that prompts the parent and the parent says, "Oh, so looks like you had fun...you really..." So, it's not about the child measuring up. It's about what happened during the process. "Looks like you really enjoyed painting that. I can see you love being creative." So the parent is in sync and accepting of, you know the child.

I felt privileged to be discussing these matters with Daniella. Upon re-reading Daniella's text a countless number of times, it really hit home to me that we as adults need to accept children just as they are, whatever that means. As Christine mentioned (reported in the previous chapter), "whatever me is". We need to accept the "me" – the "self" – the ever-evolving, not completely known constellation of the human being, a being that is connected to all other beings and events.

I have to admit, when working on another project and interacting with children learning arts-based mindfulness lessons, I found it enormously difficult to respond from the gestalt that a deep level of creativity required. When learning to teach children at university, we had been taught to praise children's work, find something unique or interesting to comment on – in essence, make each child feel special. This was quite a novel concept to me as I had been brought up in household and in a school system where no one made these types of affirming comments. We received marks for our work and then these marks would be bellowed out to the class by the teacher, in order of ranking, so everyone knew who was at the top and who was at the bottom. This approach always had me mentally cringing for the people ranked at the bottom. I was trying to transmit to the teachers telepathically, "Please do not do this. Can't you see the despair you are causing?" Some of my friends' bodies would slump when their scores were read out and they would silently castigate themselves for being "dumb". My parents didn't care about scores. They never praised any of my work, except when I won prizes. When I won prizes the outside world had judged I had done a good job and they took notice. When I was at school these would just be awarded. Students didn't enter a competition. So, when I received an award in the post, my parents and I were a bit baffled as to how it occurred, as I only just managed to tolerate school and viewed it like a jail term, serving my sentence, trying not to raise too much attention. I actually held a large degree of

contempt for the cruelty of the system, especially the physical and mental abuse that was routinely handed out by teachers. So, I am always amazed when children tell me they love school. I think, “Wow, there are some beautiful people out there now, not leading by the example they had modelled in the classroom, but teaching with their heart, repairing the damage.”

Therefore, coming from a system centred on abuse and humiliation, praising seemed to me like the light at the end of the tunnel. Children would glow with happiness, when you found that element in their piece of work that their soul was trying to convey. When looking at a child’s piece of work in the arts-based mindfulness lessons, I was “bursting at the seams” to describe to the “little people” how much the picture of their tree was calling me and how beautiful I thought it was, how much I liked trees and the beauty they give to the world. But I really had to watch my “languaging”, as the children had learnt not to judge their work but focus on the feelings that arise in each moment and follow their intuition. I can therefore see how hard it is for the well-meaning parents to adapt their way of thinking and respond effectively to meet this deep level of creativity.

Daniella was creating an environment for children to be themselves and parents, in the process, were learning and listening to who their children really are – not what they want them to be. As Angelica said in the last chapter, parents are not truly listening to their children. My own parents were always more concerned with how I felt during activities, rather than my performance. I remember excelling at some sports, but would withdraw due to the feelings of jealousy and competition that were encouraged by the adults running the programs. My parents never questioned my withdrawal, but completely accepted my feelings.

Families

Another extrinsic factor that assisted some participants with practising mindfulness and with seamlessly weaving this way of being within their daily lives was the participants’ partners. Janet, Angelica and Caro mentioned that their partners practised meditation with them. In Caro’s dialogue below we can see her husband reminding her to be mindful before reacting:

I was quite an angry person before too. My anger has...like I used to snap quickly...not often, but like netball is a good example..(oh)...white line fever [both laugh]. But I've noticed the changes in that as well. I think now, I respond rather than react...not 100% of the time (says timidly)...but I'm a different person. I can now, I can let things go if I have to. When big things happen straightway, like my husband will even say to me, "I think you need to do some meditation. I think you need to do some breathing." Yep, alright, got it. But if something does happen to me that's the first thing I want to do...like I say, "OK, I want to go and sit down. I need to breath. I need some space," and then I can just sit there and breathe and try to get it totally off of my mind. Like it's still going to be there but kind of see it like the leaves on the stream...can I let it go for a moment, can I experience how it feels in my body, can I just accept it and let it be there, do I need to act on it, you know I feel heaps better about doing that now. I feel much better about responding rather than just reacting straight away. Life is a whole lot better when you can do that [both laugh] (It is, isn't it?)

Colleagues

Colleagues' receptivity to the teachers' mindful way of being also seemed to influence how participants made sense of teaching children mindfulness. And for Ben, as reported in the last chapter, it was an instrumental factor. The support of mindful colleagues gave him the courage to be creative and develop his own mindfulness lessons. For Caro, receptive colleagues were critical to her sharing mindfulness with children. In the face to face interview she explained how in a government department she was not given support to initiate mindfulness activities for children:

Before here I worked as an attendance counsellor for the Department of Education (right) but for one of the regional offices (yep), and Sophia and I were actually going to do a course at one of the schools I worked with (ahh. They really wanted us to do it, (right) Sophia was going to do it and write it up (hmm), but getting through all the...um...is it ethics committee? I don't know but we had to go through (paper work..laughs), all the paperwork and then my manager was, "Oh, I don't think this is really you know..." Yeah, so it never happened.

However, when she started working at an independent school, teaching mindfulness was given the "green light" and perceived as something that was needed. She continues:

But when I came here I talked about it in my interview, as something I was passionate about and I talked about it in a spiritual sense.

And then it was just slowly, slowly, when I just started to work out what I could do. I

think it was the Deputy Principal (DP), I said “I would like to do this...”...Coz the Year 7 teacher approached me and said “(Gasps) this class....you know?”

It was really difficult, poor thing, just coming to let off some steam one day and I went...”well there are some things we can do.” *[both laugh]. (I’ve got a box of tricks here!)[both laugh].* And she was really open to it and the DP said, “Go for it.”

Teachers were actively seeking Caro out to help manage classroom behaviour and their own stress. School staff asked if they could attend sessions with the children as well. When working in schools, I have never seen this type of behaviour before: teachers asking to participate in lessons designed for the children. It was like Caro’s whole school was actively encouraging her initiative and expanding her possibilities for creation.

Angelica likewise, as mentioned previously, found her school colleagues overwhelmingly supportive and they would linger in her classroom when she conducted mindful rituals. However, at the local environmental level, there were threats to teachers’ creativity – management being the “chief culprit”. Our Skype conversation continues:

Researcher question (Nikki):

And have you encountered...like there has been so many positives and so many valuable experiences, has there be any challenges at all? The school seems to be quite supportive of what you are doing.

Interviewee response (Angelica):

Well I'm lucky because I'm trusted in the classroom so I can basically do what I want to do.

Researcher question (Nikki):

That's nice. That's nice isn't it?

Interviewee response (Angelica):

Yeah, It is. It's been good. Well, we've got a new principal next year so we'll see what happens there.

As Caro learnt the hard way, through a lot of tiresome paperwork, teaching children mindfulness can be blocked by key players in the system, when you least expect it. I

witnessed this first hand, when I was asked to evaluate a government-funded mindfulness program intended for a government primary school in Australia. The school, after being successful in the competitive grant and organising mindfulness lessons with an expert in the field, found their years of work “thrown into the dustbin” when they received a new principal two weeks before the program was due to commence. The recently appointed principal considered mindfulness to be a waste of time and energy and stopped the initiative. In one fell swoop the principal had managed to disempower and alienate his team. I received an apology letter from one of the teachers and the funding agency also called me dumbfounded by what had occurred. They were all invested in the program. I had only been brought in at the “last minute” due to another researcher’s illness, so in no way did I feel apologies were necessary. It was completely out of their control. I really felt for the teachers. I could feel their shock and disappointment. These examples shows how one integral person can extinguish a whole team’s creativity and enthusiasm in an instant and the importance of viewing creativity within a whole and dynamic system.

Institutional Dimension

To recap, in the Mindfulness-based Holistic Model of Creativity institutional factors that interact to influence an individual’s level of creativity include the learning environment, curriculum and pedagogy, partnerships, policy and procedures, religion, government and business/industry. Within this dimension one of the factors that stood out as supporting the integration of mindfulness in schools was other learning approaches, or pedagogy. And in turn mindfulness assisted participants with the implementation of specific learning approaches. This is something I feel needs further research: understanding the interaction between mindfulness and other learning approaches. For one teacher, Tilly, mindfulness and its interconnection with the learning approach used at her school, the Walker Learning Approach (see Photograph 7-3), was fundamental to the way she made sense of teaching children mindfulness. Our phone conversation follows:



Photograph 7-3: The Walker Learning Approach in Action (Early Life Foundations, 2014)

Researcher questions (Nikki):

So it sounds like you integrate mindfulness throughout the day just when it's when it's needed, or when you think, "Yeah I've got to be more mindful and the kids need to be more mindful." Does that sound ...?

Interviewee response (Tilly):

Absolutely. And even... we do Walker Learning here, so the kids are tuned into that. We have social and emotional learning attention that we are focusing on per fortnight and you really bring it [mindfulness] into that too. You know the whole thing is about being mindful of others' personal space, or whatever the issues are, are just using the language.

Walker Learning is a play-based, um, learning approach. So as part of that you have all the developmental domains, but one of social and emotional, so you have a learning attention for every area. And you tune the kids into those every day so and that then throughout the day you use those as well. So the kids know what they are learning about but you are using those real-life examples all the time.

Now, this was the first time I had heard of the Walker Learning Approach and so when I was chatting with Tilly I could not follow up with any specific questions, but felt mindfulness supported the learning approach and in turn the learning approach supported the use of mindfulness. When following up on our conversation and viewing examples of the approach in action in the classroom¹⁴, I could clearly understand the benefits of combining both learning approaches.

Tilly mentioned in our conversation that teachers are guiding students to "tune in" and students are already "tuned in" into the learning approach. *Tuning in* is a central practice of the Walker Learning Approach. Before students embark on their personalized investigations about something they hold a burning passion to investigate, they spend time with the teacher *tuning in*. Centring and focused attention is a cornerstone of The Walker Learning Approach and is additionally an important element in school-based mindfulness programs. For example, Schoberlin and Seth (2009, p. 91) program *Mindful teaching and teaching mindfulness: A*

¹⁴ See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtNPtT6Fco](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtNPtT6Fco;);
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8khzw5iPu8>;https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0Nwewx73_o

guide for anyone who teaches anything, presents activities called “Time In” – time to check in with yourself to refocus awareness and attention. They present a range of simple exercises that can be easily incorporated within a lesson. For example, one activity involves inviting students to listen to the ambient sounds in the room for 30 seconds, without making any new sounds themselves (Schoberlin & Seth, 2009, p. 92).

Apart from *tuning in*, Tilly said that cultivating mindfulness in the classroom enabled children to respect each other’s space. The YouTube examples of The Walker Learning Approach, in my opinion, show how respecting another student’s boundaries is a key component of the successful implementation of this pedagogy. The term “organized chaos” came to mind when I viewed the clips. Being mindful seems to be a vital ingredient, allowing this pedagogy to be put into practise with a little less chaos!

Global Dimension

At the global level, the overwhelming feeling I had when conversing with teachers, was that their work, teaching children mindfulness, was widely accepted by the community. They were cognisant that many people still have little understanding of the practices or concepts associated with mindfulness and some members of the community may be vehemently against teaching mindfulness in schools; however, this community support they were tapping into felt to me like a cloak of acceptance that was propelling their endeavours. This sentence from Caro in our face to face interview, which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, exemplifies participants’ feelings:

It is everywhere now and you hear about it all the time, and there are all these different programs, but for some schools still, they have no idea what it is.

Kabat-Zinn (2013) beautifully sums up this change in mainstream consciousness:

... given the zeitgeist of the late 1970s, the probability that Buddhist meditation practices and perspectives would become integrated into the mainstream of science and medicine and the wider society to the extent that they already have at this juncture, and in so many different ways that are now perceived as potentially useful; and important to investigate, seemed at the time to be somewhat lower than the likelihood that the cosmic expansion of the universe should all of a sudden come to a halt and begin falling back in on itself in a reverse big-bang... in other words, infinitesimal. And

yet, improbable as it may have been, it has already happened, and the unfolding of this phenomenon continues on many different fronts. (p. 3)

Summary of Main Findings

Creativity, implicitly and explicitly, played an important role in how teachers made sense of teaching children mindfulness. Some of the main findings arising from the interpretation of their texts are summarised as follows:

- A mindfulness practice calls for a re-conceptualisation of modern Western creativity theory and re-visiting ancient understandings of the concept.
- Researchers and practitioners need to distinguish between different levels of creativity – from superficial levels to deeper levels.
- Participants felt a responsibility to create spaces for children where they felt safe to explore and grow and they felt that a mindfulness practice enabled this.
- Mindfulness catalyses and ignites creativity.
- Teaching children mindfulness enabled participants to connect with deeper levels of creativity, which in turn stimulated the creation of unique mindfulness activities for children.
- Child-centric mindfulness instruction supported other learning approaches.
- The school's support played a critical role in the adoption and integration of programs.
- Mindfulness was perceived to change the nature of the relationship children have with their parents – fostering deeper connection.
- Mindfulness empowered children with the skills to be aware of the way they act and take responsibility for said actions.

Summary and Next Chapter

In this chapter I presented findings related to the super-ordinate theme of Creativity. The theme reverberated to varying degrees throughout participants' texts with three sub-themes emerging:

- Defining Creativity
- Creativity in Motion
- A Congenial Environment.

Creativity is considered to be a dimension of wellbeing, which combines with a range of other factors to form an individual's overall level of wellbeing. In the following chapter, I communicate findings related to the super-ordinate theme of Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing. Amongst other things, I will discuss how participants felt teaching mindfulness contributed to children's creative wellbeing.

**Chapter Eight: Theme 3: Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's
Wellbeing**

Sub-themes

Teaching Students

Mindfulness at a Young Age

Holistic Vision

*Mindfulness and the
Dimensions of Wellbeing*

The Learning Environment

The true measure of a nation's wellbeing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued and included in the families and societies into which they are born (UNICEF, 2007, p. 1).

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I present findings from the third super-ordinate theme, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing. Within the theme, four sub-themes emerged:

- Teaching Students Mindfulness at a Young Age
- Holistic Vision
- Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing
- The Learning Environment.

Central to how teachers made sense of teaching children mindfulness was the belief that it was important to teach MBW skills at a young age, at school, rather than waiting until adulthood. Participants also expressed and demonstrated throughout their conversations the necessity of having a holistic outlook when teaching mindfulness. During the interview process participants often spoke or wrote about how practising mindfulness enhances a student's wellbeing and discussed factors related to the learning environment that detract from achieving high-level wellness. I analyse and interpret participants' meaning making through the lens of the seven-dimension model of wellness, outlined in Chapter Five.

The Theme's Emergence

Unconditional love permeated all participants' descriptions of teaching children

mindfulness.

Acting with altruistic love is considered in academic literature to be a “spiritual activity” associated with the manifestation of spirituality (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). I felt throughout participants’ stories their need and feeling of responsibility to look after, nourish and protect the young – to give them life skills to navigate their way through school and life after school. This was exemplified in an email conversation with Janet:

The incredible privilege (and responsibility) of being a worthy guardian and compassionately nurturing two beautiful young people to the best of my ability, drew out a strong desire to share my dedication to a Meditative practice and introduce the girls to their own pathways. So often, the first place we look for inspiration and ideas is to outside sources. I searched for whatever books/classes/CD’s I could find at the time. At this time (20 years ago), the choice was limited. I could not find any classes, so bought a collection of books and CD’s. The “norm” was to guide children through quite florid, detailed meditation scripts, which relied heavily on visualisation. Initially these provided pleasant entry points for my daughters. However, soon their enthusiasm waned, giving rise to my realisation for the potential for more holistic, creative opportunities.

Nikki’s response/question:

I was quite moved by what you wrote. My first impression was that having children really acted as a catalyst for you sharing mindfulness with children, teachers and sometimes the “odd” businessman all over Australia. And then, while I was doing something else, cooking the dinner, the word “guardian” struck me. It was like being a guardian to your own sweet girls’ wellbeing naturally extended and drifted over to providing the service for other people’s children. And then I thought how beautiful and was moved to tears.

Janet replied:

From my experience, too many children have lived lives thus far that have been devoid of peace. So yes, absolutely, I do feel that my service to children is to provide a “guardianship”. One of the most important books that I have come along in a very long time is “Educating from the Heart: Theoretical and practical approaches to transforming education”. It begins with a magnificent preface by Paul D. Houston, who begins discussing the old song ‘the head bone is connected to the heart bone’ (I have reworked this song and sing it with the children in my classes). He goes on to say: “.... What is truly important is the lives of children we serve. **We are the keepers of their possibilities.**” This last sentence has become my maxim ... something that I share with every training and group of teachers that I come across.

And absolutely, my central intention is to share creative, engaging ways for children to take steps along the path to make their own discoveries and establish their own unique spiritual foundation/personal ballast that will sustain and succour them as they navigate life's adventures and challenges. And more than just build resilience; build a sense of exuberance and joy in being alive.

Other teachers reiterated Janet's sentiments in regards to nurturing the wellbeing of children, which is not surprising, given the popularity and the prevalent use of wellness frameworks in schools around the world, (Cruchon, 2009; State of South Australia, 2007; Hollingsworth, 2009; McQuaid, 2012; Peacock, 2015; Yager 2009) together with the positive correlation drawn between mindfulness and wellbeing.

Mindfulness is overwhelmingly considered in academic (see Champion & Rocco, 2009; Greenberg & Harris, 2012; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Shapiro et al., 2008) and popular literature (see Rechtschaffen, 2014; Siegel, 2008) to be "wellness-orientated" and a "wellness intervention", targeting a wide range of social, emotional, physical, spiritual and cognitive outcomes (Schoeberlein with Sheth, 2009; Willard, 2010).

In the following sections, I will discuss participants' texts through the lens of the wellness models, theories and principles that were outlined in Chapter Five.

Teaching Students Mindfulness at a Young Age

Unsurprisingly, teachers expressed the importance of teaching MBW skills at a young age, at school, rather than waiting until adulthood. This corresponds with wellness theory's central tenets: that the start of an individual's life plays a pivotal role in influencing his or her future wellness; and that education acts as a primary conductor for the integration of wellness concepts (Dunn, 1961; J. W. Travis & Ryan, 2004). The participants' views also closely connect with those of other mindfulness instructors. For example, Craig Hassed, meditation instructor and adolescent and adult mindfulness program developer, writes in the foreword of Janet Ety-Leal's (2010) book, *Meditation Capsules: A mindfulness program for children*:

Some see meditation as merely a stress management technique. Others see it as a time-out, a luxury or even an indulgence. But all of these views are limited or misleading. Meditation, at least in the way I view it, and indeed the way Janet Ety-

Leal seems to view it, is a life-skill. It is not merely helpful for the few who feel the need for it, but is relevant for any person who wishes to “wake up” and to “grow up”. It is a life skill that should be fostered from our earliest education. (p. v)

Research participant Caro explained in a face to face interview how her own life might have been different if she had learnt mindfulness in her formative years:

If I knew this in Year 11. If I learnt this in school I think it would have been so helpful. I've got friends with kids in school who have done Year 12 recently and they are so stressed out! One of them I was taking to yoga with me last year, coz her mum was saying she is so stressed out, snapping at everyone. She's in there studying till all hours of the morning and then gets up and looks half...batty eyes.

So I was like tell her to come to yoga with me. And she was saying “I wish I could come to Yoga but I can't fit it in.” So, I would just turn up and pick her up.

Sometimes she would come. Sometimes she wouldn't. When I told her what I was doing, she was like, “I so wish I had you at my school in Year 12. It would have been so helpful.”

Faith, who coordinated and ran after-school mindfulness programs for adolescents, in her email conversation related similar sentiments to Caro:

I believe that learning these things about oneself is of great importance and that school would be a fantastic place to introduce mindfulness skills as it is the place most young people first encounter a range of potentially quite stressful situations.

Teaching mindfulness to children/young people confirmed my belief that mindfulness skills can be a great coping skill for children in this age group.

Daniella in our email interview also stresses the importance of learning mindfulness at a young age; however, she couched this within the belief set that children are trained and conditioned in ways that are antagonistic to mindfulness:

We all started out knowing exactly who we were from a very young age, but slowly conditioning, measuring up and life makes us forget. I wanted to share a tool or life skill with children that would allow them to re-connect to themselves and know themselves, so they never forgot who they *really* were.

Angelica in our Skype conversation affirmed that mindfulness is a life skill that may be more important than many of the other subjects children learn at school:

And also (*emphasis, like she remembered something important*) we'll often talk

about how they use their breathing, you know, outside of the classroom (*ah ha*), so other than with me and so the times when like, if there is a problem on the school bus, and you know, they'll use their breathing; or "I'm doing a gymnastics competition Ms Monk, or a piano recital," they will come back and tell me that they used their breathing. And that to me is a life skill now that I have taught them and it's perhaps more important than many of the other things these little kids are learning in school today, I think.

It was not quite clear from the interviews what age teachers considered optimal to start learning MBW skills. However, Angelica in a Skype interview mentioned that mindful breathing is perhaps a challenge for a five year old:

Hmm...it's a good question because I teach kindergarten to Grade 4, from teaching five year olds to 10 year olds. So, I've got a pretty rare, I mean a lot of teachers don't have that vertical perspective (*um hum*). I think for the kids that are younger, developmentally it's hard for them to sit still and just do breathing. They don't really get it. Well they didn't in September, but now that we're, you know, eight months into the year, they understand it better. They like um, I think young kids like all of the uses of the senses in terms of just the sense of touch, the aromatherapy, that sort of thing, so I think that's a big piece of it for the little ones.

Um...thinking.... let's see...the other kids really from Grade 2 up. They just, they get it. They understand it, as part of you know, it's in their toolkit now. They understand it.

I think developmentally they are a bit more mature. It resonates with them. Yeah, I mean certain mindfulness programs in schools that I've seen don't start until the kids are older and there's been research on the brain and there are reasons for that. I wouldn't not do it with the younger ones just because they can't sit still or whatever. It doesn't matter if they are still...

Angelica then went on to discuss how she would use different activities, such as mindful eating, with younger children. These she felt were more developmentally appropriate. Tilly, who specialises in teaching children, aged five and six years old did adapt activities to suit younger children, but she largely saw this as "part and parcel" of teaching this age group. In a phone interview she said:

Yeah, look sometimes you do, you need to shorten it, or you need to just come back to it later but you have naturally gotta do that with five and six year olds anyway (*Yes, I know! laughs*)...(*both laugh*), I think with anything you have to do that, you know.

The interesting thing with mindfulness is they, it's like they want more, they come

out. Yeah, I mean they are naturally happy, most kids, (*Yeah*) but they come out really happy. You can almost see the effect it had on them afterwards.

I could relate to what both Tilly and Angelica were saying. When I first started teaching Japanese to three and four years olds, despite my training, where we learnt the researched benefits of teaching second languages at a young age, I wondered if the children had any idea of why this lady with blonde hair was coming in and entertaining them for 45 minutes, speaking in another language. Most days when teaching this age group, I felt like I had morphed into a clown, using a plethora of expressions, body movements and props to communicate Japanese and keep the “little ones” focused. However, in the last term, the children started speaking Japanese to me. I clearly remember one little girl, with the most gorgeous, curly hair springing from her head, who never uttered a word all year and then all of a sudden she spoke two sentences in Japanese. We both looked at each other astounded, her eyes widened in surprise, mine too and we burst into laughter.

I felt like what Angelica was trying to convey was that, even though the younger children did not seem to be as receptive to some of the practices as their older counterparts, it was still worth introducing the techniques. Students may just take a little longer to “look” like they understand the activity. Tilly confirmed that being adaptive and flexible, adjusting activities as needed, is all part of the Kindergarten or Reception teacher’s role, irrespective of what they are teaching.

Holistic Vision

Caro viewed teaching children mindfulness as one strategy to nurture students’ wellbeing. She taught mindfulness within the context of a holistic approach to living, exemplified by the following text from our face to face conversation.

Oh, I congratulated them for recognising that to succeed in Year 12 they needed to focus on their body and their mind, and a lot of us get taught to focus on only exercising, sleeping well and what food we put into our body, which is good for us but we don’t get taught a lot about positive mental health.

I got some emails this week (*yeah*) and one girl sent me an email...she sent me an email to say “I doing my mindfulness every night...um I’ve got the Smiling Mind app”...um, I can’t remember what else she said...she’s doing something else. “But I

still leave school every day really stressed. Have you got something that can help me?" (*oh*).

I sent back an email to her saying, "Recognise that Year 12 is going to be a stressful year. It is going to be a tough year. If you are eating healthily ... if you are getting enough sleep, if you are getting some exercise, if you are doing your mindfulness meditation, if you are doing as much study as you can and you are balancing all that, then you can only do what you can do." I sent her a few links to some other things and you know, just said to her, "Sometimes we just need to accept our limits and we are doing the best we can do."

Caro felt that wellness can be achieved by subscribing not to any one health care modality but accommodating a range of interventions applicable to the individual and his or her circumstances – in this case surviving the "perils" of Year 12. Janet felt that it was essential to teach mindfulness in a "holistic" way:

An ongoing joy of being a Mindfulness teacher is to share countless moments of discovery with children. These experiences absolutely confirm my belief in teaching Mindfulness in a 'holistic' way, with connection to all of the senses, embracing the mind, body and spirit.

Other participants did not explicitly state, like Janet, that it was important to teach mindfulness in a holistic way, but their conversations when analysed (in the following section) indicate that they consider mindfulness education holistically, in order to help children realise their full potential.

Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing

Please note that the original version of this section has been presented at a conference and has been accepted for publication in a journal was published as follows: Albrecht, N. J. (In press). Nourishing wellbeing with mindfulness: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *International Journal on School Climate and Violence Prevention*. Other information related to the content of this section can be located at:

<https://rmit.academia.edu/NicoleAlbrecht> and

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nicole_Albrecht

The Learning Environment

Teachers, in their conversations discussed how mindfulness enabled them to nourish the *whole* of a child's wellbeing. However, similar to Chapter Six, where teachers expressed a disconnection to some of the rules governing educational practice, there were also a number of elements located in the wider learning environment, one of the domains of educational practice (see Figure 5-4), that negatively impinged upon the successful integration of mindfulness and children's wellbeing. The learning environment, that is, the ethos/culture of the school, infrastructure and physical environment played an important role in how teachers made sense of teaching children mindfulness.

The factors in the learning environment that impinged upon nourishing a child's wellbeing related to staff culture, student culture, a high-level of noise and a lack of suitable space in which to practice mindfulness. For example, in Chapter Six, Ben communicated that when surrounded by a perceived negative environment, he had difficulty being a mindful role model to his students. Working in an environment where mindfulness was not supported by colleagues was seen by participants to negatively impact student and teacher wellbeing as well as learning outcomes. Ben, when asked about the challenges of teaching mindfulness with children, also wrote in an email communication that one of the main impediments was "finding a quiet space free from noise and distraction".

Taylor, when asked the same question wrote via email:

I have also found the lack of resources to be challenging and timetable changes. This year, we have been lucky enough to have a mindfulness room at school; however, it isn't always available for that.

In a university report (provided as illustrative material) investigating the efficacy of the initial mindfulness program conducted at Caro's school, the researcher, Grace, notes:

A major barrier she [Caro] identified was that there was no regular "special" space where the students could go and lie down on the floor where it was quiet and comfortable.

The space in which mindfulness lessons were conducted was important to teachers and they seemed to do their utmost to create calm spaces. Caro in our face to face interview shared:

someone wrote down “the warm and friendly approach from the teacher and the calming effect of the room” and I thought that’s what I wanted! So I try to get that room ready for them every week.

Yeah, I have a note on the door that no one sees, that says ... “Shhhhh you are entering a quiet place”. That’s what Janet ETTY-Leal does too. She mentions that she puts a sign on the door. She said it’s best to have a separate place rather than a classroom, which is what Grace’s research study on the Year 7 study also identified, was that I was running the meditation session in their classroom, because we didn’t have anywhere else, but that separation wasn’t occurring. I was coming in at the end of lunch when they were all (*all over the place*). Yeah, hot, red-faced, sweaty, coming into the classroom’s pretty noisy and that was one of the things that came out of that, that a different kind of area is needed. Quiet space is really helpful.

Caro talks about the sanctity of silence for meditation practice, however, *no one* seems to notice her sign on the door, “Shhhhh you are entering a quiet place.” Like Ben and Taylor, she found conducting mindfulness in a large school setting, where noise abounds, challenging. However, Caro mentioned, in a similar vein to Taylor, that school staff supported the practice and were trying to create dedicated spaces for mindfulness practice:

One of the leadership team here, she is trying to get me an area, where I can use it just for mindfulness and meditation.

When discussing why she thinks research into the efficacy of mindfulness is critical at an academic and school level, Caro again stressed the importance of being allocated a room of her own:

I think it’s also that newness, I guess about it. It is everywhere now and you hear about it all the time and there are all these different programs, but for some schools still, they have no idea what it is. So if you can say I want to do this and this is the research out there and then say; this is the research we did in school...better argument for introducing it in the school. (*Yes, definitely*) And then getting my own room... (*both laugh*).

Space to meditate seems to be important when conducting mindfulness in schools around the world. For example, at Bentleigh Secondary College (a government school located in a suburb of Melbourne, Australia), mindfulness meditation was introduced to Year 9’s as part of a Personal Journey program in 2011. The program was such a success that the school developed a dedicated meditation and wetland centre, together with the

local Moorroboon Indigenous community (see Photograph 8-1). The building was constructed with timber using state-of-the-art sustainable materials and sustainable construction practices (Bentleigh Secondary College, n.d b). The building is used for the college’s mindfulness meditation program, Indigenous studies and is also available for wider community functions (Bentleigh Secondary College, n.d. a).



Photograph 8-1: Bentleigh School College Meditation Centre (Bentleigh Secondary College, n.d a)

Likewise, in a school in Ireland a dedicated space has been created for mindfulness (See Photograph 8-2). It can be seen in the photo that 16 students can quite comfortably manage to find enough space to meditate; however, if class sizes are in the upper 20s, teachers may find it difficult to conduct meditation effectively.

Staff culture and the physical environment combine to influence the integration of mindfulness in schools and so to does student culture. One of my students, Kevin Ngo, from the undergraduate online course “Introduction to MindBody Wellness” wrote in his journal assessment task about the difficulty of meditating in a school environment:

This week's activity in meditation was initially uncomfortable for me. The first time I meditated was in high school where there were multiple distractions that hindered my experience. However, this time I hope that I can create an environment to unlock the full potential of what meditation has to truly offer.



Photograph 8-2: Senior Infants Class at St Ultan's in Cherry Orchard during their Mindfulness Session (Keane, 2014)

Interested in Kevin's line of thought, I asked him if he would mind extrapolating on the "multiple distractions". Kevin graciously replied:

I would love to provide you with additional information on my thoughts for the sentence: "This week's activity in meditation was initially uncomfortable for me. The first time I meditated was in high school, where there were multiple distractions that hindered my experience."

It was uncomfortable because it was difficult to motivate myself to commit to such an activity that I had no guidance on. Additionally, that no one I know personally has ever done meditation before. In regards to the distractions, I was referring to a period where I was in high school. This may only be my personal experience on it, but during the time, taking time off of work to sit down and close my eyes was a ticket to muck around and not take anything seriously. Having like minded friends, no one took the activity completely seriously. The lack of focus among the class was blatant. Teenage ignorance and disrespect are the words that I would use to describe the situation. Could you really ask a class of 25 teenage boys to close their eyes and concentrate? I mean no disrespect, but meditation as a hobby or daily practice is an anomaly. If someone in high school said that they meditated everyday, he would most likely be deemed as weird. These thoughts were what I deemed as a distraction. Fear of actually trying to participate in meditation. Maybe the cool kids will see me as a try hard for attempting to meditate. Self-conscious, I know. That was the mind of a teenager I guess. Doubt this would be applicable to adults. Anyway, other distractions would just be from other classmates doing their normal thing of disrupting learning eg., random noises.

Kevin, not far out of high school, gives the honest perspective of a teenage boy being asked to meditate in a school environment. Likewise, research participant, Caro also had

difficulties sharing mindfulness with teenage boys in her voluntary classes and most weeks only girls participated. She told in a face to face interview:

Yeah, like with the boys that was interesting ... I've done the sultana one mindfulness exercise with the boys and they were laughing all the way through. They were younger boys. They were 13. When I gave them the sultana to feel in their hand they absolutely cracked up. They were rolling around and I got angry because I was like, "They are supposed to be taking this seriously." I got all angry and upset and I was talking to Sophia about it coz they were laughing and saying it feels like a "ballsac". (*both laugh*) (*There should be a rule - do not give adolescent boys sultanas*) I got angry about that. But this time, because I'd talked through that with Sophia. This time when they were all carrying on and laughing I didn't get angry.

Kevin relaying the student's perspective and Caro the teacher's sheds light on the challenges of sharing mindfulness and meditation in a school environment. Kevin notes that it was not only the environment affecting his experience but also a lack of guidance.

In his journal, Kevin described how he created an environment in which he felt comfortable to re-attempt meditation, away from the distractions of peers:

I initially knew nothing about meditation, just the brief understanding that the media and movies portrayed. Reading previous examples of what students wrote during this week helped me create an environment that may benefit me as well. Generating an adequate environment for meditation seemed to be a major priority for me personally. I had to plan a time where there were no distractions around my household. I chose to also light some scented candles that my family acquired during a Christmas party last year. The lighting and environment were oddly calming. I say oddly because my room would never have scented candles. It seemed a bit strange to me when I looked around my dark room with candles around it. The new experience was uplifting and I enjoyed my room being designed in this way. This could be a possible adjustment that I may look further into when I prepare for my exam study. Once I was satisfied with my environment, I decided to also play some soft music. I feel that I could concentrate with music since I tend to not be able to focus on specific tasks when there is complete silence.

I find that about 15-20% of students, in the wellness courses, in which I teach, have prior meditation experience in schools. A vast majority of students express negative opinions about the activity and express that they have no idea as to why they were asked to try meditation. Girls in co-educational schools are often concerned they will be sexually assaulted when laying down next to boys and in one case a student was physically assaulted when undertaking meditation in a school environment. David Pelusey, a graduate student, shared in an email:

In answer to your question regarding meditation as a child - I can certainly relay the story to you, feel free to ask any questions etc that may be helpful.

I'm not entirely sure the story will be enlightening in any particular way, but...

I attended a Private Catholic school here in Perth WA through the 80's, I can only guess as to why we were even doing meditation when in fact prayer would usually be the chosen form of silent deliberation. I think it may have had something to do with the explosion of meditation becoming 'trendy' in the 80's.

While I am aware that in some circles meditation and prayer are considered to be similar - in this case we were specifically told they were different, and we were instructed by one of the brothers as to how to do it, and that we were going to do it and do it properly right now!

I was 14 or 15 years old and had no idea about these things, why I would want to do it, what the purpose of it was and how it related to me. Still, I closed my eyes and followed the instructions given to us by the Brother in charge. There was sniggers and giggles from all around the room, as you can imagine with 14 - 15 yr old boys. Unfortunately I decided to open my eyes at the wrong time - the brother reciting the meditation instructions spotted me and launched a barrage of verbal discipline my way, at this point I asked if I may be left out of doing the meditation but that I was happy to sit silently while everyone else did it. Big mistake - he came over, grabbed me by either side of the head and yelled at me to shut my eyes. He continued to recite the instructions angrily to a now silent room, however he also never let go of my head, squeezing it tighter as he spoke.

After the class he lead me to the headmasters office where he told the headmaster I had refused to participate in the class activity and had been rude about it. I received two days in house detention for this!!

So that's my first encounter with meditation!

You would think I would never give it another go really wouldn't you! Funny enough my Dad (who was in the health field himself) became unwell a few years down the track from this and did some work with Dr Ian Gawler, while this didn't entice me into wanting to meditate on a regular basis (if at all), I did see that it had a place and could result in some wonderful things for people. So fortunately I was bought back from seeing it as something meaningless that someone made you do in a dictatorial fashion, to something that was clearly the opposite of this, and in the right circumstances could be a liberating, healing and beautiful experience rather than a restrictive and destructive one. It opened my mind up enough to stop fearing it, laughing at it and avoiding it, but not enough to want to do it or try it.

Over the years I came into situations where I was able to revisit it (as mentioned in my journal) but very superficially - I did experience some genuine relaxation from it, but that was about all.

And then of course came my journal and the wellness program - and it turned out to be quite a trip over the 8 weeks! I am still learning and don't profess to understand meditation nor use it to its full benefit - but hey, I guess that's part of its very definition.

I hope my story is of some interest.

Thanks for asking, and thanks again for your feedback.

These perspectives of teachers and students demonstrates that the school environment may not always be the best place to start a meditation practice, stemming from a range of factors in the learning environment, such as noise and distraction; social/cultural factors, for example, peer pressure and also the way in which meditation instruction is imparted. Learning meditation and mindfulness at a young age, in the cases just described, may be detrimental to the student's current and future health and wellbeing.

Summary of Main Findings

Wellness was central to how teachers made sense of teaching children mindfulness. Some of the main findings arising from the interpretation of participants' texts are summarised below:

- Participants felt that it was essential to teach mindfulness at a young age, rather than waiting until adulthood.
- Teachers were teaching children from four years onwards; however, there was no consensus about the best age to start teaching children mindfulness.
- Teaching mindfulness with children was perceived to build the students' store of inner resources – a toolkit to survive effectively in the world.
- Learning mindfulness at a young age was felt to empower students.
- A mindfulness practice was thought to nourish the *whole* of a child's wellbeing.
- Teacher's taught mindfulness with a holistic perspective.
- Teachers felt a sense of responsibility to teach children mindfulness, in order to support student wellbeing.
- Unconditional love for students provided the foundation for teaching children mindfulness
- Teaching children mindfulness was perceived as *one* strategy amongst many to nurture a child's wellbeing.
- It is necessary to recognise the interconnectivity between wellness dimensions and characteristics and the synergistic wellness effects of a mindfulness

practice.

- A mindfulness practice enabled children to re-connect with who they truly are.
- Teachers were trying to create spaces where children felt safe to learn and rise to their full potential.
- The noisy environment of the school sometimes hindered the integration of mindfulness.
- A dedicated and quiet space was perceived as important to running mindfulness lessons.
- Student experiences of learning mindfulness did not always correspond with participants' related perceptions.
- Incorporating mindfulness in the classroom was perceived to be quite simple and does not need to be overcomplicated by prescribed programs.
- Teaching mindfulness to children was integral to the participants' wellbeing.

Summary and Next Chapter

In this chapter I presented findings related to the super-ordinate theme of Responsibility for Nourishing a Child's Wellbeing. Within this theme four sub-themes emerged:

- Teaching Students Mindfulness at a Young Age
- Holistic Vision
- Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing
- The Learning Environment.

In following chapter, I communicate findings related to the last super-ordinate theme to be presented, Being a Mindful Role Model.

Chapter Nine: Theme 4: Being a Mindful Role Model

Sub-Themes:

*Incorporating Formal
and Informal Practices*

*Cultivating a Mindful
School*

*Mindfulness: A Personal
Journey*

Chapter Outline

In this chapter, I report findings from the fourth and last super-ordinate theme titled Being a Mindful Role Model. Being a mindful role model was central to how participants made sense of teaching children mindfulness. To be an effective role model, teachers felt that they needed to practice mindfulness both formally and informally. The majority of participants also expressed the need for the whole school system to embrace a mindful way of being.

In the analysis and interpretation of teachers' texts three sub-themes related to this super-ordinate theme emerged:

- Incorporating Formal and Informal Practices
- Cultivating a Mindful School System
- Mindfulness: A Personal Journey.

The last sub-theme, Mindfulness: A Personal Journey resonates with the first sub-theme, The Devotional Nature of Practice, presented in Chapter Six. In this first sub-theme, I gained insight into the essential role that MindBody Wellness (MBW) practices play in a teacher's life. In line with this philosophy, participants on the whole felt that to teach children mindfulness an instructor first needed to connect deeply with the practices. They perceived this deep level of connection with the "self" to be an elemental foundation to becoming a mindful role model and, in some cases, a pre-requisite to teaching mindfulness with children.

In the next section I discuss how this super-ordinate theme emerged and then consider each sub-theme in turn.

The Theme's Emergence

Discussion on this topic was prompted when participants spoke or wrote about a variety of topics, such as the challenges faced when teaching mindfulness, how they felt when they shared mindfulness with children and what teacher qualities are important for mindfulness instruction. For example, Angelica, in our Skype interview, when talking about

how it feels to bring mindfulness into the school environment, expressed the importance of being a mindful role model:

Yeah and its, you know I have to be the mindful role model because if I'm not then I can't have that expectation that they are going to be mindful.

Likewise Ben, in an email, when asked about the challenges of teaching mindfulness, wrote about the importance of teachers being at "home" with a mindful way of being:

Getting staff on board as being able to teach or lead students requires the teacher to practice it and develop their skills on their own.

Daniella, in a phone interview when discussing questions related to Session C,¹⁵ reiterated Ben and Angelica's points, which were expressed by a majority of teachers:

Well, I think first of all that it's, um, it certainly, um, more effective if the teacher has a personal interest in mindfulness and I would almost say that, um, you know, definitely to have a practice, because how can you teach something that you don't know much about and you can't teach mindfulness from a text book or just following a CD. I mean you can, but it becomes mechanical. There's got to be that human interaction, and unless a teacher...like how can a teacher who doesn't know much about maths really teach maths effectively?

Janet discussed the difficulties of teaching teachers who have no personal interest in the practice:

One of the most difficult challenges I have faced does not come from the children, but from a small number of teachers. There can be many reasons for this. Sometimes the decision to introduce a Mindfulness program has been made by a Co-ordinator or DP and this decision is not necessarily understood or embraced! It is very difficult to teach children with a teacher who is not committed and disinterested and who even may display this by sitting up the back with their laptop on their knee! Wherever possible, I now request that I have an introductory session with staff to provide a theoretical and practical session and allow time for questions and discussion.

Rechtschaffen (2014), a mindfulness program developer and teacher reiterates

¹⁵ Q1. Are there any special qualities you think a teacher needs to teach mindfulness with children? Q2. What are some of your own qualities that you feel have led you to practice mindfulness with children? Q3. If a teacher is new to practising MindBody Wellness but is keen to teach it in the classroom or with children what suggestions would you make to this person?

participants' observations and opinions in his book on the topic

We often leap forward, wanting to help our kids relax, forgetting to notice how anxious and in need of relaxation we are. A teacher would never try to lead a math lesson if she didn't know the multiplication tables. Similarly, teachers trying to teach mindfulness won't get far with their students if they first don't model good emotional regulation and sensitivity toward their students' needs. (pp. 42-42)

However, as I have experienced numerous times when working in the education system and teaching pre-service education graduates, teachers often do teach in areas where their skills are rudimentary at best. And this may, in some cases, be what is occurring with the mass introduction of mindfulness around the world.

When speaking about my experience of observing and being part of the wide-spread education of Japanese in Australia in the 1990s, Daniella discusses the difference between learning something from someone with passion and experience in the area and learning something from someone new and unfamiliar to the topic. The conversation follows:

Research questions (Nikki):

I know, I know, we had the same thing when I taught Japanese. Um they didn't have enough people and they got a whole lot of people to do a six-week course to learn Japanese. You know some people kept going on and they were quite good teachers in the end, but it takes time. And I imagine it's a bit frightening for a teacher to be given a text and be told "We are introducing mindfulness," and they have never heard of it before or, you know, don't know what it is...so

Interviewee response (Daniella):

They might deliver it OK, but we both know that learning something from a teacher that is like a really passionate science teacher, it's coming from the heart. It's a different teaching and a different learning. You know there is the trust there, the respect. Like if I know that someone is teaching me mindfulness and they have a personal practice, they've lived it. Like to live something and teach it is far more effective than just reeling it off. You know people can energetically feel the difference. So I would say developing a personal practice would definitely enhance the teaching. You know, like I say, I think anyone can teach it but it doesn't mean they are teaching it effectively...

As can be seen from reading participants' texts, embodying and having a passion for mindfulness was seen as a central element to teaching children mindfulness. When

interpreting and analysing teachers' conversations I grouped the super-ordinate theme of Being a Mindful Role Model into three sub-themes:

- Incorporating Formal and Informal Practices
- Cultivating a Mindful School System
- Mindfulness: A Personal Journey.

I will now discuss these sub-themes in the following sections.

Incorporating Formal and Informal Practices

Daniella, in our phone interview, talked about the value of incorporating mindfulness into daily routines (informally) and also making time in your day to practise meditation formally:

...so using mindfulness in your everyday life and this is what I do, every time I sit down I use that as a cue. If I sit down unconsciously and I get up again and sit down with intention and mindfully. Um, maybe some prompts before you read an email, use that as prompt to take a beautiful deep breath. Um... opening the door, I use that again to breathe, make sure I'm checking into my breathing. Every time I press down the handle of a door I breathe in and out as I enter the door and exit. So using mindfulness, making sure that I have eye contact with people and that I am actively listening. Um noticing my surroundings when I am walking, to just stop and then walk mindfully. So using it in your every day, daily life, I think then it naturally flows on. If you don't have a practice, it flows onto your teaching and becomes a habit.

Research questions (Nikki):

Yeah, there is time spent in meditation and then there is time spent incorporating it in your daily life. It seems you need both really to...

Interviewee response (Daniella):

And definitely, definitely you know a practice, a meditation practice. Even if it's just for five minutes. Some people practice for four hours, some two hours or an hour, but even five minutes of an intentional sitting, connecting to the heart and breathing and just stilling the mind and body, I think is really essential.

Research statement (Nikki):

Yeah, I agree, I agree. I've read that quite a few practitioners, they don't practice meditation and have the quiet time but they might use mindfulness in their

professional life, when working with clients. I always wondered how they would go with teaching it, um if they are not taking any time out from their daily schedule to have quiet inner reflection.

Interviewee response (Daniella):

Yeah, and I've seen a lot of teachers on video and everything, you know ring the singing bowl, "Right into meditation ... blah blah blah, let's all close our eyes..." **[expression very rapid as if in a hurry to emphasise her example of the teachers]** (*Nikki laughs*) as a teacher would for something to do, just say they are teaching mindfulness, but they are not with themselves for a second, so how can you teach that? You know, it's the intention. It's the voice, ...and unless you've quietened your own mind and had that time you can't be calm and deliver it in that way.

Angelica, in a Skype interview discussed how she incorporates mindfulness formally and informally and similarly to Daniella emphasises the point of embodying mindfulness, Angelica grounds and centres herself through mindfulness before starting each class. Our conversation follows:

And how Angelica, for you on a personal level, I know you practise mindfulness regularly and you do guided imagery once a month, you mentioned. How does it feel bringing these practices to the classroom? You know bringing your personal practice into the class? Does that feel...

Interviewee response (Angelica):

Um...well...well, I'm just thinking. When I start my day I usually start my day when I wake up in the morning, with Mark Williams, one of his things on my phone, apps on my phone. ... I've really worked hard to put myself in a mindful place before I teach. So having the awareness of my energy, be it positive or negative. Say for example if it's negative, I have that awareness of that and you know it might be something entirely disconnected with school, but I now have an awareness of that so I can put myself in a mindful place to teach so that I'm not giving the children the wrong type of energy.

Research question (Nikki):

Hmm....that's fascinating, isn't it?

Interviewee response (Angelica):

Yeah and I'll often....because they have to be walked to my classroom and what not, because they are dropped off by all different teachers. I will now try to make sure that you know um...if I've only got five minutes to go before the kids come to

me, what I used to do is, oh I'll quickly do this...oh I'll quickly check that email. I'll quickly....coz you know that's how teachers work. I mean....so stressful really teaching. But now I stop myself, I catch myself. I say to myself, "You know what, now, you've got five minutes, don't do that just take a moment." And so I'll put myself in a mindful place and then I'll greet the kids outside the classroom and so everything just starts off in a more calm and mindful manner and it dictates the rest of the lesson and their learning.

Cultivating a Mindful School System

Tilly expressed similar sentiments to Angelica. She said that due to the stresses and demands of teaching, teachers need to become mindful. However, Tilly mentioned that teachers sometimes have trouble committing to a practice when work demands get too high and some teachers, like Janet mentioned, are simply not that interested in being mindful:

Teachers I think run on automatic pilot all the time (*mm hum*) and we don't take that time to be mindful. So we started doing some teacher mindfulness sessions in Term 1 that were great. Everyone was right up for it. Well not everyone, but lots of people were interested, but as the term gets busier and the demands get higher, that's dropped off and people can't make it because....(exasperation in her voice) it's such a hectic job (*I know, I really know and that's why I'm appreciative of your time and yeah it takes its toll, doesn't it?*). Yeah.... but the thing is mindfulness is probably the thing that will make the difference. So I'm not really sure how you do it apart from to do it slowly and just embed it really...it has to be sort of embedded in the culture and language I guess.

Tilly's sentiments about creating a mindful culture are echoed in other schools around the world. For example, staff from Pinecrest School, located in Quiet Cove, Annandale in the US, wrote in a letter to parents:

One of our intentions for bringing this program to Pinecrest is to not only teach these skills to the students and faculty, but also to support the integration of mindfulness into the daily school culture and community as a whole. (Pinecrest School, 2014)

To this end, Pinecrest, in order to create a mindful culture that extends beyond the bounds of the school yard decided to offer mindfulness sessions for parents as well as children and staff (Pinecrest School, 2014). Likewise, as mentioned in previous chapters, when Daniella was teaching arts-based mindfulness lessons to children she realised it was necessary to educate parents as well. From the participants' descriptions it seems that

embedding mindfulness in our language and culture requires also educating parents; as a mindful way of being can quickly come undone for children if their parents are functioning in an alternate way. And I imagine it also must create a great deal of cognitive conflict for children if they are learning one way of being at school – a mindful one – and then having this negated and questioned when they returned home for the evening.

At Angelica's school parents witnessed the benefits their children were experiencing in her classroom and wanted the same kind of culture created in their son's and daughter's homeroom. They were asking homeroom teachers to teach mindfulness also. Angelica and some supportive staff members slowly started to integrate mindfulness within the school's practices and pedagogy. In our Skype conversation, as reported in Chapter Six, Angelica discussed how the whole school system was gradually becoming more mindful. In an email correspondence she elaborated on our Skype conversation. Angelica wrote that because most teachers are also mothers, "They just don't have the time to commit to a six week or year-long mindfulness course."

However, they want to embrace the concept. My school has started with small steps like a 40 minute inservice, a breathing room, a book to read etc. Now it is taking on. I'm meeting with teachers again on Wednesday because they felt inspired by our last meeting and want to know more. It's the ripple effect.

Day Two of the new school year - I ran a short workshop on mindfulness which was tailored around teaching the teachers how to "stop and be" and to be aware of the *practice of mindfulness*. It was a great time of the year to introduce the concept as teachers were stressed (as all teachers are) before they've met their new class.

Afterwards some teachers were inspired to:

- Make Well Spaces in their own classrooms
- Create a Breathing Room for other teachers
- Lead the Junior School in a collective breathing activity - very powerful

I also conducted another workshop for counsellors and some specialist teachers. Again this was about *them* experiencing and doing mindfulness.

A Middle School counsellor started a Mindfulness morning meeting once a week for interested staff / faculty including office workers etc

- Grade One teachers have asked me to train them on how to implement

mindfulness in the classroom as a final unit of work before the children finish the school year in June. These kids are 6 turning 7.

- The ripple effect of mindfulness has happened at our school. It's been just like watching a little pebble thrown in the water. I expect this to continue.

Angelica's conversations demonstrate how the whole school's culture is slowly changing and becoming more mindful, and staff members working collaboratively to create calmer environments in which to learn – “the ripple effect” as she termed it. Her “mindful classroom” modelling led to other teachers wanting to adopt and learn the practice. Key figures (such as the principal and school counsellor) in Angelica's school environment, like Caro's supported a mindful culture, unlike one of the schools that Ben worked at. He perceived his school environment to be negative and stressful and he thus could not be a mindful role model to his students and teach effectively. Exogenous factors outweighed the internal stability and equanimity he knew could be achieved through being mindful, resulting in cognitive conflict. Moving to a school where mindfulness was respected allowed him to be himself – a mindful role model. Ben's experience shows that in some conditions, some teachers, in order to maximise student wellbeing, need to be supported by a culture of mindfulness.

Mindfulness: A Personal Journey

As mentioned in the chapter outline, this last sub-theme resonated with the first sub-theme presented, The Devotional Nature of Practice. When exploring the latter sub-theme I described the central role that a MindBody Wellness (MBW) practice played in a teacher's life and how these findings are in concord with Hasselle-Newcombe's (2002) study of yoga instructors. In line with this philosophy, participants, on the whole, felt that someone looking to teach children mindfulness first needs to connect deeply with the practices, in essence follow in the participants' footsteps. This connection they felt was an elemental foundation to becoming a mindful role model and teaching children mindfulness – transcending the limitations of a six-to-eight-week mindfulness program. Cultivating mindfulness becomes a way of life, a process of self-discovery, with the capacity to influence every aspect of a teacher's personal and professional life. Participants affirmed that becoming a mindful role model requires a personal commitment to self-transformation. Angelica in our phone interview explained:

Well apart from practising it, I mean doing different courses that are around. They have been valuable. They are either online or at colleges, university. They're all a personal journey within itself. I think that's a really important part of it, because you discover so much about yourself. Um, so there are courses, but practice, reading books, and it's in the living it as well.

Caro in our face to face interview discussed her own personal mindfulness journey, which commenced a decade prior to teaching children mindfulness.

Researcher question (Nikki):

So how did you get into mindfulness? You were saying something about your own personal journey.

Interviewee response (Caro):

When I was doing my first degree, I'm a real stress head, a real stressor. My mum is a real stressor, she needs to do this too. So I'm a stressor and I needed something when I was doing my first degree, because I hadn't studied for so long.

Researcher question (Nikki):

How old were you?

Interviewee response (Caro):

Thirty. I was 30...30 when I did my first degree. So a long time out of school. I was very social at school and not very academic (*Ohhhhh*). Surprising, isn't it? (Yes) – [both laugh].... (*It was kind of in vogue back then, wasn't it?*).

Yeah, I left school and went. I never wanted to study again. But when I was doing my first degree it was something I wanted to do well at when I did it, but it was really difficult for me.

Researcher question (Nikki):

Because you'd been a long time out of high school, (*Yep, yeah*) and it's all new and different. It's all pretty stressful even as a teenager.

Interviewee response (Caro):

And I didn't know anyone or anything.

Researcher question (Nikki):

You weren't coming in from school (*statement – implying no friends to come into the degree with*). What degree was that?

Interviewee response (Caro):

Bachelor of Arts. So I was looking for something to help me then and I reckon I was going through the WEA course guide to look for some...oh that's right, I was looking for...they had something to help you get into the STAT test for uni and while I was looking for that I saw a meditation course and that was talking about dealing with stress and stuff and I thought maybe I should do that as well. So I went to the WEA and did my STAT course and enquired about that and they said the lady lived in Flagstaff Hill and I thought I'd rather go there than come into the city, so I rang her and said I live in Flagstaff Hill. So I went over to her house in Flagstaff Hill, only for about two or three sessions and she taught me how to meditate. I don't know what kind of meditation it was back then, but she taught me to, um, like I had to close the doors of my brain and tell the thoughts that they had to go away (*Ahhhhh*). My brain was a monkey mind and it didn't cope with that at all.

Researcher question (Nikki):

We're actually always thinking of things. Even in meditation they've shown in brainwave studies that thoughts would be coming, or going.

Interviewee response (Caro):

I found it really difficult. I guess I was like that article¹⁶, I really wanted this. I really needed it, but it wasn't really working for me. So I kind of did that on and off for a couple of years and then I was sitting in the chiropractor reading one of their mind food magazines and there was an article on mindfulness. It was Dr. Hassed (*Craig...oh yeah*). He was talking about it being part of the medicine degree.

Researcher question (Nikki):

Yes, one of my colleagues teaches it.

Interviewee response (Caro):

¹⁶ Earlier in the interview, Caro talked about a section of an article that she read to students in her introductory mindfulness classes: "Yeah, and I found a really good article which I am going to finish reading tonight from my yoga magazine, which talked about a lady who had been trying to meditate for years, but was trying so hard to get it that she never got it [*both laugh*]. Then she said that I'm not going to try anymore and that's when she got it."

So, I was reading that through and thought, "Wow! This sounds like me." So I went home and Googled mindfulness meditation and, yeah, got into it that way.

Researcher question (Nikki):

Did you do any courses or were you just...?

Interviewee response (Caro):

No. I've done, at the mindfulness centre I did an introduction to the parenting one and that's all I've done.

Researcher question (Nikki):

So you learnt through resources and finding out things yourself?

Interviewee response:

Yeah, I'm a reader so I kind of got it.

Researcher question (Nikki):

And then you practised?

Interviewee response (Caro):

Yeah. I did it in my social work degree. I did ...we had to pick either CBT or another therapy to do an essay on (*hmm*) and I said, "Can I do it on MBCT not just CT?" And they said, "Grumble. Grumble," ...I don't know if they knew what it was.

Researcher question (Nikki):

It's MBCT. It's closely related...

Interviewee response:

Yeah ...so I told them that and they said, "Oh, alright." So that gave me a bit more learning as well doing that and then in my final topic we had to do a 5000-word essay on ethics, but also when we went into the work as a social worker what did we want to do, what values all that kind of thing, what did we want to take out and I wrote in there that mindfulness was something I was passionate about and wanted to learn more about and thought that it's something I could bring into any field I was working in (*yep*)...

Researcher question (Nikki):

So you wanted to bring it in and be mindful with the people that you were working with or was it to teach them the skills or both?

Interviewee response (Caro):

Yeah, yep, yep ... all of the above. It was just something that I felt ... I guess so passionate about it back then. I thought, "Man, this could help so many people!" And in the social work field as well.

Researcher question (Nikki):

Oh definitely. I've got a social worker student at the moment and she is doing it specifically, the course, to help other people and it's just such a beautiful thing to bring, isn't it?

Interviewee response (Caro):

Yeah, and look it's not going to work for everyone, like my second class that don't want to come back ... (*laughs*) ... but...

Researcher question (Nikki):

Oh, you don't know, in 10 years [*both laugh*], they might go, "Yes, I did that in high school. It worked really well."

Interviewee response (Caro):

Yeah...but you know it's not for everyone, but I mean I can't imagine living my life without it now so...

Caro shared her story about the integral role mindfulness has played in her life and how her mindful journey involved a process of self-reflection and self-discovery. This process involved going outside (e.g., undertaking courses) and going within (e.g., applying the practice to handling stress associated with university studies). Her personal journey, which is continuing as she undertakes further courses, reflects what Daniella emphasised, that a mindfulness journey involves undertaking a range of activities: such as courses, reading books and most importantly – "living it". Janet wrote:

There are so many paths and ways to practice Mindfulness and Meditation. It is wonderful to find ways that speak to individual hearts and minds... and enliven and inspire personal practice.

The participants' conversations indicate that they do not feel there is one prescriptive

method for learning how to teach children mindfulness. Teachers setting out on this journey need to listen to their own hearts and minds and find their own special and unique way to cultivate a mindful way of being. And finding their own way – making it their own “personal journey” – is an essential step to becoming a mindful role model. They have lived it!

Summary of Main Findings

- Being a mindful role model was central to how teachers made sense of teaching children mindfulness.
- Being a mindful role model requires practising techniques formally and informally and embodying a mindful way of being.
- Deeply connecting with mindfulness was seen as a central element to becoming a mindful role model.
- Participants felt that before teaching children mindfulness, beginner instructors should first connect deeply with the practices by taking a personal mindfulness journey, which they felt required reflecting on a range of mindfulness texts and also taking the time to connect with their own personal wisdom.
- Teachers need to learn both the theory and research related to mindfulness and also how mindfulness is practically implemented in the classroom.
- Teaching is perceived to be stressful and demanding and mindfulness is being used as a panacea to prevent teacher burn-out.
- Teachers may not have the time to commit to formal mindfulness courses; therefore it is helpful if schools can provide mindful teacher education at a *mindful pace*.
- Teachers benefit by having mindfulness supported in the whole school environment.

Summary and Next Chapter

In this chapter I presented findings related to the super-ordinate theme of Being a Mindful Role Model. Within this last super-ordinate theme three sub-themes emerged:

- Incorporating Formal and Informal Practices

- Cultivating a Mindful School
- Mindfulness: A Personal Journey

In the last four chapters, I have reported the main research findings. Each superordinate theme (Spirituality, Creativity, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing and Being a Mindful Role Model) has received its own dedicated chapter. I situated these findings within the context of literature that helped me to explicate and understand how the participants made sense of teaching children mindfulness. In the next chapter, the focus shifts and I discuss the findings within four main contexts: unanticipated results; challenges faced with the integration of mindfulness in school systems; how the findings support mindfulness education research; and using IPA and autoethnography to explore the research question.

Chapter Ten: A Meta-Reflective Discussion

The Unexpected

*Challenges with Integrating
Mindfulness in the Classroom*

*How the Findings Support
Mindfulness Education*

Research

*Epistemology, Methodology
and Methods*

Strengths and Limitations

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I continue to discuss the findings within the context of a variety of literature. However, instead of interacting with texts that assist with understanding and interpreting the participants' meaning making, the "register changes" (J. A. Smith et al., 2009, p. 112) and I shift to reflecting upon: unanticipated results; challenges faced with the integration of mindfulness in school systems; how the findings support mindfulness education research and the epistemology, methodology and methods. All of these reflective points are interconnected and through the process I provide a number of additional recommendations for research and practice. I turn first to discussing results that arose from the exploratory investigation that were unexpected.

The Unexpected

When conducting studies using IPA, researchers usually stumble upon something completely unexpected and this is greeted with a great level of excitement – it is unanticipated territory! (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). For me, two unexpected findings were the use of rituals when teaching children mindfulness and re-defining creativity in relation to modern definitions. In the following sections I reflect on both of these revelations in greater detail and discuss their implications for future research and practice.

Rituals in the Classroom

As I mentioned in Chapter Six, I was quite surprised when Angelica used the word "ritual" in relation to teaching children mindfulness. The term is not often used in education. However, Angelica found that applying ritual behaviour to teach children mindfulness was an effective strategy to help centre, connect and enable students to be in a harmonious place to learn and grow. Her classes' grades jumped and soon her whole school was adopting mindfulness – "the ripple effect", as she termed it.

Rituals have been used for centuries in meditation practices and thus it does seem natural to apply the methods to teaching children mindfulness. Angelica, had not tried any of the mindfulness programs for children available in the marketplace, but thought it would be

interesting to see how a mindfulness program such as Meditation Capsules compared with teaching children through rituals. She found her uniquely created practice to be a simple yet effective way to begin each lesson. Tilly also mentioned that teachers can get overwhelmed by the plethora of programs and techniques available to teach children mindfulness, when all that is needed is a simple practice. Their thoughts and experiences suggest that researchers need to consider how teaching market-based mindfulness programs compares with teaching children a mindful way of being through rituals. Following a whole-systems research epistemology, this would mean understanding various participants' experiences (e.g., teachers, students, parents) and how they interact through a range of research methods, such as interviews, measuring academic performance and observation.

Angelica's desire to understand a best-practice method for teaching children mindfulness additionally underscores the importance of using the term "co-researcher" and "research partner" in place of "participant" at certain intervals during this thesis. My co-researchers had an active and reflective involvement in the study. They were actively engaging and experimenting with how best to share mindfulness with children. They were analysing, interpreting, constructing meaning and evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching practice, otherwise known as being a "reflective-teacher practitioner" (Denford-Wood, 2015, p.13).

Re-defining Creativity

The unexpected also came in the guise of creativity. Creativity was central to how Daniella and Janet made sense of teaching children mindfulness. To recap, I discovered when interpreting and analysing Janet's and Daniella's conversations that their conceptualisation of creativity did not marry well with modern Western or Eastern notions. Traditional Western creativity theories could not adequately explain how they made sense of the concept and Daniella questioned how we commonly define creativity in Western society. This was something I was not expecting or anticipating. I found when exploring literature on the topic that their conversations on creativity connected closely with ancient Eastern conceptualisations of spiritual and mindfulness principles as well as some aspects of a model of creativity by Horan (2007) that integrated yogic philosophy with modern Western conceptions of creativity. However, I found that no one model had the capacity to adequately

depict my co-researchers' perceptions of creativity adequately. I thus, building on various models and philosophies, ancient and modern, devised a preliminary model (called the mindfulness-based holistic model of creativity) in order help to interpret and understand my co-researchers' meaning making.

I wondered whether other researchers had faced a similar dilemma when exploring the relationship between MBW practices and creativity and found that the majority¹⁷ had not. Apart from Horan (2007), only Raina (2013) had theoretically hypothesised that a long-term meditation practice invites a deeper contemplation of the nature of creativity and how we are currently defining it. Much of their theoretical work is supported by the findings of this study.

I believe that these unexpected results in relation to creativity call for an expanded definition and re-conceptualisation of creativity – one that marries the East with the West, the ancient with the modern. When considering creativity, academics have placed considerable emphasis on the end-product. However, results from this study indicate that in order to understand deep levels of creativity, we need to understand the energetic state of the person performing the so-called “creative act”. What are the feelings accompanying the creative process? Is it a process governed by angst, living up to deadlines, being stifled by rules and regulations or conforming to conventions for an end-goal? Can we call the process truly creative if we do not feel a sense of freedom? Horan's model indicates that we need to focus on the vacuous state in order to understand whether people are connecting with a deeper level of creativity. We need to search for signs of self-transcendence, a common state reached in meditation (N. J. Albrecht, 2011a; Harung, Travis, Blank, & Heaton, 2009).

Apart from understanding the forces driving the nature of individual creativity, I have also argued, akin to experts in the field of creativity, that we need to consider creativity holistically. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, in holistic models individual personal properties only form part of the picture when viewing creativity – individual creativity is not seen to exist within a vacuum. A Western holistic approach to creativity acknowledges that individual creativity

¹⁷ See Colzato, Ozturk, and Hommel (2012); Ding, Tang, Tang, and Posner (2014); Domino (1977); Golob, (2014); and Otis, 1974.

influences and is influenced by a range of environmental factors and a person's level of creativity derives from these interacting forces (Cropley, 2001). These findings suggest that we need to continue to explore and uncover the relationship between MBW practices and creativity. As Horan has hypothesised, both modern and ancient Eastern concepts can be accommodated when defining creativity. In the next section, I move on to discussing some of the challenges teachers face when teaching children mindfulness.

Challenges with Teaching Children Mindfulness

When contemplating the findings I discovered a number of challenges and complexities associated with teaching children mindfulness, namely: mindfulness and its connection to spirituality, teaching mindfulness to adolescent boys and mindfulness teacher training. I will now discuss each of these in turn.

Mindfulness and its Connection to Spirituality

In health care settings around the world, the widespread application of mindfulness and meditation has largely been accomplished by presenting the practices in a manner devoid of notions of spirituality (Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003; Gause & Coholic, 2010). A 2007 systematic review of MBW research concluded that the spiritual or belief component of practices is poorly described in the literature and it is additionally unclear what role spirituality or religion play in a successful practice (Ospina et al., 2007).

Findings from the current study demonstrated that spirituality played an important role in how teachers made sense of child-centric mindfulness instruction. This finding stands in contrast to some academic commentary on contemporary mindfulness education (Hyland, 2015), where mindfulness education is stated to be "unequivocally secular in all senses of the term... and make little or no reference to spiritual traditions" (Hyland, 2015, p. 178). However, while spirituality was integral to how many of my co-researchers made sense of teaching children mindfulness, a few of the participants were reluctant to use the term or words that are commonly associated with the concept. This reticence to use spiritual terms or to broach the topic is not uncommon. For example, prominent mindfulness researchers, such as Davidson, Kabat-Zinn and Shapiro shy away from using the term "spirituality". In an interview (see

Photograph 10-1) with mindfulness researchers Kabat-Zinn and neuroscientist Davidson (2014), Kabat-Zinn replied to the interviewer's question, "Is mindfulness a spiritual practice?" as follows:

It depends on what you mean by the term spiritual. I tend to stay away from the term "spiritual" as, you know, as if it had some kind of toxic outpouring because people get very attached to their view of spirituality and they put that in counter distinction to everyone else who is not quite as spiritual as I am.



Photograph 10-1: Davidson Discussing his Views on Spirituality (Kabat-Zinn & Davidson, 2014)

Neuroscientist Davidson replied to the same question, "I don't know what spirituality means". Shauna Shapiro, whose model of mindfulness was discussed in Chapter Two in an interview with Schwartz (2008, p. 3), likewise errs on the side of not mentioning the "toxic" word and allows people to discover the spiritual dimensions of mindfulness and how it relates to their own spiritual and religious beliefs. She wrote:

Part of the reason I'm drawn to mindfulness is that it is so universally applicable that you can taste and touch and feel into the experience of being fully awake and present, while not having to label it as a spiritual experience. (2008, p. 3)

Given that the original intention of meditation was to develop spiritual wisdom (N. J.

Albrecht, 2011a; N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012; Ospina et al., 2008) and that many school communities around the world consider nurturing spiritual wellbeing to be an important aspect of a child's education it seems essential that scholars, instructors and policy makers further investigate and explore the dynamic relationship between mindfulness and spirituality. In order to refine and progress mindfulness education, I suggest that practitioners first explore their own understanding of spirituality and how their personal practice connects with the concept; then reflect on how they approach the topic when teaching and sharing mindfulness with others, taking into account the array of beliefs attributed to the concept.

For example, when teaching students, in the first week of semester, I subtly encourage each person to bring their own belief system, be it atheism or Islam to their MindBody Wellness practice. In five years of teaching thousands of students, there has thankfully never been a "toxic outpouring" and all students have openly supported one another's belief systems. While this idea sounds simple and works in practice, I do not envision that this system of spiritual tolerance will suit everyone. For example, in a study examining the practice of mindfulness as a means of supporting children's wellbeing, Peacock (2015) considers it important that mindfulness in the government education sector be imparted via a secular framework, with the clearly stated purpose of promoting mental and emotional wellbeing. Peacock (2015) believes that "educators need to be sensitive to the vocabulary used throughout a mindfulness exercise, and to use as neutral and as accessible a vocabulary as possible" (p. 152). Peacock is not alone in her views. Len Moskowitz (personal communication, February 25, 2013), an Orthodox Jew who was tasked with developing an introduction to mindfulness for K-12 Jewish schools in the US, expressed the necessity of teaching mindfulness in schools either using a secular framework, where practices or items associated with religions or dogmas are not used, or applying the school's religious framework.

Given the multi-cultural nature of Australia and the high number of children belonging to a religion attending government schools I recommend that mindfulness be shared in a post-secular manner in government schools as a means to educate children about different belief systems, religious tolerance and peace. In faith-based schools how mindfulness is integrated

will be at the discretion of the school community. Evidence from Israel suggests that mindfulness is a gateway to spiritual development and supports religious practice in populations aged 11-16 years (Cobb, Kor, & Miller, 2015). At Caro's Anglican school, Christian meditation, with meditation as a form of prayer and connection to God (a common practice in Australian faith-based schools: see Champion & Rocco (2009); Day and Christie (2008), yoga and mindfulness were all being shared with children. Based on this experience, students may connect meditation and mindfulness with a range of belief systems. I also recommend further research investigating children's perceptions of learning MBW practices within the framework of various belief systems and the influence these frameworks have on their perception of mindfulness and meditation in relation to religion.

For example, a recent investigation of a meditation program in a Catholic school revealed that a child thought "she was doing the wrong thing" when drawing a picture of her meditation experiences. Students had been taught that when meditating, it was a time to connect with God and stop thinking of other things. Children in the study overwhelmingly responded that meditation was "God time" (de Souza, Hyde, & Kehoe, 2014, p. 208). The child in question:

had drawn a Christmas tree and herself with a present but when one researcher approached to look at her drawing, it was almost as if she recalled the purpose of the activity because she used a large black X to cross out both these images and began another one which was supposed to be about God. (de Souza, Hyde, & Kehoe, 2014, p. 208)

It seems that she had connected meditation with a Christian holiday with ritualistic significance. Her family may have attended church services around Christmas and decorated the house with religious symbols; Christmas being a time when those of the Catholic faith often heighten their activities in regards to worship. Therefore, it seems quite a natural and logical association to make and the picture depicts how the ritual activity of meditation triggers memories of other ritualistic behaviour of significance to children. I have to admit my heart went out to this little girl who had crossed out her Christmas tree, thinking she had done the wrong thing. I felt I wanted to undo the damage that had been caused. Based on this example, I recommend investigating how religious practice and spiritual development is connected to and facilitated by mindfulness and meditation instruction in schools.

Teaching Mindfulness to Adolescent Boys

Another challenge associated with teaching children mindfulness related to teaching the practices to boys aged from about 13 to 18 years of age. One of my past students, Kevin Ngo, mentioned that asking this cohort to be at peace and dive into deep contemplation is inviting pandemonium. Mindfully eating sultanas can result in sultana wars (Burnett, 2009) or comparisons to anatomy that will have boys laughing uncontrollably for hours (laughter therapy). However, it is unclear whether the difficulty in teaching some adolescent boys was due to teacher instruction; the teacher's personality; gender; the school's climate or the students being introduced to mindfulness during this stage of development – or a combination of a variety of factors.

For example, a study of a 173 teenage boys at a fee-paying school in the UK revealed that after a four-week period of mindfulness instruction there were found to be no significant differences in mindfulness, resilience or cognitive or emotional wellbeing between the treatment and control group (Huppert & Johnson, 2010). It was also discovered that the boys' personalities affected subjective measures of outcomes. For example, students who showed signs of being more open to new experiences, emotionally stable, less critical, empathetic and conscientious benefited more from mindfulness meditation. When the influence of personality is taken into account the practice was shown to have a significant impact on psychological well-being and mindfulness. Survey responses from the study highlighted other wellness outcomes such as improvements in:

- sleep;
- the ability to cope with stress and anxiety;
- relaxation and feelings of calm;
- anger management; and
- meta-cognition.

Some students remarked that it was nice to have calm and relaxation in an otherwise packed schedule as well as moments of silence. Suggestions for improvement included: greater emphasis on spirituality and practising more *active* forms of meditation and less

walking meditation in freezing weather conditions (Mindfulness in Schools Project, 2010).

The study by Huppert and Johnson (2010) shows that personality may have a significant impact on the receptivity of learning mindfulness, for the first time, during adolescence, and may have nothing to do with gender. For example, when I was retrieving a flyer advertising my course at an open day at university a few years ago, (which had surreptitiously landed on a girl in her late teens), I was greeted by a hostile response. She said, “I don’t want to have anything to do with mindfulness or yoga. That’s something my mother does!” I was quite surprised by this response, but students in my undergraduate course often mention that their parents’ own MindBody Wellness practices influences their decision to take my class and that they want to join with either their mother or father in their yoga or meditation practice and gain a more in-depth understanding of the practices. The girl, who the flyer hit, goals seemed to be focused in the other direction – of distancing herself from her mother’s interests. It may be that people of both sexes, individuals who do not identify with gender, or identify as transgender are not interested in learning mindfulness. Much more research, applying various methodologies is needed in this area to understand how adolescents make sense of learning mindfulness in school environments. A first step needs to be asking the young students themselves!

Mindfulness Teacher Training

During conversations my co-researchers discussed a number of issues related to training teachers in the art of teaching children mindfulness. The issues or challenges were interconnected and related to:

- the amount of personal MindBody Wellness (MBW) practice required to successfully teach mindfulness;
- beginner MBW practitioner teachers struggle to practice techniques when they get stressed at work;
- the enforcement of mindfulness training going against the invitational nature of the practice; and
- teachers’ commitment constraints in relation to learning MindBody Wellness

practices.

I will now discuss these issues in greater depth. The study participants felt that anyone contemplating teaching children mindfulness first needs to immerse themselves in the practice and let mindfulness become a way of being in their own lives. The emphasis placed by my co-researchers on living what one is teaching probably stems from the mass production of mindfulness programs around the world. To borrow and adapt from creativity researcher's Cropley's (2001, p. 3) phrasing, there is too much "fast food mindfulness" – something that is attractively packaged, quickly prepared, easy to serve and goes down well, but offers little real nourishment. An example of a by-line from an advertisement for a children's mindfulness program shows the "fast food" variety at its most alluring: "With the support of our interactive online program, begin teaching mindfulness to youth after a 2-hour online training" (Mindful, 2014, p. 81).

Instead what I discovered when discussing the topic with experienced MBW practitioners was a home-baked recipe. This may not be as appealingly packaged, well marketed or easy to serve up as the fast food variety, but it reflects the special characteristics of the individual who prepares it, is wholesome and fosters healthy growth. The food is rich with flavour, dimension and quirkiness (Cropley, 2001, p. 3). Being a mindful role model was central to how the participants made sense of teaching children mindfulness. This deep level of connection with the "self" they perceived to be an elemental foundation to successfully imparting mindfulness to others.

My co-researchers were spearheading mindfulness teacher training in their schools, but some said that the process was extremely slow. Angelica felt that teachers wanted to learn more about mindfulness and her school was supporting this with in-service training and the establishment of a "breathing room". Tilly said that, "Mindfulness is not something that you can just push and say, 'You must all do this!'" So similar to both Angelica and Caro's experiences, Tilly's school was cultivating mindfulness slowly and not enforcing the practice. Tilly said that as the school term gets busier and busier, teachers new to mindfulness interest wanes. However, she felt that this was the time the techniques would make the most

difference to a teacher's busy life. These reflections are similar in nature to Miller and Nozawa's (2005) discussion on religion and spirituality. J. P. Miller observed during his contemplative education courses that teaching staff would turn to meditation in times of heightened work stress. This perhaps demonstrates that the teaching staff in Miller's university courses internalised mindfulness as a way of being; in contrast to teachers who are new to the practice and learning it slowly in a school environment. Tilly found that beginner MBW practitioner teachers interest in mindfulness, rapidly diminished when life gets overwhelming. More research, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, is needed in this area in order to understand effective ways of training teachers new to the practice.

Teachers also considered it important to practice mindfulness both *informally* and *formally*. And felt that being a mindful role model needed to extend beyond the borders of the self to permeate and incorporate the whole school system. The participants working in school environments wanted to feel supported by a whole-of-school approach to mindfulness. However, this sentiment perhaps contradicts the invitational nature of mindfulness and its potential contradictions. Janet wrote that one of the biggest challenges to teaching mindfulness was the teachers who had been forced to learn mindfulness by the heads of organisations.

The sentiments expressed by participants, in regards to being a mindful role model are reiterated by many members of the mindfulness research community. "The literature consistently stresses the importance of mindfulness teachers having an ongoing experiential engagement with mindfulness meditation practice in addition to theoretical knowledge in order to be an effective teacher" (van Aalderen, Breukers, Reuzel, & Speckens, 2014, p. 170) – developing a mindful presence.

In the original Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, which inspired and catalysed the development of a number of child-centric programs, instructors are required to have an ongoing meditation practice and attend at a minimum one five to ten-day silent, teacher-led insight meditation retreat (Ward, 2010). However, as was seen in the findings section, some of my co-researchers felt that these strict standards are difficult to uphold for

some members of our community, such as working mothers who are also the primary caregivers. Angelica wrote that most teachers do not have the time to commit to a six-week or year-long mindfulness course. And attending a silent retreat for five to ten days may be impossible for teachers with young children, not to mention may pose psychological risks.

As has been stated, my co-researchers felt that teaching children mindfulness, required a dedicated MBW practice. However, a number of school children around the world are learning mindfulness techniques for the first time with their teachers, often with the aid of specialist training (N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012). One program, which is teacher independent and does not require specialist training or teachers to have a committed mindfulness practice was recently evaluated in the US. Researchers explored the effects of using audio-guided mindful awareness training, based on the MBSR program, with students and teachers new to the practice (Bakosh et al., 2015). The creators of the program, who have extensive MindBody Wellness training, felt that using the audio program tackles the perceived practical limitations of having to take a long and extensive journey to become an effective mindfulness teacher (Bakosh et al., 2015), as was recommended by my co-researchers and other practitioners/researchers in the area such as Crane et al. (2012).

Bakosh et al. (2015) conducted their study in two government primary schools in the same town of Chicago over an eight-week period. A total of 191 students participated in the study, 101 males and 90 females, who were undertaking Year 3. Two classes from each school were allocated, per class to the intervention group and two to the control group. The intervention group practised meditation and mindfulness for 10 minutes after lunch each school day, using a range of 35 different tracks. Teachers undertook the training with their class. The researchers focused on understanding how the program affected quarterly grades, classroom behaviour and teaching operations. In the intervention group it was found that quarterly grades improved significantly for two topics, reading and science. No significant difference was found between the control and intervention for maths, writing, spelling or social studies. The program had little to no impact on daily teaching operations, that is, teachers were able to impart the required curriculum content each day and there were no problematic issues associated with the audio training. One teacher in the intervention group also

mentioned that she found students were less distracted, calmer and more focused during the day. And her class reported that she was less stressed and had lower levels of emotional reactivity.

The study's results show that effectively teaching mindfulness in schools does not require classroom teachers to have an extensive and integrated MBW practice. Teachers, with no mindfulness training can and are successfully incorporating a *mindful* way of being with their students. This evidence questions what level of training and competence is needed to implement mindfulness in schools and successfully highlights a further area for future investigation.

Mindfulness practice as a holistic philosophy offers a foundation for a life-long practice with an understanding that the fruits of the practice will take time to unfold, and will often occur in unexpected ways (Gause & Coholic, 2010 p. 8)

How the Findings Support Mindfulness Education Research

So far in this chapter I have reflected upon unanticipated results and the challenges faced with the integration of mindfulness in school systems. Through this discussion it can be seen that texts such as Horan's (2009) model of creativity and the majority of peer-reviewed articles on mindfulness teacher training validate how the participants in this study made sense of teaching children mindfulness, lending external validity to the study's results. I now turn to reviewing in what other ways the results support the literature or conversely show how research in the field supports my findings.

When exploring how the teachers in this study made sense of teaching mindfulness, I found that participants spent a considerable amount of time discussing the positive impact MBW practices had on their own wellbeing and that of the children under their care. These findings correlate with other research in school systems, as well as the wider body of mindfulness literature. There is a well-established connection between mindfulness and wellbeing in both academic and popular literature.

Mindfulness Research with Adult Populations

Research with adults, which commenced during the 1980s, shows a positive correlation between mindfulness meditation and a wide range of wellness outcomes, ranging from improvements in blood pressure to the ability to deal with stress at work (N. J. Albrecht, 2011a). In a review of 52 exemplars of empirical and theoretical mindfulness research,

Greeson (2009) found that clinical trials and laboratory studies alike suggest that the mechanism of mindfulness involves relaxation, shifts in cognition, emotion, biology and behaviour that may work synergistically to improve health. Similar to the current study's findings, a mindfulness practice was also noted to be associated with greater meaning, purpose and peace (spiritual aspects) in one's life as well as enhanced relationships (Greeson, 2009). In addition, individuals who regularly engage in mindfulness were shown to be more consciously aware of and engaged in other positive health behaviours, such as eating a healthy diet and undertaking regular exercise (Gilbert & Waltz, 2010). This finding reported by Gilbert and Waltz (2010) was supported in the current research – mindfulness was perceived by teachers as one strategy amongst many to nourish wellbeing, indicating that some instructors were aware of and participating in a range of wellness-enhancing behaviours.

Mindfulness Research with Teachers

Researchers exploring the impact of mindfulness in teacher populations have predominately focused on investigating how the practice affects teachers who are new to learning mindfulness techniques. Studies using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies show that a mindfulness practice has wide-ranging wellness-enhancing effects (Weare, 2014; Kwon, 2015) and is critical in maintaining teacher wellbeing (Kwon, 2015). A regular practice has been found to:

- reduce self-reported and objective measurements of stress (N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013);
- decrease emotional exhaustion (Flook et al., 2013);
- heighten feelings of self-compassion (Flook et al., 2013);
- help teachers cultivate compassion for others (Kwon, 2015);
- assist with creating positive learning environments (Burrows, 2011b; Jean-Baptise, 2014; Kaltwasser et al., 2014);
- raise teacher self-esteem (N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012);
- assist with behaviour management strategies (N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012; Kwon, 2015) and classroom organisational skills (Gold et al., 2010; Flook et al., 2013); and

- enhance relationships with parents (Kwon, 2015) and students (Jean-Baptise, 2014).

Similar to Kwon's (2015) study, I found that a regular MindBody Wellness practice was critical to my co-researchers' wellbeing and also essential in providing a firm foundation for student learning. My co-researchers connected MBW practices with synergistically enhancing a child's physical, emotional, cognitive, creative, environmental, social and spiritual wellbeing and felt that it was important to teach mindfulness from a holistic perspective. They also believed that teaching children mindfulness allowed for a deeper level of connection amongst students and between students and teachers. As Angelica, poignantly remarked, mindfulness enables, "connection of a different kind". The teachers saw this whole class connection as a foundation for effective learning, which corresponds with findings in qualitative research undertaken with novice mindfulness practitioners. Burrows (2011b) in a study exploring school staff experiences of learning mindfulness over a six-week period found that a mindfulness practice enabled teachers to foster a positive learning environment. Results from the study suggest that becoming more aware of thoughts, feelings and the body's reactions facilitated self-regulation skills and the capacity for a calm and focused mind – a mind with the openness, responsiveness and sensitivity for optimal teaching, guiding and learning (Burrows, 2011b, p. 29).

However, while teachers were valiantly attempting to create effective and harmonious environments that support the whole of a child's wellbeing, mindfulness was also being used as a panacea for stress in the system – much like an aspirin is taken to relieve the pain of a headache. This evidence, I feel suggests that we need to investigate and remedy the underlying causes of unproductive stress, stress that affects both students and teachers. One teacher, Tilly, expressed that as a society we value being "busy" and as such some of the structures we have created may be actively working against approaching life from a more harmonious and balanced perspective. These sentiments echo those expressed by Kwon's (2015) study participants.

This view while not prominent in the literature is acknowledged and discussed. Purser and

Milillo (2015) argue that the “mindfulness movement has yet to engage in seriously questioning as to why stress is so pervasive” in institutions (p. 14). They explain:

...corporations have jumped on the mindfulness bandwagon because it conveniently shifts the burden on to the individual employee: stress is framed as a personal problem, and mindfulness-based interventions are offered as means of helping employees cope and work more effectively and calmly within such toxic environments. Cloaked in an aura of care and humanity, this corporate takeover refashions mindfulness as a safety valve, a way to let off steam and as a way of coping and adapting to the stresses and strains of corporate life. ...Mindfulness training has wide appeal because it can be utilized as a method for subduing employee unrest, promoting a tacit acceptance of the corporate status quo, and as an instrumental tool for keeping attention focused on corporate goals. (p. 14)

The authors (2015, p. 14) then proceed to give examples of “misuse” of mindfulness in the military and private enterprise – the practice being used to support 80-hour work weeks and pivotal skills to kill the enemy – all conveniently “commodified and cloaked in an aura of care” (Purser & Milillo, 2015, pp. 13-14). Materialist values of greed, competition, security and control have been given legitimacy by a scholarly community with a myopic vision focused on “parts” that are palatable to organisations focused on exploitation and dominance (Purser & Milillo, 2015).

Some people claim that as mindfulness training infiltrates these organisations with materialist values, corporate values and decision making will in turn be transformed. Purser and Milillo (2015) think this notion may be misguided:

...Monsanto – widely criticized for its genetically modified crops, patenting of seed stock, domination of the world food supply, and production of Agent Orange – is supposedly, because of its recent adoption of individual-oriented mindfulness training, on its way to becoming a more compassionate and sustainable organization. The corollary to this argument is that transformational change starts with oneself; if one can change one’s mind to be more calm, peaceful, focused, and equanimous, social and organizational transformation will naturally follow. The problem with this formulation is that the three unwholesome roots – greed, ill will/aversion, and delusion – are no longer confined to individual minds but have been amplified by forces of neoliberalism and globalization (Loy, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2013). (p. 14)

Schools are, however, different institutions to the military and private enterprise; for one, their aims and goals vary markedly from organisations such as Monsanto. Teachers in the current study did not perceive mindfulness as simply a means to enhance “score

performance”, but believed it could synergistically enhance all dimensions of wellness: physical, emotional, cognitive, creative, environmental, social and spiritual.

Since around the late 1990s, in a number of countries around the world, frameworks and policies have been established that encourage schools to nurture a child’s whole wellbeing (N. J. Albrecht, 2014; Government of South Australia, 2006). One study participant, Angelica, expressed in her journal that “at the moment empathy and connection are just words on a page in many schools. There’s a communal numbness. My hope is that teaching and learning about wellness will change this.” Teaching children MBW techniques, the goals of which are perceived to closely align “with the twenty-first century notion of schooling” (Waters, Barsky, Ridd, & Allen, 2014, p. 106), arguably could act as a vehicle for realising educational policy in practice – moving beyond rhetoric. In the participants’ cases it was not the school’s management implementing change, but the roots of the organisation – the teachers.

However, while some teachers in this study felt that teaching children mindfulness enabled educational policy to be actualised, others felt that explicitly teaching mindfulness was difficult to fit in amongst all the other curriculum demands. As each school, state and nation’s educational policy will be different, researchers need to investigate and document how policy supports or does not support the integration of mindfulness. The participants also expressed that actualising the demands of policy in the classroom is one of the underlying causes of teacher stress. Learning mindfulness has been found to reduce perceptions of stress in relation to educational policy (N. J. Albrecht et al., 2012). However, as all teachers in this study had an active and long-term MBW practice it may be that the practice is supporting excessive work demands placed on teachers, as they all reported and showed signs of being overburdened by work demands. I personally feel it is important that mindfulness not be used as a tool to support exploitative working practices.

Mindfulness Research with Children

A number of studies have also been conducted with children to understand how they make sense of learning mindfulness for the first time. Their insights connect closely with the current study’s findings as well as the wider body of literature on the topic. For example, in a

study that explored the perceptions of approximately 50 children and adolescents aged from eight to 15 years, who voluntarily took part in a 12-week arts-based mindfulness program, it was found, during interviews, that the children felt mindfulness was a worthwhile activity that contributed positively to their wellbeing (Coholic, 2011). Children expressed improvements in:

- academic achievement;
- knowledge in regards to emotions;
- the ability to regulate emotions;
- paying attention and focus;
- self-efficacy, which lead to the ability to stand up to bullies;
- relaxation;
- empathy; and
- compassion.

These findings correspond with those published by other mindfulness practitioner-researchers working with youth (e.g., Arthurson, 2015; Bakosh et al., 2015; Cruchon, 2009; Hooker & Foder, 2008; Joyce, ETTY-Leal, Zazryn, Hamilton, & Hassed, 2010; Kuby, McLean, & Allen, 2015; Hahn & Plum Village Community, 2011; Whitehead, 2011).

One child in Coholic's (2011) study quite profoundly stated that she was able to appreciate the beauty of her inner being (Coholic, 2011). This comment, in my opinion, connects closely with the perceptions of Nima, Angelica's student. To recap, Nima said, "It's like my heart was broken into 2 pieces. But when I come here I think of loving kindness and it's like my heart gets back into one big piece." A mindfulness practice seems to have the capacity to nurture a child's spiritual wellbeing.

Apart from nourishing spiritual wellbeing, a central theme found in Coholic's (2011) study was that students felt mindfulness lessons were "fun". A similar result was discovered in a study by Ager et al. (2015) when analysing Year 2 and Year 5 students' mindfulness journals. This is something generally not mentioned in studies related to adult learners. Similarly, in the current study, some of my co-researchers said that children had fun in their mindfulness classes and teachers were continually creating engaging and stimulating lessons that would motivate children.

It was also brought to light in Ager and colleagues' (2015) study that the practices enhanced not only the wellbeing of students who were participating in the program, but also their families (Ager et al., 2015). Children did not stop thinking about and practising mindfulness when they left the school yard, but started teaching their parents and siblings. My co-researcher Daniella also found that children became the teachers to their parents; they were teaching them to slow down and not to judge. It seems that children when learning mindfulness want to help their caregivers and siblings learn the skills and create a home environment that supports a mindful way of being.

Ager et al. (2015) also found that practising mindfulness enhanced students' awareness and knowledge of wellness concepts and enabled the development of strategies to influence their own wellbeing independently and positively (Ager et al., 2015). For example, in the journals, a number of children referred to using the "pause button" and breathing to self-regulate. The journals additionally indicated that mindfulness activities fostered: connection with each wellness dimension in a more meaningful way; deep reflection; self-trust; responsibility; and love. These results substantiate what teachers in the current study were trying to accomplish by teaching children mindfulness. They were attempting to nourish a whole of a child's wellbeing and enable students to build a "personal ballast" that would sustain them through life's challenges and adventures.

The findings from this study combined with previous research in the area lends support to the use of wellness frameworks when teaching, learning and researching mindfulness, such as in the case of the mindfulness-based wellness education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (see Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Poulin, 2009; Poulin, Mackenzie, Soloway, & Karayolas, 2008). In the following section I conclude the discussion chapter by reflecting on the epistemology, methodology and methods used in this thesis.

A Reflection on the Epistemology, Methodology and Methods

Epistemology, methodology and methods drive the process of data gathering and the creation of knowledge. They hold distinct functions, yet are interconnected, with each one

informing the others. The researcher needs to ensure that these three elements are coherent and commensurable throughout the entirety of the research project and clearly outlined during the reporting stage (Carter & Little, 2007). Ensuring, reflecting and reporting on this cohesiveness is said to be a hallmark of qualitative rigour (Carter & Little, 2007). To recap, the epistemology guiding the current research was whole systems mindful enquiry, the methodology was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) combined with the autoethnographic method of personal story-telling and data was gathered using: demographic information (see Appendix E & F), interviews and data illustrative of a teacher's practice, such as unpublished materials, worksheets, journals and photos (see Figure 10-1).

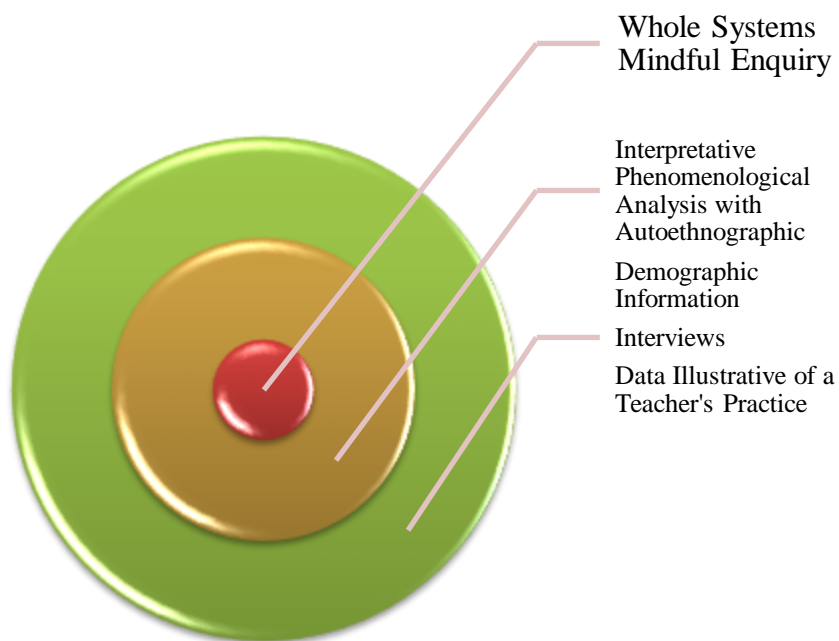


Figure 10-1: Epistemology, Methodology and Methods Guiding the Research Process

In the design process of this research project I made a number of innovations in regards to the epistemology, methodology and methods in order to undertake research in a manner that aligned with my values, ethics and preferred ways of gathering wisdom. These involved: the development of an epistemology that built on other paradigms; extending IPA with an autoethnographic method and using wellness coaching principles to guide the interview

process. In this section I will reflect on the cohesiveness between the epistemology, methodology and methods and the limitations and highlights related to applying the methodology and methods.

Cohesiveness of the Epistemology, Methodology and Methods

There was a high level of connectivity between the epistemology, methodology and methods in the design and implementation of this research project, which enabled the data gathering process to proceed fluidly. As mentioned earlier, I devised an epistemological guideline by blending aspects of whole systems thinking with a holistic relational enquiry paradigm (see Burrows, 2011a). I outlined the approach in Chapter One and, as a reminder, some of the key factors that combine to form a whole systems mindful enquiry paradigm are presented once again in Figure 10-2. When subscribing to this epistemology, key principles that the researcher needs to keep in mind during the research process are: maintain and cultivate a mindful presence throughout the data gathering process and during the interpretation stage; sustain a holistic and flexible perspective; and recognise that knowledge is co-created.

The essence of whole systems mindful enquiry was highly compatible with the epistemic content of IPA in that it respects and acknowledges: that researchers research *with* people rather than *to* people; knowledge is co-created; there are multiple ways of knowing, such as the use of the intuitive senses; the necessity of keeping an open mind; interactions with others are dynamic and unpredictable; data gathering is holistic; the interpretation of wisdom requires a mindful way of being; observing and understanding the whole, the parts and the interconnection between the parts (J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

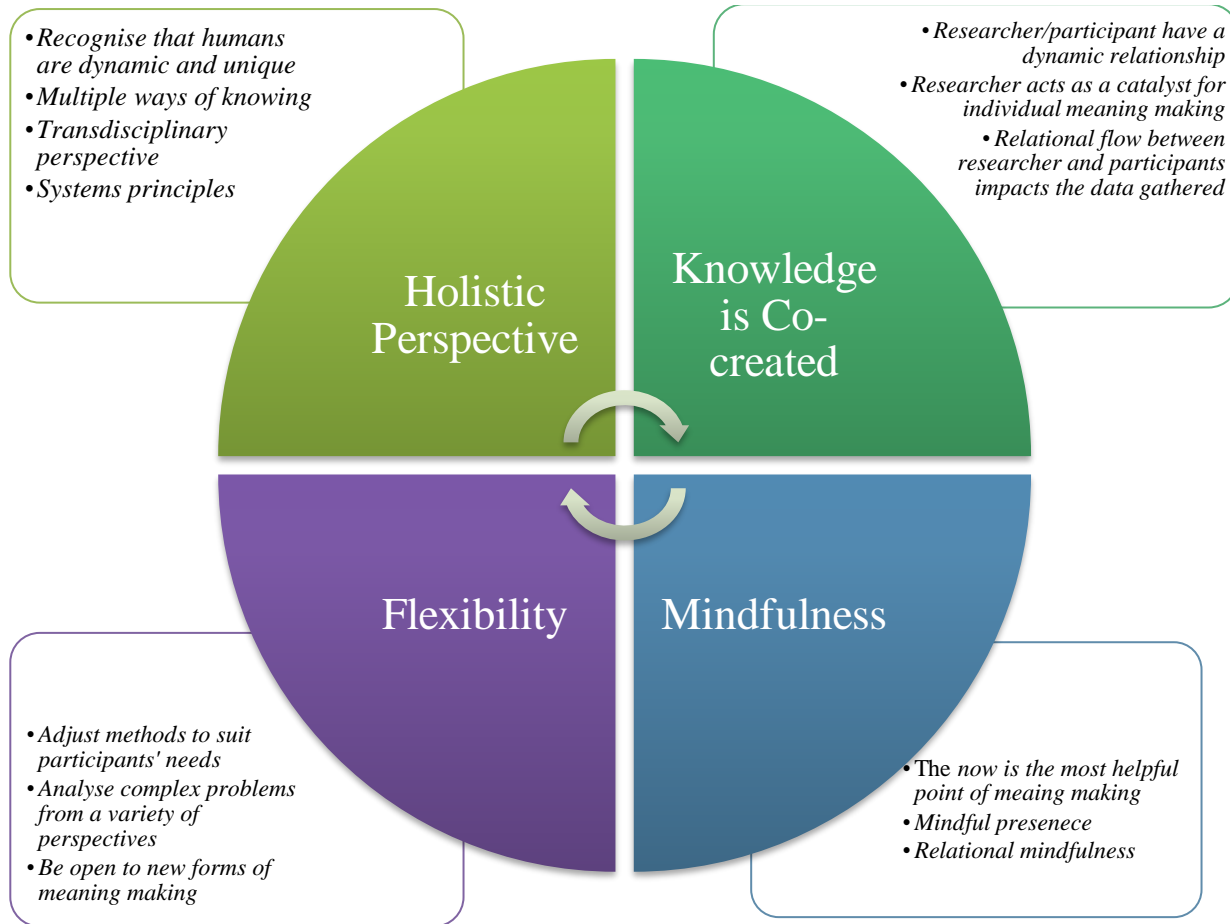


Figure 10-2: Whole Systems Mindful Enquiry Paradigm

The epistemology further resonated with the topic being researched – mindfulness education. I applied mindfulness principles and a holistic perspective to understand this multidimensional construct. Much of the research in the field of mindfulness education has been undertaken within the field of psychology (Bishop et al., 2004); however, taking a transdisciplinary outlook enables the reader or investigator to understand how mindfulness interacts with a range of discipline content and also transcends that content. In my opinion, it gives the impetus for mindfulness to be explored from a more expansive and holistic framework.

The epistemology was also infused within the methods used to gather teacher wisdom. For example, using wellness coaching principles to help guide the interview process offered a practical means to implement whole systems mindful enquiry, as many wellness coaching methods are similar to a holistic relational enquiry paradigm. Additionally, giving teachers a range of options for interview participation, that is, face to face (if geographically possible), phone, email or Skype further enabled participants to be empowered and take an active role in the research process. The option to communicate in a variety of ways also accommodates the various means by which many people in our society communicate and allowed teachers, if they wanted, to ponder and contemplate my questions, in some cases over a two-to-three-month time period. In the next section I go on to discuss highlights and limitations related to the methodology and methods.

Limitations and Highlights Related to the Methodology and Methods

Using IPA complemented with autoethnography exceeded my initial expectations and connected closely with the spiritual essence of my being, something that I was not anticipating. The methodologies enabled me to capture the essence of teachers' meaning making – to relive moments in time that were pivotal to how they made sense of teaching children mindfulness, as well as witness how they constructed new ways of perceiving the topic as the interview process evolved. Contemplating the data became a part of the fabric of my daily life. Moments playing with my niece and nephew would suddenly trigger new ways of perceiving teachers' wisdom and time spent meditating on their words invited deep insight and transcendent moments – where the core of my being would energetically reverberate with the essence of their experience and meaning making. Using the word, “spiritual” to describe my perception and experiences of using the methodologies is thus not a flamboyant gesture, but an honest account of the way I felt when engaging with

participants.

Autoethnography enabled me to take the journey with my co-researchers authentically, rather than being a distanced onlooker. I aimed for authorial *presence*, rather than *absence*, the latter being the norm in traditional forms of academic writing and IPA. The application of autoethnographic methods has thus heightened one of IPA's goals to research "close" rather than at a distance. In so doing it allows the reader to engage with the text and view the research from a holistic perspective; rather than a one-sided account from a distanced and unknown source. This in turn fulfils another of IPA's goals, to write in an engaging manner. Using the method of storytelling allowed me to show my unique ways of thinking, feeling and intuiting, offering a glimpse of some of the many experiences that have shaped my own worldview. Storytelling additionally facilitated the interpretation of teachers' texts. It further helped me to convey when my conditioned belief systems were negatively impacting upon a clear and uncluttered interpretation of teacher's texts, such as in the case of Angelica's rituals.

There were many highlights to using IPA and autoethnography; however, some of the questions that often came to mind during the research journey were:

- Is this the way all experienced MBW practitioners feel about teaching children mindfulness?
- How do these findings apply to other teachers?
- Are the results indicative of the field at large?

I feel as if these findings may be applicable to many teachers in the field; however, perhaps not all. My co-researchers in the main had a commonality that united their stories. The mindfulness practices they shared with children evolved from an inextricably linked matrix of insights and wisdom derived from a range of sources, namely:

- counsel and information from various cultures, religions, philosophies and meditation practices;
- mindfulness texts and other literature;
- personal meditation, practice and contemplation, to see what "fits" or is congruent with her own internal wisdom;
- children's feedback from classes; and

- discussion with other instructors and teachers.

I think the findings might have been quite different if had I interviewed groups who held strong religious or philosophical beliefs, such as Judaism or Buddhism. However, there may be core elements that link religious groups in regards to how they make sense of teaching children mindfulness and I believe using IPA to compare groups of teachers who hold strong religious beliefs is another area worthy of exploration. It is an area of research that may help to develop an expanded view of how teachers who are experienced mindfulness practitioners makes sense of teaching children mindfulness.

An area where I felt the IPA methodology imposed some limitations was in regards to recommended techniques for interviewing. The interview is considered to be a one-sided conversation, where the researcher is endeavouring to prompt experiential details, interesting narratives and conceptual frames of understanding, rather than eliciting natural interactions (J. A. Smith et al., 2009). Thus while the conversations did in some respects mimic my natural interactions with teachers teaching mindfulness with children, I believe I was also presented with a “rosier” side of the picture by some participants. Perhaps analogous to the situation where you dress up for an outing, rather than put your cosy and comfortable old clothes on. I was perhaps viewing the dressed up version. However, other participants came to the interview in their ugg boots and “tracky” pants. This is perhaps a limitation of a number of methodologies. Research has shown that people being studied may be inclined to report mostly what is to their own advantage or what they think the researcher would like to hear (Cropley, 2001, p. 19).

Additionally, in the current research project, material illustrative of practice was included in the analysis stage, supplementing interviews. Material collected ranged from reports conducted by other researchers to personal journals. When this material was supplied by teachers it helped give depth and provided a “more rounded” account of teachers’ experiences. Further, using methods of triangulation to seek convergence, corroboration or correspondence (Verhoef & Vanderheyden, 2007) may be important when understanding and verifying the perspectives of individuals, van Aalderen et al. (2014) noted.

It has also been suggested that the dominant scientific paradigm of a “third person approach”, meaning the creation of knowledge based on observations or interviews, is not

compatible with grasping the intricacies of mindfulness (Schmidt & Kupper, 2012). “A first person experience can never be fully caught in language” (Schmidt & Kupper, 2012, p.172). Words are used to describe an experience, but they obviously are not the experience that they attempt to describe (Roberts, 1972, p. 81). In the current study I have attempted to capture and relate the essence of some aspects of teachers’ mindfulness practice. It is hoped that the beliefs and insights that underpin teachers’ words resonate with the reader’s imagination and that he or she is able to paint their own personal picture, one that transcends the limitations of our language.

In this discussion chapter I have reflected upon: unanticipated results; challenges faced with the integration of mindfulness in school systems; how the findings support mindfulness education research; and issues related to epistemology, methodology and methods. In the next chapter, the conclusion, I move on to: summarising the main findings and recommendations; discussing the implications of the findings in terms of developing frameworks, theories and models to guide our understanding of mindfulness research and practice as well as educational policy; and considering the implications arising from the way in which I conducted research.

Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

Introduction

*Summary of Findings
and Recommendations*

Implications

Concluding Statement

Introduction

Since the new millennium, child-based mindfulness practices have moved from the margins to the mainstream (Todd & Ergas, 2015). The purpose of the current study was to explore this growing phenomenon from the teacher's perspective – listening to teachers who have an established and regular MindBody Wellness practice combined with two or more years of experience teaching children mindfulness. The research question posed was, “How do teachers who are experienced MindBody Wellness (MBW) practitioners make sense of teaching children mindfulness?” The question centred on personal meaning and sense making in a particular context for people who share a common experience.

Research exploring the topic is in the infancy stage, but growing at a rapid pace. In 2014, approximately 36% of original mindfulness studies (approximately 100 peer-reviewed articles) were conducted with either children or in school systems. While the body of research investigating the experiences of teachers or children new to mindfulness has grown rapidly over the years (Weare, 2013, 2014), there are still few published studies where authors listen to the wisdom of teachers, *teachers* who have experience teaching children mindfulness.

For this research project, I wanted to focus on listening to teacher wisdom. I felt that the research community, policy makers and practitioners alike could learn and benefit from the telling and interpretation of experienced instructors' stories. The dominant outcomes-based mindset, considered to be the “gold standard” in research has led to the assumption “that the *ingredients* of an intervention are significantly more important than the *person* delivering the ingredients” (McCown et al., 2011, p. 26). Thus, the pedagogy of mindfulness has been neglected in favour of determining the efficacy of programs (McCown et al., 2011). In order to restore balance to this research area, I gave the *person*, the *teacher*, centre stage.

In order to listen to and elicit teachers' wisdom I interviewed eight teachers from Australia and the United States (one male and seven females). Participants' teaching experience in schools and out-of-school care settings varied from two years to 25 years. The teachers all had a regular mindfulness practice, but at a minimum, they also practised one other modality, such as yoga or guided imagery. In addition to giving interviews the teachers also

provided demographic information and in some cases, data illustrative of their practice, such as unpublished materials, worksheets, journals and photos. The epistemology and methodology underpinning this study played an integral role in collecting this data and were crucial elements in travelling to the depth of teachers' wisdom.

In this final chapter I briefly summarise the main findings and recommendations made during the thesis. I then proceed to discuss the implications of the findings in terms of developing frameworks, theories and models to guide our understanding of mindfulness research and practice as well as educational policy. Next I move on to considering the implications arising from the way in which this research was conducted.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

From listening to and interpreting teachers' experiences it is clear that having a personal MindBody Wellness (MBW) practice catalysed the integration of the whole person – his or her mind, body and spirit. Regular, long-term practice led to enhanced levels of wellbeing and connection to the self, others and the planet. Participants, having personally experienced the benefits of MBW techniques felt an inclination to share their wisdom with others, especially children. This phenomenon corresponds with theoretical models of mindfulness (Shapiro et al., 2006), Buddhist philosophy (Hardin, 2011) and research in the field (McKenzie, Hassed, & Gear, 2012; Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). These studies have shown that a person's intentions for practice shift along a continuum of enhanced wellbeing, moving from concerns consumed with the self to an expanded worldview where the individual considers how and in what way his or her actions can benefit the wider community (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).

The inclination to share mindfulness with the school community was generally supported and encouraged; however, when it was not, teachers moved to workplaces where a mindful way of being was valued. Being able to teach mindfulness to children and colleagues further heightened participants' sense of wellbeing and enabled teachers to feel at home in their work environment, creating a conducive environment for learning and being. However, a majority of participants found that some of the rules and conventions governing educational practice were antithetical to cultivating a mindful way of being in the classroom.

Participants emphasised the importance of teaching mindfulness holistically and nourishing the whole of a child's wellbeing. They felt that there were many ways to approach child-centric mindfulness instruction. However, in general, it was the participants' opinion that anyone considering teaching children mindfulness should first come to know and live the practice in his or her own life.

I found after approximately one year spent analysing and contemplating teachers' texts, that four inter-connected super-ordinate themes captured the essence of how the teachers made sense of child-based mindfulness instruction:

- Spirituality
- Creativity
- Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing
- Being a Mindful Role Model.

Within each super-ordinate theme lay inextricably connected sub-themes that formed the essence of teachers' meaning making. Within the super-ordinate theme of Spirituality, four sub-themes emerged:

- The Devotional Nature of Practice
- Connection
- Workplace Spirituality
- Rituals.

The theme of Creativity reverberated to varying degrees throughout participants' texts with three sub-themes emerging:

- Defining Creativity
- Creativity in Motion
- A Congenial Environment.

Within the super-ordinate theme of Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing, four sub-themes emerged:

- Teaching Students Mindfulness at a Young Age
- Holistic Vision
- Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing
- The Learning Environment.

Within the super-ordinate theme of Being a Mindful Role Model, three sub-themes emerged:

- Incorporating Formal and Informal Practices
- Cultivating a Mindful School
- Mindfulness: A Personal Journey.

Throughout this thesis I and my co-researchers made a number of suggestions to advance and refine mindfulness education practice, policy and research and the way in which we conduct research. In the following section I briefly summarise some of these recommendations.

Progressing Mindfulness Practice, Policy and Research

Spirituality, creativity and wellness were central to how my co-researchers made sense of teaching children mindfulness and play an integral role in mindfulness education. These concepts, like mindfulness attract multiple interpretations. Therefore, when teaching and researching mindfulness, where possible they need to be clearly defined and represent a range of perspectives, including those of the researcher and/or teacher. Further, as a research community we need to explore in greater depth the relationship between the concepts. For example, asking questions such as, “How does mindfulness impact creativity in the classroom?”

Teachers in this study felt that commercially available mindfulness programs are sometimes complex and can overwhelm both beginner and advanced MindBody Wellness (MBW) practitioners and teachers. They recommend that teachers who are new to the practices first need to learn and integrate MBW practices in their own life before sharing them with others. Once they have this solid foundation, teachers can then start teaching children mindfulness by introducing basic concepts, such as starting with a mindful pause or mindful silence. However, the study by Bakosh and colleagues (2015) questions how much MBW practice a teacher requires if pre-recorded mindfulness instructions are used for short intervals of time. One participant in this study thought that it would be interesting to compare a teacher's own natural integration of the concepts in the classroom to implementing a pre-packaged program. I advise analysing and understanding the differences between alternate ways of teaching mindfulness to advance this field of wisdom.

There were a number of factors in the learning environment that negatively impacted the integration of mindfulness in school environments. These included toxic work cultures, high noise levels and a lack of dedicated spaces to meditate. Tackling these issues will be important for the successful integration of mindfulness. A factor that needs dedicated exploration is how best to approach mindfulness instruction during adolescence. One of my participants found teaching this age group challenging, a perspective that was also supported by a student in my undergraduate university course, "Introduction to MindBody Wellness". My student, Kevin, who was exposed to meditation during his high school years, wrote that he did not like practising meditation at school due to peer pressure. Results from this study and other studies suggest that some adolescent boys do not find school or out-of-school settings conducive to practising mindfulness. Understanding this cohort's perspectives will be instrumental to future mindfulness research and practice.

Also highlighted in this study was the need to understand how mindfulness relates to other educational practice, pedagogies and policies. Questions such as, "How does mindfulness assist other educational methods?" and "How does a mindfulness practice help with becoming a reflective-teacher practitioner?" warrant further investigation. My co-researchers had mixed opinions about how a mindfulness practice connects with educational policy. A number of participants, working in government schools within the same state of Australia, felt that there was not sufficient support for teaching mindfulness.

This draws attention to the need to understand the relationship between mindfulness and educational policy and whether there is sufficient classroom time allocated to cultivating mindfulness.

Rix and Bernay (2014) found that a mindfulness practice made a “strong contribution to the key competencies outlined in the New Zealand curriculum” (p. 201) when investigating the impact of an eight-week mindfulness program conducted with six to 11 year olds together with six classroom teachers. The mindfulness program (developed by the researcher, Rix), aligned with the New Zealand curriculum and was underpinned by a Māori model of *hauora* (holistic wellbeing). This research underscores the importance of embedding, formally outlining and teaching how a mindfulness practice connects with established curriculum documents, wellness frameworks and professional teaching standards.

The Australian state of New South Wales appreciating the importance of mindfulness in education, now officially recognises the practice as a key to enhancing wellness in its most recently published wellbeing framework (NSW Government, 2015). This trend is occurring worldwide. For example, in Bhutan, mindfulness education is currently being implemented across the country’s education sector in an effort to cultivate: deep critical and creative thinking; understanding of the country’s ancient wisdom and culture; contemplative learning; civic engagement; as well as a holistic understanding of the world (J. P. Miller, 2010). Buddhist monks work together with the education department and a university to educate the youth in their forgotten heritage. There are a myriad of ways mindfulness enables the actualisation of a school, state or nation’s educational policy and pedagogy – understanding, researching and documenting these links will be critical to the world-wide progression of child-based mindfulness instruction.

Recommendations Related to the Way We Conduct Research

So far I have summarised a number of recommendations related to progressing mindfulness practice, policy and research that were discussed during the thesis. However, in previous chapters I also made a number of suggestions about the way we conduct research, including: collecting and reporting on teacher demographic information, something that has been missing in many past studies in the area; considering and reporting on interview techniques; supplementing interviews with data illustrative of a

teacher's practice; and where feasible using triangulation methods.

I also recommend in order to enhance qualitative rigour, that researchers: 1) ensure and explicitly articulate the commensurability between the methods, methodology and epistemology that underpin the research study; 2) apply broad criteria established for qualitative research, such as those proposed by Elliot et al., (1999) and Tracy (2010); and 3) adopt method-appropriate criteria, a method which takes into account the nuances and differences between qualitative approaches (Flick, 2014).

In the next section I take a global perspective of the thesis and offer some overarching implications for research, practice and policy. The first implication I discuss relates to models, theories and frameworks that may help guide our understanding of mindfulness practice and research.

Implications

Developing Frameworks, Theories and Models to Guide our Understanding of Mindfulness Research and Practice

Child-centric mindfulness instruction in mainstream educational settings is a recent phenomenon. From this research it is clear that teachers draw on a range of approaches when teaching children mindfulness. Some are influenced by ancient and time-honoured practices and philosophical traditions, such as ringing the Tibetan singing bowl, whereas others draw on more recent practices, such as mindfully blowing bubbles. As a result of these factors, the field is in the early stages of understanding and discovering what philosophies, theories and models can best guide research and practice. It may be, as was the case in the current research (with the design of the Mindfulness-based Holistic Model of Creativity, see Chapter 7), that we need to blend ancient with modern wisdom in order to understand the depths of this new force in education.

Apart from creating a new model to help interpret and understand participants' experiences, I also drew on a number of perspectives, models and theories from a variety of disciplines. They included: Buddhist concepts; a psychological model of mindfulness practice; wellness and creativity theory; post-secular views of spirituality and ritual behaviour. I see the application of these models and theories as only the beginning in building a knowledge base for this area. There may be many more applicable theories from a diverse range of fields, such as neuroscience, social justice, peace education and

behaviour management theory. As with other disciplines, a range of theories and models may be needed to make sense of the phenomenon of mindfulness in education.

Even though we are in the early stages of gathering wisdom on this topic, I posit that wellness may serve as a suitable overarching post-secular framework (see Chapter Five for an outline of this; also N. J. Albrecht, 2014) to help guide our understanding of mindfulness practice and research, for both adults and children. This does not mean dispensing with other models or philosophical perspectives, but housing them within the context of wellness. For example, religious or philosophical belief systems, could be viewed within the context of the spiritual dimension of wellness. As Shapiro recommends in an interview with Schwartz (2008, p. 3), this would enable individuals to discover the spiritual dimensions of mindfulness as it relates to their own spiritual and religious beliefs. Likewise, Buddhist concepts and doctrines such as the Four Noble Truths and the relief of suffering that ground and gave the initial impetus for secular adult mindfulness practices could also be viewed within the spiritual dimension and guide a person's mindfulness practice, if they or their teacher so chooses.

Adopting a wellness perspective invites the teacher to recognise that individuals have a variety of perspectives and strong belief systems and these belief systems shape the way they practice and identify with mindfulness, but are not necessarily in opposition to other ways of making sense of mindfulness. For example, an individual who identifies with a religious group and follows its teachings may also find it helpful to understand the creative potential of mindfulness through the Mindfulness-based Holistic Model of Creativity.

However, the picture becomes more complicated when teaching children. This is due largely to how adults view children should learn about religious and spiritual matters. In countries such as Australia, children are usually educated about religion at school or at home and this education varies markedly depending on the parents and the school community. The exploration and analysis of various mindfulness literature during this thesis indicated that mindfulness is being used as: 1) a vehicle to enhance faith and 2) as a means to educate children about other faith systems in a non-proselytising manner. Encouraging and enhancing subscription to one particular faith group through mindfulness may be problematic for schools if they have either post-secular or secular frameworks. For example, if a school aims to encourage and respect students' different faith groups or cultural notions of spirituality (which are most likely enforced and promulgated by their

parents), it follows that mindfulness needs to be taught in a way that respects a multitude of belief systems. If on the other hand, the school's mission is secular in nature and does not aim to teach about different religions or faith groups' belief systems then ideally mindfulness needs to be conveyed without the reliance on the symbols and doctrines that accompany a particular faith group.

Len Moskowitz (personal communication, February 25, 2013), an Orthodox Jew, who was tasked with developing an introduction to mindfulness for K-12 Jewish schools in the US for over 200,000 students, views this area as particularly problematic. He believes that many people who are involved with teaching mindfulness come from a Buddhist or yoga/Hindu background and that these teachers inadvertently or purposely bring Buddhist or yoga/Hindu content, such as having an altar or chanting into their teaching methods. Moskowitz affirms that for religious audiences and communities, that is, any person belonging to a religion, mindfulness must be presented in a way that is either strictly secular or in complete accordance with that particular religion. This is a topic that needs particular attention and discussion in the research literature. It is my opinion that all mindfulness education and education, in general, should be presented in a post-secular nature. Similarly teachers should be encouraged, if they feel comfortable, to disclose any strong belief systems they have and how this affects their mindfulness practice in a non-proselytising manner (see Coholic, 2010 for a specific example).

However, my opinions on this topic stem from the way I have been raised. I grew up in a household where religion was openly discussed. I was exposed to various expressions of faith and as a child was allowed and invited to make up my own mind as to whether I chose to subscribe to a particular faith group, which did not have to accord with my parents' choices. When I teach mindfulness I am cognisant that my students hold an array of strong belief systems, ranging from fundamentalist Christian to Islam, and I respect their right to bring their own personal faith to how they make sense of mindfulness. For young children, I feel quite strongly that they need to receive religious education not indoctrination in school environments at this formative age of development.

Apart from helping to understand the interface between spirituality, religion and mindfulness, a working knowledge of wellness philosophy, theory and practice enables a practitioner to remember the unique qualities of each person and recognise that individuals during certain times in their lives may be experiencing low levels of wellness, due to such

things as past trauma and grief and therefore sitting in quiet meditation, where suppressed and repressed emotions may come to the fore may not be ideal. Other MindBody Wellness (MBW) practices such as journal writing or cognitive behavioural therapy may be better placed to help an individual journey to a place where they can peacefully contemplate and be with each moment as it is.

Events and circumstances in one's life affect one's day-to-day suitability and receptivity to MBW practices and so too do life span developmental changes as was seen in the current research in relation to adolescent boys. Dunn (1961), the pioneer of wellness theory, hypothesised that the factors leading to the optimal expression of wellness are significantly influenced by life-span developmental changes and thus the types of wellness promoting practices we engage in and the method in which we learn practices will need to be adjusted to suit the major developmental stages of life. The evidence from this research suggests we need to understand in greater detail the life-span developmental changes that affect mindfulness instruction.

Apart from informing a best-practice approach to teaching and learning about mindfulness on multiple levels, wellness can also broaden and encourage a holistic perspective towards research. In the introduction I mentioned that early research regarding the topic of mindfulness was reductionist and predominately used outcomes-based trials to understand the impact of practices in both adult and child populations. Prominent mindfulness researchers Hayes and Shenk (2006) posited that a *purely* outcomes-based enquiry can produce misleading findings and lead to a less progressive science. A knowledge base that is dominated by outcomes-based trial designs may divert attention away from important contextual factors, feedback loops, the users' experiences and learning processes as well as individualised long-term outcomes (Paterson et al., 2009).

Researchers applying a wellness philosophy premised on systems theory, acknowledge that while much can be learnt by disassembling the parts of a system, it is important not to lose sight of the important relationships that bind each sub system to the others and to the higher levels of the hierarchy (N. J. Albrecht, 2011; Verhoef & Vanderheyden, 2007). For example, the application of systems theory can enable the observer to understand that exogenous factors, such as cultural norms or a principal's disposition combine with individual internal factors to influence the efficacy of mindfulness

programs.

Supplementing outcomes-based research with qualitative forms of assessment can also help to inform the design of future outcome-based research (Verhoef & Vanderheyden, 2007). For example, if researchers were to conduct a randomised controlled trial to determine whether a mindfulness intervention has the ability to assist with weight loss, they may observe a range of objective measures such as percentage of fat lost over intervals of time. However, to bring a holistic mindset to the research process, the researchers could also invite study participants to keep a journal documenting their thoughts and feelings about the weight loss journey. Through the analysis and interpretation of participants' experiences they may discover in greater depth how mindfulness impacts the *whole* of an individual's wellbeing and how different wellness elements interact. For example, a mindfulness practice could lead to increased self-esteem and thus future researchers could ask participants to take subjective self-reported measures related to self-esteem and self-efficacy to explore this link further.

If as researchers we progress to using wellness as a guide to inform mindfulness research and practice there will necessarily be implications for how we train teachers. Teachers in the current study had a sound theoretical and practical understanding of wellness theory. They understood that a mindfulness practice influenced a wide range of wellness outcomes, such as the necessity of being mindful of the interconnectivity between wellness elements and that a range of factors affect health and wellbeing, not only mindfulness. The findings from this study suggest that before a teacher embarks on mindfulness training that he or she should first learn the basics of wellness theory and apply these skills in practice in his or her own life, through for example assessing his or her own wellness and working on a three-to-six-month wellness coaching plan. Given the wide-spread adoption of mindfulness around the world, this is something that university lecturers need to keep in mind when training teachers. These institutions need to ensure that they are adequately equipping students with the skills to enter a profession where mindfulness is now a mainstream practice.

In addition, the current research results highlight the importance of teacher wellbeing, including ensuring that what we are practising we are enacting in our own lives. However, the results simultaneously indicated high levels of stress in the teaching profession and that in-service teachers, due to a lack of time, often need to learn about these practices

slowly and with the support of their schools. Some of the study participants felt that there was a need to scaffold mindfulness training, thus creating a gentle pathway for in-service teachers to learn about mindfulness. This is something that needs to be kept in mind when designing courses for this cohort and also when developing educational policy to guide professional development. Educational policy needs to recognise that teacher wellbeing impacts student wellbeing and that teachers may first need to come to grips with understanding the nature of their own wellbeing, before they can ensure and enhance the wellbeing of children under their care.

Recommendations for Approaching and Expanding IPA and Other Forms of Qualitative and Quantitative Assessment

In this thesis I have made a number of recommendations for the ways in which we conduct research. Another issue transcending these suggestions is the need to ensure harmonic convergence between the epistemology, methodology and methods and the topic being researched, namely, mindfulness. In this study the harmonic convergence was integral to exploring the depths of teachers' wisdom. In a sense this situation is analogous to teachers teaching mindfulness mindfully. I researched mindfulness mindfully, using mindful communication skills during interviews, opening my mind to new ways of thinking, through beginner's mind and listening, meditating, searching and waiting for the essence of each person's experience to rise into conscious awareness.

Professor of physics and director of the academic program of the Center of Contemplative Mind, Arthur Zajonc (2009), puts forward that contemplative practices, such as mindfulness and meditation have the ability to transform and extend traditional scientific methods. He writes that contemplative enquiry enables researchers to move beyond "brooding and intellectual analysis" to discover experiences "as insights that bear with them the feel of truth" (Zajonc, 2009, p. 16). Meditation enables an individual to perceive reality directly in a way that is not distorted, allowing for a richer exploration of reality (Zajonc, 2009). Likewise, Shear (2013) believes that meditation can enable researchers to reach for and explore deeper levels of introspective awareness and promotes the practice in order to achieve a greater level of objectivity when researching. He feels the focus on outcomes-based research in the field has lead the research community away from understanding how meditation can allow us to reach for greater insights related to reality and the way we perceive it. This suggests that future researchers when exploring this topic

need to consider using the very skills they are exploring.

In many ways a mindful way of researching is congruent and complements IPA. In this study, being mindful enabled me to unearth hidden gems of wisdom. The creator of IPA, J. A. Smith (2011b) wrote in his article, “‘We could be diving for pearls’: The value of the gem in experiential qualitative psychology” that it is important to seek out hidden gems during the interview analysis stage. However, I recommend that as a research community we start searching for hidden treasures earlier, during the interview process and discover in what ways MindBody Wellness practices enable research to bring to light the essence of human experience. I also suggest that when using IPA or the interview method researchers reflect, contemplate and document how they interview as the way in which the interviewer engages with interviewees will have a significant impact on the data gathered.

Mindful enquiry into a research problem can also be enhanced with the use of autoethnography. Autoethnography enables authenticity. It also helps to remedy one of the chief criticisms of published, peer-reviewed IPA studies, namely that researchers have a tendency to describe their participants’ thoughts and feelings but neglect to describe anything about the complex interaction of thoughts, feelings, biases and experiences that govern the framework or lens through which the author views the data. This is known as authorial absence (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Apart from extending and complementing IPA, autoethnography may also be able to balance and bring honesty to research employing a wide array of methodologies. I therefore suggest we considered the way in which autoethnography can complement or assist the articulation of other research methodologies.

Concluding Statement

A thriving and evolving pool of research and commentary is emerging in relation to the integration of MBW techniques in school and out-of-school settings. The findings from this study suggest that mainstream education is experiencing a paradigm shift. Practices that inspire a deep level of awareness, introspection and insight are inspiring and guiding the way teachers think, act and feel all over the world. I believe the motivation to teach children mindfulness originates from a need to create harmony – harmony within the individual, within the classroom, within the school, within society and the planet as a whole. Harmony is particularly critical at this moment in time as we live in a world in which

the capacity to prevent conflicts and to resolve them in a timely fashion is practically non-existent (UN Commissioner Guterres, 2015, as cited in Kitney, 2015, p. 46). Nourishing the seeds of wisdom and compassion and encouraging a mindful way of being to grow and thrive from an early age is one way *peaceful* individuals are trying to stem the tide of conflict.

Appendix Section

Appendix A: Mindfulness Programs for Children – Hard Copy Texts (January 2014)

APA 6th ed. Reference	School Age Level	Web Site	Other information
Ardell, K., & Wilds, E. (2011). <i>Teaching mindfulness to children & teens</i> . San Bernardino, CA: A Brighter Light in the World.	5 years - 18 years	http://www.thehealingartscenter.org/	
Broderick, P. C. (2013). <i>Learning to breathe: A mindfulness curriculum for adolescence to cultivate emotion regulation, attention and performance</i> . Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.	11 years - 18 years	http://learning2breathe.org/	
Coholic, D. (2010). <i>Arts activities for children and young people in need: Helping children to develop mindfulness, spiritual awareness and self-esteem</i> . London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.	8 years - 18 years	http://www.dianacoholic.com/	
Etty-Leal, J. (2010). <i>Meditation Capsules: A mindfulness program for children</i> . Melbourne: Meditation Capsules.	5 years - 18 years	www.meditationcapsules.com	
Fontana, D., & Slack, I. (1998). <i>Teaching meditation to children: The practical guide to the use and benefits of meditation techniques</i> . London: Watkins Publishing.	5 years - 18 years	-	

Greco, L. A., & Hayes, S. C. (Eds.). (2008). <i>Acceptance and mindfulness treatments for children and adolescents: A practitioner's guide</i> . Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications Inc.	5 years - 18 years	-	
Hanh, T. N. (2001). <i>A pebble for your pocket: Mindful stories for children and grown-ups</i> . Berkeley, CA: Plum Blossom Books.	6 years - 18 years	http://wakeupschools.org/	
Hahn, T. N., & Plum Village Community. (2011). <i>Planting seeds: Practicing mindfulness with children</i> (C. C. Nghiem, Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.	6 years - 18 years	http://wakeupschools.org/	
Hanh, T. N., & Vriezen, W. (2008). <i>Mindful movements: Mindfulness exercises developed by Thich Nhat Hanh and the Plum Village Sangha</i> . Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.	Does not specify age	http://wakeupschools.org/	
Kahlert, J., & Sige, R. (Eds.). (2002). <i>Achtsamkeit und Anerkennung: Materialien zur Förderung des Sozialverhaltens in der Grundschule [Attentiveness and recognition: Materials for the promotion of social behavior in elementary school]</i> . Cologne: Federal Centre for Health Education.	5 years - 12 years	http://translate.google.com.au/translate?hl=en&sl=de&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bzga.de%2Fbotmed_20420000.html&anno=2	German language

<p>Kaiser Greenland, S. (2010). <i>The mindful child: How to help your kid manage stress and become happier, kinder, and more compassionate</i>. New York: Free Press.</p>	<p>5 years - 13 years</p>	<p>www.susankaisergreenland.com</p>	
<p>Kaltwasser, V. (2008). <i>Achtsamkeit in der Schule: Stille-Inseln im Unterricht: Entspannung und Konzentration [Mindfulness in Schools: silence islands in the classroom: relaxation and concentration]</i>. Frankfurt: Beltz Verlag.</p>	<p>7 years - 15 years</p>	<p>http://www.vera-kaltwasser.de/buecher/achtsamkeit-in-der-schule/index.html</p>	
<p>Murray, L. E. (2012). <i>Calm kids: Help children relax with mindful activities</i>. Edinburgh, UK: Floris Books.</p>	<p>Babies – 18 years</p>	<p>http://www.ilovefgt.com</p>	
<p>Plummer, D. M. (2012). <i>Focusing and calming games for children: Mindfulness strategies and activities to help children to relax, concentrate and take control</i>. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.</p>	<p>5 years - 13 years</p>	<p>http://www.deborahplummer.co.uk/</p>	
<p>Rechtschaffen, D. (2014). <i>The way of mindful education: Cultivating well-being in teachers and students</i>. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.</p>	<p>Does not specify age</p>	<p>http://danielrechtschaffen.com</p>	

Schoeberlein, D., (with Sheth, S.) (2009). <i>Mindful teaching and teaching mindfulness: A guide for anyone who teaches anything</i> . Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.	5 years - 18 years		
Snel, E. (2013). <i>Sitting still like a frog: Mindfulness exercises for children (and their parents)</i> . Boston, MA: Shambhala.	Children and parents. Does not specify age	http://www.academyformindfulness.com/	
Hawn Foundation. (2011a). <i>The MindUp curriculum Grades Pre-K-2: Brain-focused strategies for learning-and living</i> . New York: Scholastic.	5 years - 13 years	http://www.thehawnfoundation.org/mindup	
Hawn Foundation. (2011b). <i>The MindUp curriculum Grades 3-5: Brain-focused strategies for learning-and living</i> . New York: Scholastic.	5 years - 13 years	http://www.thehawnfoundation.org/mindup	
Hawn Foundation. (2011c). <i>The MindUp curriculum Grades 6-8: Brain-focused strategies for learning-and living</i> . New York: Scholastic.	5 years - 13 years	http://www.thehawnfoundation.org/mindup	

<p>Willard, C. (2010). <i>Child's mind: Mindfulness practices to help our children be more focused, calm, and relaxed</i>. Berkley, CA: Parallax Press.</p>	<p>5 years - 18 years</p>	<p>http://drchristopherwillard.com/welcome.html</p>	
<p>Wood Vallely, S. (2008). <i>Sensational meditation for children: Child-friendly meditation techniques based on the five senses</i>. Asheville, NC: Satya International.</p> <p>Wood Vallely, S. (2013). <i>Sensational meditation for children: Mindfulness, guided imagery and other child-friendly meditation techniques</i> (2nd ed.). Asheville, NC: Satya Worldwide.</p>	<p>5 years - 18 years</p>	<p>http://www.sarahwood.com/</p>	

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Appendix B: Letter of Introduction

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

and

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: Teachers Teaching Mindfulness with Children

Investigators:

- Nicole Albrecht – Principal Researcher
- Professor Rosalind Murray-Harvey – PhD Supervisor
- Dr Leigh Burrows – PhD Supervisor

Dear (Participant Name),

I hope this letter finds you well. You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Nicole Albrecht from Flinders University. Nicole Albrecht (Nikki) is a PhD student in the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law at Flinders University. Nikki is happy to produce her student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity during any face-to-face interviews.

The research is expected to lead to the production of a Flinders University PhD thesis, publications and/or conference presentations on the topic over the coming years.

What is the purpose of the project?

As the topic name suggests this project is geared towards understanding and interpreting teachers' experiences of teaching mindfulness in the classroom or in out-of-school care settings to school-aged children.

What will I be asked to do?

Nikki would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project.

You will be asked to participate in at least 1 (one), and if you are willing, up to 3 (three), interviews. Each interview will take approximately 1½ (one and a half) hours. You will also be asked to provide some information on your work experience and background, after the first interview which may take 15 to 30 minutes. Further participation is welcomed at your convenience and may include exemplars of your practice, for example personal journals. This may take 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Confidentiality

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions. Participation in the study is voluntary and refusal to participate will have no effect on your service provision if employed by an organization.

What's next?

If you are interested in participating in the study please contact Nikki for further information and consent forms at albr0005@flinders.edu.au

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project may be directed to the principal researcher, Nicole Albrecht directly by email albr0005@flinders.edu.au or to either of Nikki's supervisors; to Dr Leigh Burrows by telephone (+61 8 8201 3022), fax (+61 8 8201 3184) or email (leigh.burrows@flinders.edu.au) or to Professor Rosalind Murray-Harvey by e-mail (rosalind.murray-harvey@flinders.edu.au).

Thank you for your mindful attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Rosalind Murray-Harvey (PhD)

Professor of Education

School of Education

Flinders University

Nicole Albrecht

PhD student (Flinders University)

BEc, BA, BEd (LOTE), MWell

Lecturer, MindBody Wellness

Course Coordinator, Health Sciences

RMIT University

Appendix C: Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Title: 'Teachers Teaching Mindfulness with Children'

Investigators:

- Nicole Albrecht – Principal Researcher
- Professor Rosalind Murray-Harvey – Supervisor
- Dr Leigh Burrows – Supervisor

Description of the study:

This study is part of the project entitled '*Teachers Teaching Mindfulness with Children*'. The project will explore teachers' experiences of explicitly teaching mindfulness with children in school and out-of-school care settings. The project is kindly supported by the Flinders University Education department.

Purpose of the study:

The project aims to find out about teachers' experiences and perspectives of teaching mindfulness in the school and out-of-school care settings in relation to three interrelated areas of practice:

- Motivation for Teaching Mindfulness with Children;
- Activities, Practices and Programs Incorporated and
- Mindfulness Teacher Qualities

What will I be asked to do?

As mentioned in the 'Letter of Introduction' there is a range of options for participation and they are listed below. Your participation is voluntary and if you choose to participate **the minimum requirement is to fill in a form telling us a bit of information about yourself (this may take 15-30 minutes and participate in one interview/conversation with Nikki for no more than one and a half (1½) hours.**

You are welcome to withdraw your participation from the study at any point during the project or change your commitment option.

Nikki is happy to further explain these details over the phone, Skype or via email.

Options for research participation

1. **Interview** – participate in 1(one) to 3(three) interviews around an hour and a half each via Skype, face-to-face, via email or a combination to suit your needs.
Expected Time Commitment: 1.5 hours per interview
2. **Demographic Information** – fill in (1) one form regarding information about yourself e.g. education background.
Expected Time Commitment: 15 – 30 minutes
3. **Other Illustrative Material** – provide other material illustrative of your practice. For example, a video, journal or other reflections.
Expected Time Commitment: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Options for participation – explained in a bit more detail!

Interview/s

1. The first step in the research process is to have a one-on-one interview/conversation with Nikki. This can take place face-to-face (if Nikki lives close to you) or via Skype, email or telephone. The choice will be yours. If Nikki meets you face-to-face we will need to find somewhere where you will not be disturbed. Nikki will ask you a few questions about teaching mindfulness with children. There are three interview options on different topics. You may like to participate in all three or just one – the choice is yours. Interview topics relate to: 1) your own mindfulness practice and motivation to teach mindfulness with children 2) the mindfulness practices you teach to children and 3) mindfulness teacher qualities. One or two questions for discussion will be given to you prior to the interview. You can contemplate them in your own time and then arrange with Nikki a convenient time and location (if applicable) to have a conversation about your mindfulness practice.

The interview will take no longer than 1 hour and 30 minutes and if conversing verbally, will be recorded using digital technology. Once recorded, the interview will be transcribed (typed-up) and analysed to help inform results. The recording will be stored as a computer file and then destroyed once results have been finalised. The recording or a transcription will be used in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed and the recording will be shared only with other researchers, such as Nikki's supervisors Leigh and Rosalind.

It may be necessary to make the recording available to secretarial assistants for transcription, in which case you may be assured that such persons will be advised of the requirement that your name or identity not be revealed and that the confidentiality of the material is respected and maintained. At any time during the study and before publication, you may view any part of your interview and if you would like to omit or alter content please let Nikki know and she will be happy to make the necessary changes.

Demographic Information

2. After the first interview, Nikki will invite you to tell her a little bit about yourself! This will require filling out a form, entitled '*Demographic Information – Teachers*'. In conjunction with my supervisors, Leigh and Rosalind, I have designed a form which invites you to answer simple questions such as your age, gender, education experience and perhaps more complicated questions related to your educational philosophy. This form will be sent to you via email. It is estimated that it will take around 15-30 minutes to fill out and can be returned via email at your discretion. You only need to answer as many questions as you feel comfortable answering.

Other Illustrative Material

3. Nikki welcomes any other information that you think will help explain how you teach mindfulness with children. This may include teaching materials, a personal journal, videos or other information. Illustrative work that includes children's or other people's reflections cannot be collected. Original work will be returned to you. The time taken to assemble and send this work may take between 30 minutes to an hour but will depend on how much information you would like to provide.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?

The research provides an opportunity for participants to share their expertise with the world and make a valuable contribution to the knowledge base in this area. The research process may enhance and refine your own understanding of teaching mindfulness with children.

What benefit will the community gain from your involvement in this study?

It is expected that the community will benefit from hearing your stories and reflection of teaching mindfulness with children and new practitioners will be able to gain skills critical to implementing mindfulness with children. The analysis of your reflections may assist with teacher training programs and further enhance the academic community's understanding of mindfulness

practice with children.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

We do not need your name and you will be anonymous. Once the interview has been typed-up and saved as a file, the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed and the typed-up file stored on a password protected computer that only the Principal Investigator (Ms Nicole Albrecht) will have access to. Your comments will not be linked directly to you in any publications of the results of this research.

Nikki assures while confidentiality can be assured by de-identifying participants, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. For example, other people may be able to recognize your contributions even though they will not be directly attributed to you. You can request that I provide you with text that includes your de-identified contributions for approval to use them.

Prior to interview, if meeting face-to-face, we can arrange a suitable private location for the discussion to take place.

Any information provided can only be disclosed if (1) it is to protect yourself or others from harm, (2) a court order is produced, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

The investigator does not anticipate any risks from your involvement in this study. If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with either Nikki, Rosalind or Leigh and they will be discussed in confidence.

How do I agree to participate?

Participation is voluntary. You may answer 'no comment' or refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw from the whole study or interview at any time without effect or consequences. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate please read and sign the form and send it back to Nikki Albrecht at PO Box 428, Hove, South Australia 5048 or if using an electronic signature email to albr0005@flinders.edu.au. Other consent forms, for example, 'photographic release' will be sent to you as required with plenty of time provided to consider your participation. If you would like to increase your participation options at anytime during the study, this is welcomed and you will need to fill out a new consent form. However, if you decide to withdraw your participation for an option you do not need to fill out another consent form.

How will I receive feedback?

At any time during the study please feel free to contact Nikki to answer queries or receive feedback.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project may be directed to the principal researcher, Nicole Albrecht directly by email albr0005@flinders.edu.au or to either of Nikki's supervisors; to Dr Leigh Burrows by telephone (+61 8 8201 3022), fax (+61 8 8201 3184) or email (leigh.burrows@flinders.edu.au) or to Professor Rosalind Murray-Harvey by e-mail (rosalind.murray-harvey@flinders.edu.au).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

Yours sincerely

Rosalind Murray-Harvey (PhD)

Professor of Education

School of Education

Flinders University

Nicole Albrecht

PhD student (Flinders University)

Lecturer, MindBody Wellness

Course Coordinator, Health Sciences

RMIT University

Appendix D: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH (by interview and other illustrative material)

Please return form to Nicole Albrecht @ PO Box 428 Hove SA 5048 or email if using an electronic signature email to albr0005@flinders.edu.au

Teachers Teaching Mindfulness with Children

I

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the **Letter of Introduction/Invitation to Participate** for the research project on **Teachers Teaching Mindfulness with Children**

Interviews

I would like to participate in the interview about:

- my own mindfulness practice and motivation to teach mindfulness with children.
- the mindfulness practices I use with children.
- mindfulness teacher characteristics and qualities.

(Please tick all three interview options if you would like to participate in all of the interview options.)

I would like to be interviewed via:

- Skype
- Phone
- Face-to-face
- Email
- A combination of these options

Demographic Information

- I would like to fill in the demographic information sheet titled, '*Demographic Information – Teachers*'

Illustrative Materials

I would like to provide some illustrative materials of my mindfulness practice.

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
5. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on any treatment or service that is being provided to me.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my progress in my course of study, or results gained.
 - I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
6. I agree/do not agree to the tape/transcript being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.
7. I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this research with a family member or friend.
8. I have not signed a confidentiality agreement with my employer preventing me from discussing my mindfulness practice with children.
9. I may change my consent options at anytime during the study and will notify the researcher and sign a new consent form.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name: Nicole Jacqueline Albrecht

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

Appendix E: Demographic Information Sheet

RESEARCH PROJECT: TEACHERS TEACHING MINDFULNESS WITH CHILDREN

Demographic Information - Teachers

Instructions for Completing Form

In order to help readers understand the range of participants involved in a study and the situations in which findings may be useful it is recommended to detail participant characteristics such as: country of origin, cultural background, gender, age, social class, meditation experience, teaching background and experience teaching mindfulness to children.

The information you provide in this form will be de-identified (remain anonymous), so you will personally not be connected with the answers you provide.

I appreciate your time in filling out this form and please feel free to leave sections blank. A completed example has also been attached for your information.

It is envisioned that this form will take 15 minutes to complete. Once again, participation in this study is voluntary.

Please return via email to Nikki: albr0005@flinders.edu.au

or Nicole Albrecht, PO Box 428, Hove 5048, South Australia

Demographic Information - Teachers

Name:

Sex	
Age	
Current Residential Location, Suburb, State and Country	
Country of Birth	
Ethnicity (Cultural background)	
Faith/Religion (if applicable - optional)	
Spiritual Links/Connection (if applicable -optional)	
Education Background	
Educational Philosophy (if applicable -optional)	
Other Work Experience	
Years Teaching / Counselling in Schools or out-of-school care settings	
Year Levels Taught/Teaching	
Experience in Teaching Mindfulness to children and/or adults – please specify	
Personal experience with the use of relaxation techniques, meditation, mindfulness, and/or guided imagery	

Appendix F: Example of Demographic Information

RESEARCH PROJECT: TEACHERS TEACHING MINDFULNESS WITH CHILDREN

Demographic Information - Example

Demographic Information- Teachers

Name:

Sex	Female
Age	54
Current Residential Location, Suburb, State and Country	Adelaide Hills South Australia
Country of Birth	Australia
Ethnicity (Cultural background)	Anglo Saxon (Australian) some African heritage
Faith/Religion (if applicable - optional)	N/A
Spiritual Links/Connection (if applicable -optional)	Strong links to mystical traditions such as Sufism and Gnosticism also Sumerian and Ancient Greek
Education Background	attended govt and independent girls school, undergraduate degree in Sociology and English, then Dip ED M Spec Ed and PhD.
Educational Philosophy (if applicable -optional)	I am passionate about (re) balancing education to take account of different ways of knowing and being, including intuition, sensing, feeling and thinking. I believe education has become excessively preoccupied with the rational and that there is a need for greater sanctuary and community
Other Work Experience	Hospitality domestic violence worker, after school coordinator

<p>Years Teaching / Counselling in Schools or Out-of-School Care Settings</p>	<p>After school care 1 year</p> <p>Primary 2 years</p> <p>Secondary/special ed 4 years</p> <p>Advisor 7 years</p>
<p>Year Levels Taught/Teaching</p>	<p>Year 5 to 12</p>
<p>Experience in Teaching Mindfulness to children and/or adults – please specify</p>	<p>No explicit teaching of mindfulness to children but mindfulness embedded in pedagogy</p> <p>Explicit teaching of mindfulness to adults</p>
<p>Personal experience with the use of relaxation techniques. meditation, mindfulness, and/or guided imagery</p>	<p>No guided imagery</p> <p>experience of ‘incubation’ style deep meditation on my own and with spiritual teachers</p> <p>experience of soles of feet meditation and sensing into the body on my own and with others.</p>

Appendix G: Example Interview Transcript Faith

The following transcript is a full verbatim extract of an email interview conducted with Faith. Apart from the demographic information sheet, the transcript represents the *whole* of the data collected for analysis and interpretation from Faith. After an initial email conversation discussing the research project and answering queries, Faith asked if I could send the email questions all at once as she was travelling on a holiday. I sent the questions in March 2014 and received the responses during May of that year.

Question 1:

You mentioned in an email that you offered mindfulness programs in an after-school environment, rather than in compulsory school time. What was the rationale behind this?

We conducted the mindfulness groups as part of a research project. Ideally, we would have wanted to offer mindfulness groups to as many children as possible by making it compulsory. Unfortunately, the schools did not have the capacity to fit the program into their schedules and so we offered after school programs.

However, we also offered the groups to ballet students who had to complete them as part of their training. While this was not the focus of our research, it gave us the opportunity to compare voluntary and compulsory groups. I think that students who chose to do the groups often had a personal motivation that motivated them to sign up (e.g., anxiety, stress, a special interest in meditation). The students that had to complete the groups were a bit more skeptical at the start and often could not see in what way mindfulness could be of assistance to them. However, once they were introduced to mindfulness and how it can be used in everyday life, I think they saw the benefits. Apart from maybe one person in each group, the students thoroughly enjoyed the groups and found that mindfulness exercises could help them relax and calm down.

Question 2:

From your email it seems that you think learning mindfulness early in life is quite important for teaching life-skills and emotion regulation. And you mentioned that you would like to see it being applied as a prevention program or even a school

subject. What kind of life skills do you think it brings to young children?

I think learning about mindfulness teaches a lot of different things. First, it teaches children to slow things down. To slow down their “doing” and to slow down their thinking. By slowing down they then learn to listen to themselves and consequently they get to know themselves better over time. They learn to pay attention to physical cues (e.g. tense shoulders, restlessness) and this enables them to respond to these cues in a helpful way (whatever that may be at the time and for the particular person). In turn, knowing how to respond to physical discomfort in that way gives them a great sense of mastery and confidence. Also, I believe that slowing down can help young people to listen to their thoughts more closely. Learning through meditation that thoughts come and go and that there is no need to hold on to them can then teach them to decide which thoughts to consider more closely and which thoughts to discard. Given that many young people have self-doubts and other negative thoughts, this skills is really useful. And again, being aware of one’s thoughts and learning which ones to keep and which ones to discard brings about a great sense of mastery and self-confidence. Additionally, I believe that mindfulness meditation, or even just a reminder to “be in the present” (e.g. through a grounding exercise) can help young people to be calmer/calm down in situations that usually cause anxiety (e.g. presentations in front of the class, exams).

In that way, mindfulness can be an effective short-term skill. I believe that learning these things about oneself is of great importance and that school would be a fantastic place to introduce mindfulness skills as it is the place most young people first encounter a range of potentially quite stressful situations.

Question 3:

What impact do you think the program had on the children’s and the teachers’ (psychologists) lives?

I think that the program was a great “group experience” for the students. They learned that most of their peers have similar thoughts and similar doubts about themselves and that they can share these and be met with understanding. They learned that it is OK to not always be happy and confident and that there are skills they can learn to make themselves feel better. While each student probably had her own agenda for participating (which we

might not be aware of), I think that this positive group experience was an outcome for all group members. I am not sure how exactly this impacted on their lives....maybe this relates to what I said above, that it made them more self-confident and taught them how to slow down and relax.

In supervision, the teachers often reflected how teaching mindfulness made them more mindful in everyday life and how this had a positive impact on their wellbeing. They reported using short meditation exercises before important meetings or presentations and being more mindful while walking, eating, and talking to other people.

Question 4:

When/How did you first learn about mindfulness?

I was introduced to the term mindfulness when researching types of therapies in 2011 for a university assignment. Doing lots of yoga it immediately struck me as the “yoga of psychology” and therefore sparked my interest.

Question 5:

What impact has witnessing the teaching (sharing) of mindfulness with children had on your own life?

Teaching mindfulness to children/young people confirmed my belief that mindfulness skills can be a great coping skill for children in this age group. Having had this experience, I will try to keep being involved in projects that support mindfulness for children, and will attempt to run my own groups again, as soon as I have the means.

On a more spiritual level, hearing young people discuss their insecurities and doubts and receiving such positive reactions from their peers made me feel deeply connected not only to these children but to people in general. It made me see that it is this feeling of connectedness that is important to me. In turn, this realization helped me re-focus my life on doing activities that bring about connectedness, and to place less importance on those that don't (e.g., stressing about finishing my thesis 😊).

Appendix H: Example Interview Transcript Faith – Points of Reference Relevant to Analysis

In the transcript below (presented in Appendix G) the sections of Faith's interview used when reporting findings are underlined. One part of the interview was used twice and this has been underlined and italicised and a brief explanation is provided to demonstrate why it was used twice.

Question 1:

You mentioned in an email that you offered mindfulness programs in an after-school environment, rather than in compulsory school time. What was the rationale behind this?

We conducted the mindfulness groups as part of a research project. Ideally, we would have wanted to offer mindfulness groups to as many children as possible by making it compulsory. Unfortunately, the schools did not have the capacity to fit the program into their schedules and so we offered after school programs.

However, we also offered the groups to ballet students who had to complete them as part of their training. While this was not the focus of our research, it gave us the opportunity to compare voluntary and compulsory groups.

The underlined sections below are given as an example in the super-ordinate theme, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing, sub-theme Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing – Emotional Wellness.

I think that students who chose to do the groups often had a personal motivation that motivated them to sign up (e.g., anxiety, stress, a special interest in meditation).

The students that had to complete the groups were a bit more skeptical at the start and often could not see in what way mindfulness could be of assistance to them. However, once they were introduced to mindfulness and how it can be used in everyday life, I think they saw the benefits.

Apart from maybe one person in each group, the students thoroughly enjoyed the

groups and found that mindfulness exercises could help them relax and calm down.

Question 2:

From your email it seems that you think learning mindfulness early in life is quite important for teaching life-skills and emotion regulation. And you mentioned that you would like to see it being applied as a prevention program or even a school subject. What kind of life skills do you think it brings to young children?

I think learning about mindfulness teaches a lot of different things.

The underlined section below is given as an example in the super-ordinate theme, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing, sub-theme Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing.

First, it teaches children to slow things down. To slow down their "doing" and to slow down their thinking. By slowing down they then learn to listen to themselves and consequently they get to know themselves better over time. They learn to pay attention to physical cues (e.g. tense shoulders, restlessness) and this enables them to respond to these cues in a helpful way (whatever that may be at the time and for the particular person). In turn, knowing how to respond to physical discomfort in that way gives them a great sense of mastery and confidence. Also, I believe that slowing down can help young people to listen to their thoughts more closely. Learning through meditation that thoughts come and go and that there is no need to hold on to them can then teach them to decide which thoughts to consider more closely and which thoughts to discard.

Given that many young people have self-doubts and other negative thoughts, this skills is really useful. And again, being aware of one's thoughts and learning which ones to keep and which ones to discard brings about a great sense of mastery and self-confidence.

The underlined section below is given as an example in the super-ordinate theme, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child's Wellbeing, sub-theme Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing – Emotional Wellness.

Additionally, I believe that mindfulness meditation, or even just a reminder to "be in the

present” (e.g. through a grounding exercise) can help young people to be calmer/calm down in situations that usually cause anxiety (e.g. presentations in front of the class, exams). In that way, mindfulness can be an effective short-term skill. I believe that learning these things about oneself is of great importance and that school would be a fantastic place to introduce mindfulness skills as it is the place most young people first encounter a range of potentially quite stressful situations.

Question 3:

What impact do you think the program had on the children’s and the teachers’ (psychologists’) lives?

The underlined section below is given as an example in the super-ordinate theme Spirituality, sub-theme, Connection. The underlined and italicised section is also given as an example in the super-ordinate theme, Responsibility for Nurturing a Child’s Wellbeing, sub-theme, Mindfulness and the Dimensions of Wellbeing – Social Wellness.

This demonstrates the inextricable connection between the spiritual and social dimensions of wellness. Connection encourages social cohesion.

I think that the program was a great “group experience” for the students. They learned that most of their peers have similar thoughts and similar doubts about themselves and that they can share these and be met with understanding. They learned that it is OK to not always be happy and confident and that there are skills they can learn to make themselves feel better. While each student probably had her own agenda for participating (which we might not be aware of), I think that this positive group experience was an outcome for all group members. I am not sure how exactly this impacted on their lives....maybe this relates to what I said above, that it made them more self-confident and taught them how to slow down and relax.

In supervision, the teachers often reflected how teaching mindfulness made them more mindful in everyday life and how this had a positive impact on their wellbeing. They reported using short meditation exercises before important meetings or presentations and being more mindful while walking, eating, and talking to other people.

Question 4:

When/How did you first learn about mindfulness?

I was introduced to the term mindfulness when researching types of therapies in 2011 for a university assignment. Doing lots of yoga it immediately struck me as the “yoga of psychology” and therefore sparked my interest.

Question 5:

What impact has witnessing the teaching (sharing) of mindfulness with children had on your own life?

Teaching mindfulness to children/young people confirmed my belief that mindfulness skills can be a great coping skill for children in this age group. Having had this experience, I will try to keep being involved in projects that support mindfulness for children, and will attempt to run my own groups again, as soon as I have the means.

The underlined section below is given as an example in the super-ordinate theme, Spirituality, sub-theme Connection.

On a more spiritual level, hearing young people discuss their insecurities and doubts and receiving such positive reactions from their peers made me feel deeply connected not only to these children but to people in general. It made me see that it is this feeling of connectedness that is important to me. In turn, this realization helped me re-focus my life on doing activities that bring about connectedness, and to place less importance on those that don't (e.g., stressing about finishing my thesis 😊).

Appendix I: Example Transcripts – Different Modes of Communication

Email interview with Janet

Researcher question (Nikki):

I remember when I was observing you train teachers how to teach mindfulness, you said one of your key reasons for embarking on this field was your daughters. If I remember rightly, you were looking for a meditation class for your beautiful girls but could only find classes that taught meditation practices only. You wanted a different approach. Would you mind sharing a bit more about your thoughts and feelings at this time?

Love and blessings Nikki

Trial interviewee response (Janet):

My personal practice of Meditation (spanning two decades at the time) underwent rigorous enquiry and development with the birth of my two daughters! The shifting sands of the intense experiences of relationship, with two new family members, inevitably gave rise to challenges and blessings.

The incredible privilege (and responsibility) of being a worthy guardian and compassionately nurturing two beautiful young people to the best of my ability, drew out a strong desire to share my dedication to a Meditative practice and introduce the girls to their own pathways. So often, the first place we look for inspiration and ideas is to outside sources. I searched for whatever books/classes/CD's I could find at the time. At this time (20 years ago), the choice was limited. I could not find any classes, so bought a collection of books and CD's. The 'norm' was to guide children through quite florid, detailed meditation scripts, which relied heavily on visualisation. Initially these provided pleasant entry points for my daughters. However, soon their enthusiasm waned, giving rise to my realisation for the potential for more holistic, creative opportunities.

TM and yoga provided starting points for my own spiritual practice. When my daughters were babies, a friend introduced me to the work of Thich Nhat Hahn, for which I am

eternally grateful. Mindfulness provided a wonderful way to evolve and develop my practice and a fruitful opportunity to connect to simple, joyful and creative ways to share the practice with my girls. Mindfulness also afforded a natural connection to my background as an Art teacher. So there were no 'boundaries' for times and opportunities for Mindful practice and discoveries. Mindful connection took place wherever we were: in the garden, at the beach, in the car, engaging in art activities, during mealtimes and beautiful rituals emerged at the end of the day in the bedroom.

Over time we shared natural, joyful ways to 'come to our senses', bringing awareness to sensate experiences. Sometimes these included going outside to humbly marvel at the night sky (a particular favourite with my younger daughter), quietly observing sounds, sights (delighting in the full spectrum of colours, shapes, textures, proportions etc), smells and then gently segueing from outer awareness to inner awareness, connecting to the body and the breath. I have rich memories of the boundless creative opportunities to weave appropriate imagery, with personal meaning to each of my daughters, to embellish the practices. (It goes without saying that each of my daughters is a unique individual: one is now completing her Arts/Law Degree, while the other has just graduated from the VCA, completing a Drawing Degree).

These precious shared experiences with my young daughters created the stepping stones for a fork in my career path: prompting me to leave the art room for boundless discoveries and opportunities to develop programs for children as a Mindfulness Consultant.

Researcher question (Nikki):

I was quite moved by what you wrote. My first impression was that having children really acted as a catalyst for you sharing mindfulness with children, teachers and sometimes the "odd" businessman all over Australia. And then, while I was doing something else, cooking the dinner, the word "guardian" struck me. It was like being a guardian to your own sweet girls' wellbeing naturally extended and drifted over to providing the service for other people's children. And then I thought how beautiful and was moved to tears.

As you know I teach mindfulness, meditation and guided imagery to hundreds of undergrad and graduate students each year and one comment in a reflective journal broke my heart. The student mentioned that until he had never known one moment of peace until

he entered the course. There have been other students who mention similar things from time to time, abusive parents, being asked to constantly “do” rather than “be”, but for the vast majority, practising mindfulness as an adolescent reminds them of how they were as a child.

My student’s story, the one that broke my heart, reminded me of some of the stories you have told about stressed children you have encountered in schools. Do you feel like you are providing a “guardianship” service to children around the world, setting them up for a solid foundation to navigate life’s obstacles? And would you mind telling me again about some of the stories of the stressed children you have encountered? I think this is the part that saddens me the most, the stressed children, not knowing a moment of peace.

Face to face interview with Caro

Researcher question (Nikki):

I was reading through the questionnaire you gave to the students, which I thought was really good. You said that the reflections came back and they were really interesting and I was wondering, you know you said you were doing it because you thought the Year 12’s might be quite stressed and it might be an important year to learn mindfulness. What did you find out from the questionnaire? Were they stressed?

Interviewee response (Caro):

A lot of them were at the beginning and this is Week 1, so it was quite surprising. Mainly it was the, “I’m feeling slightly more stressed than normal or stressing out to begin with” (*okay*). Then when we got down to the bottom, “How are you feeling now?” A lot of them were saying they were a lot calmer after one session, which I thought was quite bizarre because I was talking for a lot of the session and I did really do a lot of talking. We did one three-minute meditation towards the end of the session just to give them a feel of it, but mainly it was just me talking about it, so I was quite surprised.

Researcher question (Nikki):

So it was even just talking about the topic of relaxation, relaxes them?

Interviewee response (Caro):

Yeah. I guess I was trying to make it about them and it was time they could take time out of their busy schedule, just for them. So I don't know if it was that or...

Researcher question (Nikki):

Yeah, I've seen that happen before in the sessions, just even taking time to think about yourself and your own well-being and that can change the whole energy in the room. People think, "I don't have to do, do, do, I can be".

Interviewee response (Caro):

Yes. We did an exercise very early on where I talked to them about you know this is for you, it's about self-compassion and being compassionate towards ourselves, because quite often we're willing to give that away to other people and we are not willing to give it to ourselves. So I got them to hold their hand out and fill it up with kindness and compassion and things that they do for other people. I'd get them to close their eyes and then you know just talk to about filling that hand up and when they've filled that hand up, just putting it on their heart and getting the pressure right. And then you put your other hand...I think I didn't do it right but it seemed to have worked *[both laugh]*...and then you put your other hand on your belly and breath for a minute and all the kindness and compassion that you give to other people flows into you. And you just sit with-it for a minute and ask what does that feel like?

And lots of people say, "Wow, I do give a lot of kindness and compassion to a lot of other people and I don't do it to myself and that felt really good."

Phone interview with Daniella

Researcher question (Nikki):

And have you made up any of your own activities or are you mainly using the books and everything to start off with?

Interviewee response (Tilly):

Well I kind of ...because I've done the books for a while and CD, I can kind of just sit there and talk them through(Yeah, hmm) and I haven't actually written all that down but I just make it up as I go along (Yeah).

Researcher question (Nikki):

Yeah, I know exactly and that's like as a primary school teacher that's what you kinda have to do, you have to kinda think on your feet (Yeah) and just go with the flow and, you know connect with the children.

And are there any practices that you've seen out there that you would like to try that you haven't tried yet?

Interviewee response (Tilly):

No, but there are probably lots out there that I am not aware of. I did read...I'm just trying to think where I read it now...somewhere...I think it was in Daniel Rechtshaffen book about another type, but basically anything I hear about I'd like to read about and give it a go.

Appendix J: SMART Planning

The MBW Smart Plan is a worksheet created by Nicole Albrecht for the online undergraduate course “Introduction to MindBody Wellness”, RMIT University, Australia.

Examples of what SMART planning is and isn't

Andrew has a high-pressured job and just received a report from his doctor that he has high blood pressure. His doctor said that he may need to go on medication, but there are natural methods, such as meditation, that have been shown through numerous trials to reduce blood pressure. Andrew decides to try meditation first as he is not keen to be on medication for the rest of his life. He says to his doctor that he will start doing meditation techniques at a centre after work.

This is a great start, but the doctor realises that there is nothing specific, measurable or time-based about his intentions. He suggests that Andrew work together with the surgery's health coach to develop a plan to help lower his blood pressure. Andrew feeling overwhelmed by the news, is eager to try.

Andrea, the health coach, explains the principles of SMART planning and together they develop a weekly SMART goal. Andrew sets down a vision of having blood pressure in the healthy range as measured by his General Practitioner. He decides to go to a meditation centre, near his work, twice a week (on a Tuesday and Thursday) for a one hour session for the next three months. He will measure his blood pressure morning and night and keep a record of this for his doctor.

First up we can see that Andrew's SMART plan is **action-based**. He is going to attend a meditation session each week. Andrew is changing his regular behaviours – normally he would have a drink with friends after work down at his local pub. He still decides to go once a week to the pub, but cut back on the drinking. It is **specific**. He has committed to attend sessions twice a week for one hour. He has a **time-line**. He is going to trial meditation for a three-month period. It is **realistic**. Andrew feels that attending twice a week will not affect his social life too much. He will still go to the pub on a Friday night to see his friends. He is going to keep a **measure** of his blood pressure for his doctor and then see if there is any difference over three months.

Example of a SMART plan in action



Bec's SMART action plan explained

So, first up you have your Vision. In Bec's case she wanted to be more mindful throughout the day. Bec wanted to stop thinking about all the things she needed to do and just enjoy the present moment and fully immerse herself in that moment.

Visions are best written in the present tense, as if they were already happening and in your own voice (M. Moore & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). They can be long or short and to me sometimes sound a bit like affirmations. For example, this is a longer affirmation/vision created by a graduate MindBody Wellness student, Karen Seymour:

I live a purpose driven life that radiates a message of love, kindness and compassion. I have faith that my intentions and desires are answered. I am filled with gratification for the endless flow of positive thoughts and emotions.

I am patient, ask questions and follow my intuition. Quiet listening allows me to receive messages from my intuitive self. I am mindful that I am in control and have no regrets for the past, only dreams and aspirations for the future.

I am at peace with the place I am at right now, in this moment; and trust my life is unfolding as it should.

Bec's is a bit shorter than this one but this was really what she wanted to concentrate on. Your vision may simply be to be more loving and kind to yourself and the people in your life. You may like to take bits of Karen's vision or make up your own. When you focus on your vision, also feel what you want it to feel like. Imagine it right here, right NOW.

The vision is like your starting point. In order to turn the vision into an everyday reality you need to be specific.

For your reflective journal practice, you may like to explore one specific action each week. Take a MBW technique such as guided imagery, meditation, mindfulness or music (perhaps not journal writing as you are already doing this) and incorporate it into your daily life. You may swap and change as many MBW techniques as you like. Or, perhaps just focus on two different techniques, preferably something that is new and you have not experienced before.

Keep it real. Do not get over-ambitious – make your action achievable.

In Bec's case, she thought she could manage just 5 minutes of guided imagery before she started her study day. She decided to time herself as she didn't want to go for longer. She wasn't doing the MBW course so she didn't have the luxury of indulging in more guided imagery as part of her study requirements.

As we didn't have any techy gadgets she couldn't measure if she was calmer throughout the day. So she decided to measure mindfulness through her own perceptions. If you had high blood pressure, a blood pressure machine may be a way to measure your stress. Also, you could possibly use the people around you to measure and report on your levels of stress/mindfulness.

The desired outcome for Bec was somewhat like her vision but it doesn't necessarily have to be – go for what feels right.

For Bec, the desired outcome was also the reward. Other people like to have rewards different from their desired outcome. For example, my reward is often to have a walk on the beach. So, once again do whatever feels right for you.

OK. Now you have come up with your SMART MBW plan and put it into practice and set a specific time period. SMART plans can go for any increment of time: 3 weeks, 1 month, 3 months or a year.

Review your progress in your journal. What happened? Did it work? For Bec, it worked to some degree but one day she forgot to do her guided imagery practice and so did it after 2 hours of studying and found

that this worked much better. So, in her second SMART plan, she changed her specific action. She decided to do guided imagery two hours into her study each day in the second week.

Appendix K: Five Stages of Change



Appendix L: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Session A: Mindfulness Personal Experience and Motivation to Practice with Children

- Q1. What appealed to you about cultivating mindfulness with children?
- Q2. Would you mind describing your own personal experience with mindfulness/meditation etc?
- Q3. What are some of the highlights involved with teaching mindfulness to children? Are there any challenges?

Session B: Practice

- Q1. Do you follow a specific mindfulness program? What motivated you to use this program? If not, what activities and/or practices do you use in the classroom?
- Q2. Have you developed any of your own mindfulness activities? What are some of your favourite practices?
- Q3. Are there any practices that you haven't tried but would like to try?
- Q4. How do you integrate mindfulness into daily classroom practice?
- Q5. Are the activities suited to all age levels or do any need to be adapted or altered?

Session C: Teacher Qualities

- Q1. Are there any special qualities you think a teacher needs to teach mindfulness with children?
- Q2. What are some of your own qualities that you feel have led you to practise mindfulness with children?
- Q3. If a teacher is new to practising MindBody Wellness but is keen to teach it in the classroom or with children what suggestions would you make to this person?

Please note these questions as a guiding framework **only**. Questions may vary slightly from participant to participant, depending on their responses.

Appendix M: Hasselle-Newcombe (2002) Sample of Survey Questions

1. As a result of doing yoga, do you feel happier about your life?

Definitely Not 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Definitely Yes*

2. Which of these statements comes nearest to your own belief? (circle one answer)

- a. I believe in a God with whom I can have a personal relationship
- b. I believe in an impersonal spirit or life force
- c. I believe that God is something within each person, rather than something out there
- d. I don't believe in any kind of God, spirit or life force
- e. I really don't know what to believe

3. Do you think about meaning and purpose to life? Yes No Not sure

4. Are you currently exploring/studying any religious tradition(s)? Yes No

5. Were you raised in a religious tradition? Yes No Sort-of

6. How has yoga affected your life?

7. What function(s) does yoga have in your life?

8. What do you think is the value of yoga to contemporary "western" society?

9. If you have particular religious beliefs, can you comment on to what extent your yoga practice integrates with your religious beliefs?

10. Can you think of any question that I did not ask, but could have?

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