Beyond mindfulness Mondays in high schools: An emergent mindfulness practice towards embodied wisdom

by

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Abstract

Mindfulness practice is trending. In high schools, the practice is oftentimes introduced as meditation for present-moment awareness of the self to support stress-reduction, self-regulation, and academic concerns. The thesis aims to show that this approach renders mindfulness practice as a coping technique for students to deal with rising mental health concerns and school pressures when, in fact, mindfulness practice within Buddhist philosophy is an integral part of a holistic way of cultivating human wellbeing towards human flourishing. The thesis argues for an interpretation of mindfulness practice that is coherent with its original conception and that aligns with tenets of wellbeing and with holistic education as mandated by BC's curriculum. The interpretation forms a holistic mindfulness framework that describes a practice which directs attention to the entirety of human subjective experience and makes room for contemplation on what emerges, such that practitioners cultivate embodied wisdom. The intertwined processes of such a practice are explored via a constructionist multi-case study that was facilitated online. Particularly, the qualitative research study examines how three secondary school students intra-act with a mindfulness practice that is underpinned by the holistic mindfulness framework. It captures how participants and the mindfulness practice have evolved in tandem, and how the former have grown in self-trust and grappled with core issues. The thesis makes a contribution to schooling and mental health domains by recommending a shift in the approach to mindfulness practice from a technique for coping to a practice that nurtures personal transformation.

Keywords: mindfulness; Buddhism; secondary school; mental health; holistic education

Dedication

To all sentient beings, past and present, known and unknown to me, that helped me generate this work. And to all beings that follow who will carry the ideas in this work further. For all of you, I wish you the realization of loving-kindness, the Metta Sutta, of which I include the beginning of below as a dedication to you.

> This is the work of those who are skilled
> and peaceful, who seek the good:
>
> May they be able and upright,
> straightforward, of gentle speech
> and not proud.
> May they be content and easily
> supported, unburdened, with their
> senses calmed.
> May they be wise, not arrogant and
> without desire for the possessions of
> others.
> May they do nothing mean or that the
> wise would reprove.
>
> May all beings be happy.
> May they live in safety and joy.
>
> (Kornfield, 1993, p. 6)

Acknowledgements

As I alluded to in the dedication section, I recognize that there are countless beings interwoven with me that made a path which led me to the current place of this work. Each is like a jewel, coming together like Indra's net, creating a path. Too many jewels to name and some that I do not know the names of. Even so, I shall endeavour to acknowledge several of the prominent people that are closely interwoven with me regarding this work.

I would like to begin by thanking participants of the study included in the thesis, who came together with me to practice mindfulness (including during their spring break from school!). They were so wonderful to collaborate with: generous in their sharing during and genuine in their feedback after the study. I hope they might read the thesis someday and see how their contributions tie together into valuable meaning and thereby know that they helped create something that will have an impact in other places.

Next on the topic of research, I would like to thank Dr. Michelle Chen, the professor of my very first research methods course, Introduction to Research in Education, who managed to teach the course in such an enlivening and digestible way that made me excited to come to class. It is because of her facilitation of and guidance throughout the course that made me believe that I might just actually be able to someday do a thing called research.

Continuing the note of professors now, thank you to Dr. Krista Socholotiuk, the committee member of this thesis, for seeing potential in me that I was oftentimes not even aware of. Dr. Socholotiuk has this uncanny ability, an inviting ability, to direct me to a zone for learning that I did not know was there. She knew how to guide me to stretch myself beyond what I knew or could do before. I have learned so much and continue to stretch and learn with Dr. Socholotiuk. I am grateful for her patience and skillful expertise in teaching me.

Next, thank you to Dr. Heesoon Bai, the supervisor of this work. I remember sheepishly reaching out to Dr. Bai and asking to get together to talk about graduate school, feeling unsure if I would be able to handle it in the first place let alone if Dr. Bai would even take me on as a student. The enthusiasm and support given by Dr. Bai in that conversation, even though we met only once before when I was an undergraduate

student in one of her courses and I had no formal scholarly training (my undergraduate degree was about practicing mathematics and classical piano, rather than theory and writing), set the journey in motion and kept me going throughout. I am thankful to Dr. Bai for helping to keep me on this journey and for being able to share knowledge with me in a way that I not only could understand logically but could also experience.

Speaking of experience, I would like to thank the generous, warm, and caring Sunims at the two Korean Buddhist temple stays I embarked on, particularly to Tae Gam Sunim. I was forever changed from my experiences there. Those experiences, along with the ones I enjoyed with Dr. Bai, played the very important role of shaping how I understood what mindfulness practice is and does as well as how I facilitated the practices of the study in this thesis.

Further regarding experience, thank you to Les Reimer also, my counselling practicum supervisor. Les taught me how to pay close attention to my clients as fellow human beings. I grew exponentially as a counsellor by training with him and was near the end of my training when I conducted the research study in the thesis. I am appreciative to Les and this timing, as these two pieces made me a skilful facilitator for the mindfulness practices and researcher of participants in the study, better than I would have been if I conducted the study before my training with Les.

Continuing with the concept of training, I give a heartfelt and tearful thank you to my late father, Mr. Vassilios Voulgaris, who provided me with a foundation for living my life and who passed away as I was embarking on my graduate school journey. My genuine curiosity, presence, and ability to support others in their search for healing ultimately comes from him and how he raised me. He gave – and I aim to give, both in my being with others and in this work – a sense of peacefulness, vibrant energy, and strength.

Finally, I reserve the biggest thank you for my partner, Dr. Jessica Lee. There is no graduate school version of me without Jessica. By watching them go through graduate school, I learned what it was about. And later, when I wanted to try, Jessica taught me how to do it. Jessica was with me throughout my graduate school journey: helping me draft my initial email to Dr. Bai, teaching me how to write an academic argument, never complaining about my erratic schedule, and so on. Most central to this

work is how Jessica accepted, soothed, and directed my oftentimes raw, unfiltered energy – regarding ideas, reviewing articles and my writing, before and after committee meetings, and the like. This is all to say that Jessica is the common thread running through the various parts of my time in graduate school. I am grateful for Jessica's unwavering support and marvel at how they were able to be this great resource of love and learning for me while, at the same time, trying to create some semblance of a life after graduate school for themselves. Thank you to my dearest; I am forever indebted.

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List of Acronyms

BC	British Columbia
SFU	Simon Fraser University
PA	Public announcement
MBSR	Mindfulness-based stress reduction
.b	Stop.breathe
MiSP	Mindfulness in schools project

Chapter 1.

Beyond mindfulness Mondays

1.1. Leading up to and beyond

I began exploring mindfulness practice in 2018, after feeling burnt-out as a public high school mathematics teacher. As a new teacher in 2013, I had set out to prove that all students were capable of learning mathematics – that it was not a subject to be feared as it commonly is. I believed doing so was a matter of forming a secure attachment with students and teaching the subject in a way that included students (e.g., interests, hobbies, needs) in the process.

This belief required a lot of effort to manifest. Many teachers, particularly those in high schools, keep and re-use their lesson plans year after year. I also made and kept plans, many of which were, at least initially in my career, derived from the generosity of the teachers who came before me and helped me get started. But as I used my prepared lesson plans, I found myself changing them to support more students in the moment. For example, I would think of a new example or metaphor to help explain a mathematical concept (e.g., idea of respect in sports to explain the concept of the distributive property) because I noticed students did not quite get it when I explained the concept the first time.

Being creative with students around mathematics lessons was helpful for many of them in learning the subject, not only in terms of better academic achievement but also in terms of their relationship to learning about and practicing mathematics; plus, it became fun for us as a class (e.g., boxing drill with the teacher to learn about rates)! And so, I ended up reforming my lesson plans as I taught. The collected changes to plans that I had at the end of one year became a base to be readily adjusted again the following year – to be stretched, pulled, shrunk, tossed out – depending on the group of students in front of me.

Then just a few years after I started, a mandated redesign of British Columbia's (BC's) curriculum was added to this already lofty teaching approach and I simply could not keep up. I was finding myself over capacity – too much, too often – because the

changes were not only regarding subject-matter content, but also included what are known as Core Competencies: important skills that students are to develop throughout their K-12 education and carry forward with them as citizens (Curriculum Redesign, n.d.).

To be clear, I fully believed in (and still do) and wished to integrate the Core Competencies into teaching mathematics. However, with the number of mathematical concepts needed to be covered, I struggled to bridge the Core Competencies to the mathematical concepts, and sometimes, to even find room for them as an add on towards the end of a class. I was not alone in this struggle. Fellow mathematics teachers and I would get together when we could, brainstorming how we might possibly integrate the Core Competencies with curriculum. To start, we settled on students undertaking a brief reflective exercise at the end of each major test. While the exercise felt superficial, it was technically satisfactory. Since we were mandated to include the competencies after all, we had to find a way to include them and quick.

1.1.1. BC education policy

To briefly touch on what the then-new BC curriculum was about, BC's public-school K-12 education policy featured an overhauled curriculum and introduced a new concept of the Core Competencies. The policy was introduced to schools on a rolling basis starting in the fall of 2015, meaning certain grade levels year by year until all grade levels were informed (Curriculum Redesign, n.d.). High schools were mandated to use the new curriculum beginning fall 2016 (Knack, 2018).

The Core Competencies are "sets of intellectual, personal, and social and emotional proficiencies" (Core Competencies, n.d.) conveyed as essential to all learners. These competencies are not specifically tied to any curricular content but are to "underpin" content "in all areas of learning" (Curriculum Redesign, n.d.), and they are positioned as critical to education and future citizenship (Curriculum Redesign, n.d.). The Core Competencies consist of three domains – (1) thinking, (2) communication, and (3) personal and social (Curriculum Redesign, n.d.) – each of which branches out to sub-categories.

At the time of the competencies roll out, the consensus amongst fellow teachers (including myself) was that it was easier to tie in the Core Competencies of (1) thinking and (2) communication with the curricular content compared to the subjective nature of the (3) personal and social competency. Indeed, I am guilty of having foregone this competency in the past, particularly when teaching upper-level mathematics classes due to the sheer volume of curriculum required. On the other hand, such struggles with (3) speak to the real need for direction on how teachers can integrate this core competency, particularly when it comes to academic subject curricula such as Mathematics and Science. Speaking from my personal experience, the personal and social competency is more likely to be overlooked in day-to-day secondary classrooms in favour of curricular outcomes despite the importance of (3) to the well-being of students. This is unfortunate given that the Core Competencies are to be developed in all areas of learning and at all levels of schooling (Core Competencies, n.d.).

My struggle with the domain of (3) the personal and social competency, therefore, became part of my motivation for this thesis. In particular, this domain contains three sub-categories: (a) personal awareness and responsibility, (b) positive personal and cultural identity, and (c) social awareness and responsibility (Personal and Social, n.d.). These three sub-categories, when taken together, describe the student developing awareness of their subjective experience regarding self and other in order to learn from it and use that learning to guide action.

1.1.2. Mental health

Despite knowing the value of the personal and social competency, I continued to struggle to integrate the competency. I could not keep up with the vast curricular changes required, that had little direction for teachers on how they might include them, and my earnest approach to teaching mathematics. Yet, I felt I could not give up either of them. And so, my mental health began slipping, becoming worse year after year. By 2018, five years into teaching high school, I felt like I was maxing out on my inner resources and that I needed some kind of support for myself. It is around this time that I heard of mindfulness practice as being helpful for mental health. So, I grabbed some books on the topic, did a few practices on my own at home, and tried yoga on a several occasions.

My personal practice helped me get through some hard days. For example, breathing meditation or a body-scan could help me fall asleep on anxious nights. After an hour of yoga, my body would finally feel relaxed and part of me again. Still, I could not shake the heavy, burdened feeling I had from my work on a regular basis. What my practice did offer me was a momentary break between the struggles I faced regarding work. It helped me to keep my tank full enough to get by the school year. And I thought that was a great relief!

It was not until I started my counsellor training the year after, where I realized mental health as much more than symptom reduction. As I learned about theories and interventions to support client mental health, the message received from my professors was that counselling is not only about providing interventions for client concerns. It was emphasized that interventions and coping skills were part of a larger picture, which included understanding theoretical frameworks and the client's unique and subjective experiences. Throughout my training, I came to learn that sessions geared towards coping were less frequent, in cases where I might see a client briefly (e.g., intake appointment), in a large group counselling setting whose purpose is psychoeducation, or in the case where learning to cope is necessary for the client to then be able to have capacity to engage in the process of counselling. Most of the time, counselling is a process – whether its unfolding over a single session or over several years – that aims to draw out client subjective experiencing (e.g., meaning-making, ethics, spirituality) such that the client can become aware of and understand their experience to be able to shape future experience (Young, 2017, p. 10). The client and counsellor intentionally engaging in a comprehensive and attentive process is what fosters mental health (Young, 2017, p.10).

As I learned to understand and appreciate the subjective complexity surrounding the counselling process, I began to see why my personal mindfulness practice that I started in 2018 to support myself was, simply put, okay. My practice helped me through some difficult moments, but I could not shake off the chronic hum of feeling unwell.

1.1.3. Mindfulness practice in a Buddhist environment

The hum of unwellness made me wonder about the spiritual side of mindfulness practice. So, I picked up books on Buddhism that called to me. These readings intrigued

me to the point where I thought it might be time for me to embark on a temple stay to see what mindfulness practice is really about. Since I previously lived in South Korea for a year and have family members who are Korean – meaning the culture and language felt familiar and comfortable for me – I decided to engage in a Korean Buddhist temple stay. I experienced a 2-week Korean Buddhist temple stay at two different temples during the summer break of 2018.

What stood out to me during my time there was the warmth and flexibility taken to introduce me to various meditations and activities at the temples. Everything was an invitation, never a requirement. Even the monks were allowed to skip a meditation practice or ceremony, or to have an ice cream! One particular practice that stood out to me, of many significant offerings, was teatime with a monk. I and other lay people staying at the temple could sit with a monk to have tea together. Other monks or temple staff were also present on occasion. We could ask the monk anything during teatime. I stayed long enough to have many afternoon teas, sometimes witnessing the same questions being asked day after day by different people. Not once did a monk signal that they did not want to answer a question. And when they answered, they did so with such care towards the person asking, inviting them into conversation, and then sometimes opening the conversation up to the rest of the group.

My time there made me wonder: Could the personal learning I experienced from such a warm and flexible environment of mindfulness practice be generated with my high school students, even though it is such a different setting? What would students feel about such a practice? Would it be helpful for their wellbeing or for their classroom engagement? This is when I knew I wanted to focus on the topic of mindfulness practice within secondary schools for my eventual thesis, when I would start graduate school in a year.

1.1.4. Mindfulness practice in high schools

After the temple stays, I did not give much more thought to the aforementioned questions as I, once again, became busy in my job as a public high school teacher and graduate school was still a year away. The questions fell by the wayside until, at one point during the school year, there was a schoolwide announcement that we would be engaging in mindfulness practice once a week. It would be on Monday mornings, and so

it was called Mindfulness Mondays. The following Monday morning before classes started, a brief announcement came on telling us that we would commence practice. We were asked to take a moment to get comfortable in our seats and a short passage was read. The practice lasted about 5 minutes in total. A few of my students paid attention to what was shared, but many did not; and some were actively complaining about the practice during the practice! Inquiring about the practice from fellow teachers, they experienced the same as I did in my classroom. In sum, I watched this misunderstood and mindless mindfulness practice carry on for several weeks.

Like students and teachers, I also became frustrated by the practice, but for different reasons. For me, the practice did not align with my understanding and experience of what mindfulness is and does. Moreover, I recognized many teachers and students now being turned off from a potentially transformative practice, at no fault of their own. There was no sense of preparation for and understanding of what we would be practicing and why, leading to a practice that was viewed by many at our school as a waste of time when so many learning outcomes needed to be tended to. And it happened again at another school that I taught, this time for teachers and called Wellness Wednesdays.

These experiences jolted me back to my initial questions. If only we might experience what mindfulness practice is intended to be like in our high school setting, similar to my experience at the Korean Buddhist temples, and capture that as a research project so that it could be widely shared. However, I did not know how to transpose what I had experienced to the high school setting. As such, I did what any budding graduate student would do who was about to start school: I turned to look at the research on the topic. Given the popularity of meditation and yoga in general, I thought that there would surely be research on mindfulness practice that would tell me how to facilitate practices in secondary schools like the ones I experienced at the temple stay.

I was hard-pressed to find such articles, particularly for the high school setting. Of the 22 articles I reviewed, I realized two key things. First, the mindfulness practices engaged in were oftentimes meditation with a focus on the breath. In the case of pre-established mindfulness curriculum (e.g., Learning to Breathe), they included a combination of meditations. Second, the top three outcomes, by frequency, were stress-reduction, self-regulation, and academic achievement.

I was surprised to see such a limited focus in the literature. The practices and activities I experienced at the temple stay were varied (e.g., teatime, sitting meditation, working meditation, graveyard ritual) and flexible. As an example of flexibility, monks and staff would share stories behind and adapt the activities or meditations based on who was present. Moreover, the outcomes of the studies imply that mindfulness practice was a coping skill that students should learn in order to deal with the stresses and pressures of school life. This is very different from the flexibility of and openness during mindfulness practices that I experienced at the temple stay, which helped me grow personally and professionally. As a personal example, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of my relationship to my body as it relates to gender. Professionally, I was able to reconnect with my core reasons for becoming a teacher, which then sparked a new teaching strategy for an upcoming specialized mathematics course.

Moreover, I was further surprised by the limited accessibility of certain mindfulness programs. When I followed an article that promoted an evidence-based mindfulness curriculum to the program that the researchers referenced, I often found the program requiring payment for certification before it could be used. While I can understand the purpose of a payment and certification structure to support and bolster such programs, as an educator in BC's chronically underfunded public-school system, payment adds a financial barrier. It also felt contrary to the notion of dana in Buddhism, whereby teachings are provided openly and freely without expectation of return.

1.1.5. Holistic mindfulness framework

Surprised and puzzled by the research articles I reviewed, I widened the search, looking for critics of mindfulness practice (e.g., Terry Hyland) and other notable scholars on mindfulness in general (e.g., Oren Ergas) in the hope that they might help me figure out how I might regenerate with secondary school students what it is that I experienced at the temple stay. This search pointed out an oversight and a direction, that mindfulness practice comes from and needed to be anchored back to its Buddhist roots.

So, I went down the advised way, trying to understand the following: the relevant Buddhist concepts surrounding mindfulness and how these concepts related to what I experienced at the temple. The understanding I arrive at constitutes the holistic mindfulness framework that is central to the thesis. To briefly outline this understanding

here, there are two Buddhist concepts that surround mindfulness practice which come together to form the holistic mindfulness framework – a framework that, as I will demonstrate, can be separate from the particular rites and rituals of the religion. These concepts are The Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and The Foundations of Mindfulness. The Foundations of Mindfulness includes two branches: The Four Frames and Noble Eightfold Path. The Three Jewels inform the environment of practice and the Foundations of Mindfulness inform the practice itself. Putting these concepts together to inform mindfulness practice, the message given is that the process is of utmost importance rather than the type of practice offered.

1.1.6. Arriving at this work

The aforementioned articles which pointed towards the holistic mindfulness framework were conceptual pieces. It seemed that many prominent thinkers stopped at the place of thinking. I was hoping that these scholars would show me how exactly it is that I might change the approach to practice, the doing. Unfortunately, this was not the case. It looked like to me that thinking and doing were treated as separate matters for those who have taken up the work of promoting mindfulness to date. It made me feel like I had to choose which side to focus on – between deeply flushing out a conceptual work or pursuing a detailed research project. No wonder mindfulness practice has become lost in translation!

I wanted to refuse the duality of choosing a side. I did not want to stop at a conceptual work for this thesis, that is, a work that described how mindfulness practice could be anchored to its relevant Buddhist concepts and still be applicable to the high school setting. This was because I knew full well, from my own experience as an educator, how much time and effort it took a teacher to be able to do their job well. I worried there would be no time and energy left for educators to figure out how they might apply yet another thing that was told to them, even if it was laid out elegantly and convincingly in a conceptual piece. Nor did I want to detail a research project on mindfulness practice with high school students without enough background information on the factors that went into the practice. My worry here was: if I did not provide enough conceptual foreground and instead mostly declared what I did and the results, then what I did might then be applied like a formula that misses the flexibility and complexity that is

so important for mindfulness practice. To put these various thoughts together is to say that, for this thesis, I wanted “and” not “or”.

Thus, I present this work. This thesis is my attempt at bringing together the thinking and the doing. My aim is two-fold. First comes the thinking. After outlining my review of the literature, I aim to (1) anchor mindfulness practice to its relevant Buddhist roots, giving a comprehensive interpretation that can inform mainstream practice. I later refer to this as a holistic mindfulness framework and demonstrate its transferability to the counselling and high school settings. Next comes the doing. I aim to (2) examine how a mindfulness practice underpinned by such a framework is experienced by secondary school students via a constructionist multi-case study. Further, the study considers students’ experience each time they practice. I then reflect on the findings to explore the relevance of the practice with regards to the holistic mindfulness framework, fostering mental health, and actualizing education policy. I hope to present sufficient detail throughout the thesis such that the work can be understood and used by the reader in a way that is suitable to their context. More importantly, I hope the thesis might catalyze a shift in how we practice mindfulness with secondary school students: shifting the approach to generate a mindfulness practice that aims beyond coping towards a holistic practice which illuminates a deeply personal path of transformation.

1.2. Personal preparations

It is important for a facilitator (and researcher, if conducting a study) of mindfulness practice to have some form of embodied understanding of what mindfulness is and does as will be outlined in this thesis – like the teacher who practices absorbing and expressing their subject-matter before they are qualified as a teacher. The Korean Buddhist temple stay I described in the previous section is one example of embodied understanding that I experienced. That being said, this does not inherently mean one must go out for a temple stay. I encourage the reader to reflect on experiences of mindfulness practice that they have had and to pursue experiences that call to them, just as the temple stay called to me.

This section serves as further encouragement for the reader, where I will describe other notable forms of embodied understanding that I experienced which can be used as a springboard for the reader towards their own experience. I will also outline

areas of my background relating to career and education that are relevant to this thesis. Describing these various aspects also serves as an act of transparency, revealing the most significant sources that shaped this work.

1.2.1. Embodied understanding

There are several resources over the years, namely books and podcasts, that called to me when I was looking to understand mindfulness and Buddhist philosophy but was unsure of what exactly I was looking for. One of my books, which I drew heavily from for the study, was Thich Nhat Hanh's (2012) "The Pocket". I have also very much enjoyed other writings by Thich Nhat Hanh. Some of my other favourite books, to date, include one that discusses cultivating mindfulness by Sayadaw U Tejaniya (2016), and one that explains various Zen koans by Tarrant (2008). As far as podcasts go, Upaya Zen Centre's dharma podcasts are ones that I find myself regularly tuning into.

The aforementioned resources are examples of where I started before gathering up the courage to go out and experience a live Sangha, such as the temple stay that I described. Another notable Sangha experience, which informed how I facilitated the mindfulness practice of the study in particular, was from a graduate level seminar I attended by Dr. Heesoon Bai, the supervisor of this thesis. I chose the seminar because I was interested in the topic and trusted the professor teaching it. During the seminar, we were always encouraged to bring ourselves into the educational space. One way that Dr. Bai did this for example, was by threading what we, as individuals, had to say during the opening mindfulness practice with each other's sharing and the assigned readings to be discussed. In doing so, Dr. Bai was inviting me to experience connection between self, classmates, and curriculum through mindfulness practice, as well as modeling how to do this so that I could recognize and share about such connections as the semester went on.

The above-described resources and key experiences taught me how to tune into and go beyond myself via mindfulness practice. They taught me the transformative value in deep listening to the self and other, no matter the setting. They formed the foundation for how I shaped and facilitated the study. In describing these experiences, I, once again, hope to encourage the reader to explore opportunities of mindfulness practice,

particularly ones where they feel they may be able to experience and cultivate the skill of deep listening from the practice.

1.2.2. Deep listening

As I will outline in the holistic mindfulness framework in Chapter 2, attentive and sincere deep listening – to self and other, human and non-human alike – is part of what mindfulness practice is about. Therefore, it will be important for a facilitator and researcher on the subject to have developed some skill in this regard. I will make further reference to the skill of listening in Chapter 5.

For now, I would like to say that, while it takes time and care to cultivate the skill of deep listening, there are many ways to go about doing so in addition to mindfulness practice. For me, it started at the outset of my teaching career. I had the belief that I could successfully help any student with the high school mathematics curriculum if I tried to share knowledge of the subject in a way that considers the student (e.g., interests, context). It was challenging to adapt a bursting mathematics curriculum to the students in front of me. Yet, the benefit in doing so was apparent each time I strived for this, not only in terms of academic achievement but also in comments from students and guardians about how students experienced the class. This motivated me to keep practicing the skill of deep listening and in various ways (e.g., mindfulness practice, studying counselling).

Since then, I have spent many years working with youth, as a high school mathematics teacher for eight years followed by a position as a post-secondary counsellor that marks a turn in my career. This is to say that I have had a nearby seat to the ups and downs students experience in their various situations (e.g., school, work, homelife, relationships). Such proximity over the years has helped me become adept at deep listening, which is not only beneficial for supporting students but also for navigating the various aspects of the study presented in this thesis, such as facilitating the mindfulness practice, data gathering, and data analysis.

1.2.3. Conducting research

I have taken three research related courses to prepare for the journey of undertaking a study. I began with an undergraduate course that served as an introduction to research in education. This was general in scope, namely teaching me how to critically review research articles and create a research proposal. Next was a graduate level course, which was also general in scope but focused on writing a literature review along with reviewing articles. This course was instrumental for shaping Chapter 2. Finally, knowing that I wanted to undertake a qualitative study, I took a graduate course in advanced qualitative research in education. This course informed the design and reporting of the study presented in this thesis or Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

In addition to coursework, I have earned valuable support from my thoughtfully chosen thesis committee which consists of Dr. Heesoon Bai (supervisor) and Dr. Krista Socholotiuk (committee member) from Simon Fraser University (SFU). While both have overseen the entirety of this thesis, each has also shared specific talents that helped me prepare and refine certain areas. For example, Dr. Bai has been a wise guide as it relates to the holistic mindfulness framework in Chapter 2 and my facilitation of the mindfulness practices of the study. Such guidance is possible given Dr. Bai's experience in integrating mindfulness practices within graduate courses – known as contemplative education, which is discussed in Section 2.4.2 – and as a long-time practitioner of Zen Buddhism. In the case of Dr. Socholotiuk, a special interest in research methods – which includes experience in leading research projects, a book chapter on understanding counselling and psychotherapy research (Socholotiuk et al., 2016), and teaching graduate courses in research methodology – made Dr. Socholotiuk a skilful mentor for the study design.

1.3. Navigating the thesis

Now, to prepare the reader for what lies ahead! In general, there are prologues and epilogues to each chapter (the first and last sections, respectively) to support a variety of reading styles. By including these, I hope to encourage the reader to enjoy the thesis contemplatively – perhaps reading a chapter, putting down the thesis for some time to contemplate the chapter, and then returning to the thesis. The prologues and

epilogues are guideposts to support the reader in such a process. To further the reader's anticipation, I provide a general outline of the subsequent chapters below.

1.3.1. Subsequent chapters

Chapter 2 serves as the literature review. In that chapter, I call attention to the trend of mindfulness practice for students in secondary schools and provide a synthesized review of research articles and of the developmental history on the topic. I use this review to make the case that mindfulness practice is currently misunderstood as a coping strategy, as well as misaligned with the notion of mental health and BC education policy. I draw on notable scholars of mindfulness to direct me to an interpretation of mindfulness practice that I will refer to as the holistic mindfulness framework. I also demonstrate the transferability of the framework. Finally, I point to a gap in the research regarding mindfulness practice with secondary school students and explain how I will address this gap. The overarching inquiry question is: How do students intra-act with a mindfulness practice underpinned by a holistic mindfulness framework?

Chapter 3 is regarding the study methods. In this chapter, I start by giving background information to the study, such as: who the research team is, why the study focuses on students as participants and is qualitative, as well as the moderate constructionist paradigm and multi-case study method. Next, I outline the study's process. Documents regarding aspects of the process are provided for the reader within Appendix B. Finally, I discuss the rigour of the study.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to describing the findings from the study. I begin the chapter by introducing the three cases and their unique pathways in building self-trust during our practice together. Next, I present three interrelated key assertions that came about from the data: (1) Participants were coming to trust their present moment experience, (2) our emergent mindfulness practice strengthened, and, the mutual and synergistic growth between these two (3) supported participants to reveal and grapple with a core issue that was important to them. Finally, I also illustrate that our practice was helpful and meaningful from participants' point of view.

Chapter 5 serves as the discussion and I situate the findings in three ways. First, I discuss their relevance to the holistic mindfulness framework, particularly the Noble

Eightfold Path. Second, I show the importance of participants' emerging self-trust in light of an existing body of work on the topic of self-trust by Govier (1993) and Lehrer (2011a; 2011b; 1997). Third, I indicate the ways in which the findings suggest that generating an emergent mindfulness practice has potential to foster mental health and actualize holistic education policy. From here, I use the discussion to make recommendations for facilitators of mindfulness practice and future research on the topic. Finally, I close the chapter, and thereby the thesis, with an anecdote from a participant's member check interview that ties the study's mindfulness practice to the ultimate hope I have for the practice.

1.4. Anticipated audience

I recognize that research and practice are interconnected, influencing each other's trajectory. Research is oftentimes cited to inform practice. Ponderings of and discoveries from practice bring about research. As such, I hope to make this work accessible to readers outside the academic circle so that a shift in how mindfulness practice is approached can begin from two directions simultaneously – top-down and bottom-up.

Perhaps more importantly for me, which inspired this work and influenced my writing style, is the bottom-up. Conducting and disseminating research is a lengthy process, and rightly so to be able to craft and communicate thoughtful work. Yet, students are at the receiving end of mindfulness practice and will continue to experience a practice towards coping, like mindfulness Mondays, while the research takes time to formulate in the background. Therefore, this work is written with the practitioner (e.g., students, teachers) or practitioner-researcher in mind so that they can begin reflecting on and modifying their practice. By practitioner, I am referring to anyone who is engaging in or wishes to engage in a mindfulness practice within their setting and who may have limited knowledge of and/or ability to understand and apply research designs and findings. Such may be the case for many teachers for example, where all are experts in their subject-matter, yet many may not have undertaken any research related training. By practitioner-researcher, I am considering someone with further knowledge in understanding and applying research than the practitioner. Perhaps they are also qualified to conduct research. This may be the case with school counsellors for example, as they are oftentimes required to have taken at least one research methods course as

part of their training program. And in some cases, depending on the type of graduate program, they may have even pursued a research project.

The above is all to say that it is my sincerest hope that this thesis may be read by a variety of readers at different levels of experience. I wish for teachers, school counsellors, school administrators, and even students (given that the participants of the study indicated they wanted a copy of the thesis!) to feel they can understand and apply this work. I further hope that readers from other fields (like the nurse who I was honoured to engage with around the topic of mindfulness practice at a conference) can pick up this thesis and recognize its transferability. One way I support my hope for a wide audience is by continuing the narrative flavour started in this chapter and integrating it with important concepts – blending voices and examples with academic content. After all, this thesis will emphasize the importance of human subjective experience in various ways (e.g., holistic mindfulness framework, notion of mental health, school policy). It makes sense, therefore, that the voices of and examples from myself and participants – our experience – be included throughout as relevant within each chapter.

At the same time, while the thesis is written in a style that appeals to various readers, it includes key components (e.g., literature review, methods, findings, discussion) along with sufficient explanation and detail to make this a trustworthy work. In doing so, I also wish to appeal to researchers to read and take up an interest in this work.

1.5. Continuing on

This initial chapter outlined the background to the thesis. It included the origin story along with key ideas used in the thesis, my personal history as it relates to this work, and who I hope will read the thesis. It also gave a taste of the writing style that will continue to be used: A personal tone with examples and analogies. The next chapter presents the literature review.

Chapter 2. Relax and carry on?

2.1. Introduction to the literature review

Chapter 2 has two overarching dimensions. The first takes a closer look at mindfulness practice with high school students and, in doing so, makes the argument that a shift is needed in how mindfulness is approached. The second concerns itself with the process of shifting. It outlines a holistic mindfulness framework to guide change and applies this framework to relevant contexts. The chapter then ends by arriving at and explaining the research question for the study.

I start the first dimension by reviewing how mindfulness is currently enacted in secondary schools, both from my experience as a teacher and from recent literature on the topic. Considering recent studies in particular, as this is where schools oftentimes look to justify implementing mindfulness, I call attention to mindfulness practices as focusing students in the direction of coping. I also consider the history of mindfulness practice for coping. From here, I express that helping students in this way is limiting, as the concept of mental health is expansive and holistic. I draw from Keyes' (2003) framing of mental health as an example to support this argument. I then point out that school policy has also expanded to be holistic, particularly noting the personal and social competency of BC's revised curriculum. Having identified limitations of currently enacted mindfulness practice with regards to mental health and school policy, I then signal that there is a need to shift how the practice is approached in secondary schools. From here, I look to prominent scholars that point in the direction of change, as well as discuss the need to shift.

The second dimension is dedicated to taking up the task of shifting, by realigning the construct of mindfulness with its Buddhist underpinnings, the concepts of Three Jewels and the Foundations of Mindfulness (i.e., The Four Frames and Noble Eightfold Path). After describing these concepts, I discuss how they come together to form a holistic mindfulness framework that gives rise to an emergent practice towards embodied wisdom. And it doesn't stop there. I go further with the framework by sharing how it fits with the role of counsellor and classroom teacher. Finally, I conclude the chapter by leading the reader to the research question for the constructionist multi-case study, whereby the study will be developed in subsequent thesis chapters.

2.2. Mindfulness is trending

Mindfulness Mondays was a weekly practice at my secondary school – a 5-minute meditation exercise that took place over the school's public announcement (PA) system right after the morning bell. As a school, we were briefly introduced to the idea, again over the PA system, and it was conveyed that the purpose would be to help students settle into the school week. Another secondary school in which I briefly taught had a dedicated course for students in grade 10, called Yoga for Mindfulness 10. In taking this course, part of what students were to gain included improved concentration, self-awareness, stress management, and relaxation. I give these secondary school examples that I experienced as illustrations of how commonplace mindfulness activities are in schools, ranging anywhere from bite-size meditation exercises to full courses.

The trend of including mindfulness practices in secondary schools makes sense, given that mindfulness research with students has demonstrated positive outcomes, such as improvements in cognitive tasks (e.g., memory, attention) and socioemotional outcomes (e.g., stress, engagement) (Carsley et al., 2018; Maynard et al., 2017). Couple such promising results with the urgency to support students with their mental health, as youth ages 15-21 face the highest incidence of mental health disorders in Canada (Youth Mental Health Canada, 2016), and mindfulness to facilitate student wellbeing has skyrocketed in popularity.

2.2.1. A closer look: Mindfulness for coping

Reviewing research of mindfulness practices with secondary school students, particularly with non-specialized student populations from 2016 (N = 37; See Appendix A for explanation of data sources, article selection process, and reference list) as these constraints give a snapshot of the field and the year aligns with implementation of BC's holistic education policy, reveals a common understanding around what mindfulness is and aims to do. In the aforementioned research base, the definition of mindfulness oftentimes is or draws on the definition by Kabat-Zinn (1994, p. 4): "paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally." The practices used to invoke mindfulness were a standalone meditation exercise (e.g., breath awareness meditation, art activity, yoga) or combination of meditation exercises over time (as in the cases of previously established mindfulness-based programs for high schools). Table A.2.2 within

Appendix A outlines which research articles offered what kind of mindfulness practice, if the reader is interested in finding out more about a particular practice or combination of practices used. Looking at the outcomes of the studies, the two most frequently examined outcomes with regards to mental health were stress-reduction (*n* = 19) and self-regulation (*n* = 18). The most frequent outcomes regarding students' education were behaviour problems (*n* = 5), academic achievement (*n* = 4), attention (*n* = 4), and test anxiety (*n* = 4).

Other, less frequent outcomes included mindfulness (e.g., state or trait mindfulness scales) (*n* = 6), self-compassion (*n* = 5), well-being (*n* = 4), anxiety (*n* = 3), depression (*n* = 3), executive functioning (*n* = 3), classroom engagement (*n* = 2), creativity (*n* = 1), sense of connection (*n* = 1), memory (*n* = 1), impulsivity and aggression (*n* = 1), peer relationships (*n* = 1), pro-social behaviour (*n* = 1), resilience (*n* = 1), self-concept (*n* = 1), self-efficacy (*n* = 1), and trauma of adolescence (*n* = 1). Table A.2.3 within Appendix A presents an organization of the articles by outcomes.

While the understanding of mindfulness as awareness is indeed part of the construct of mindfulness as outlined by Buddhist philosophy (which I describe in detail within Section 2.6) and there are different practices available to invoke attunement to present moment experiencing, the outcomes within the collection of studies reviewed (*N* = 37) reveal an implicit assumption permeating this body of work. The value of mindfulness is in its potential to help students cope better with the stresses and pressures of school life such that they can carry on with their school day; It is a tool that implicitly aims to quell symptoms in order to actualize academic success. I would like to add that, although the studies I reviewed (*N* = 37) represent a sample of mindfulness research in secondary schools, they showcase the current understanding and purpose of mindfulness practice in schools of meditation as a tool for coping with negative symptoms. As a recently published news article by the Guardian (Weale, 2022) indicates, this is indeed the perception circulating among the general public.

2.2.2. History of mindfulness for coping

The current use of meditation as a tool for symptom reduction in order to promote student functioning in public schools originates from the medicalized beginnings of mindfulness in North America by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1970s (Hart et al., 2013). Kabat-

Zinn began integrating mindfulness as an intervention to alleviate symptoms of his patients who faced chronic mental and physical conditions (Hart et al., 2013; Kabat-Zinn, 2021). His intervention was then organized into a manualized program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). From here, the program was adopted into non-medical clinical settings and the general community in the 1990s (Hart et al., 2013). As the research showed promising results in the reduction of stress and other negative symptoms, it was then extended to schools in the early 2000s (Renshaw & Cook, 2017). Several variations tailored for secondary schools have since come about, such the Learning to Breathe (Broderick, 2019) program from the United States and the stop.breathe (.b) program that originated in the United Kingdom and is also promoted by the Mindfulness Schools Project organization in the United States (MiSP, 2022).

Such manualized and evidence-based curriculums derived from MBSR fueled uptake, resulting in books, podcasts, phone applications, teacher training workshops and more. Thus, many types of mindfulness practices have been tried with students to date, both in research and practice. Yet, as I showed in the previous section and that of which was then confirmed via this history, many of them are stems of the same root: meditation as a tool for coping.

2.3. Expanding understanding

Before presenting the problem with currently enacted mindfulness practice for coping, I would like to first clarify my position. Using mindfulness practice to cope with the pressure students face is not problematic, per se. To return to my opening example of Mindfulness Mondays, to use a mindfulness practice whose aim is to invite calm and acceptance of the previous week and/or weekend in preparation for the tasks ahead can be helpful for students. The practice can help a student enter a state of flow towards their schoolwork, either from that Monday morning practice and/or if the student then uses the practice in other instances (e.g., while trying to do homework, before a test). This is to say that being able to stress-reduce or self-regulate and thus be productive can be a wonderful thing! Remission of negative health symptoms is a noteworthy contribution of Kabat-Zinn's program. Further, his program set the foundation for mindfulness practice that originated in Buddhism to be accepted in society.

However, such practice becomes problematic when its implicit overarching aim is success in school. School performance does not automatically equate to mental health or citizenship. As an external measure, it is one part of a bigger picture towards these aims. The missing piece that has come to be understood as critical for fostering mental health and educating students such that they become wholesome citizens is our subjective experiencing or the internal.

2.3.1. Mental health as more than symptom reduction

While MBSR-derived mindfulness programs have shown positive outcomes in research, they seem to have inadvertently positioned mindfulness practice to be viewed as a remedy for negative symptoms, including such things as students' mental and emotional struggles at school. However, a contemporary understanding of mental health makes clear that mental health is more than working towards the prevention or absence of symptoms of mental illness (Keyes, 2003; Manwell et al., 2015).

For instance, Keyes' (2003) model proposes three branches that come together to generate mental health: emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Under the umbrella of emotional health for example, individuals experience and exhibit a sense of satisfaction, vitality, and happiness in their life (Keyes, 2003). Regarding psychological health are indicators of personal growth and positive relationships, along with self-acceptance and having a sense of purpose and autonomy in life. (Keyes, 2003). Lastly, social health refers to taking an interest in and showing care towards others, as well as perceiving acceptance and belonging from others (Keyes, 2003).

What is notable in the above model of mental health is its emphasis on the individual's positive subjective experience of complex notions. It recognizes fostering positive subjective experience as necessary for long-term transformation towards mental health and reflects a more holistic understanding of human needs (Keyes, 2003). As such, the model stands in stark contrast to the idea of mental health as stress reduction and emotion regulation, of which mindfulness practice in high schools currently oftentimes aims for.

2.3.2. Education policy has shifted

Education policy is also recognizing the need for a more holistic approach to student development, whereby students becoming citizens means much more than working towards graduation requirements and competing in the job market. BC's revised curriculum represents such a policy by including the notion of a personal and social competency. This competency, in particular, includes three sub-categories: (1) personal awareness and responsibility, (2) positive personal and cultural identity, and (3) social awareness and responsibility (Personal and Social, n.d.). Reviewing the document that describes these sub-categories reveals language far beyond academic performance as education. Under that of (1) personal awareness and responsibility for example, students are to learn to understand the influences of their personal and social behaviour on their wellbeing, as well as to advocate for themselves (Personal and Social, n.d.). With (2) positive personal and cultural identity, students are to understand how personal and collective stories shape their identity, and to develop a positive sense of self (Personal and Social, n.d.). Further, students are to understand how their identity might contribute to the wellbeing of their family, community, and to broader society (Personal and Social, n.d.). Finally, in (3) social awareness and responsibility, students are to increasingly realize the connection between people and the environment, and in doing so, to learn to interact with all in considerate ways, which includes the development of safe, inclusive communities (Personal and Social, n.d.). Taken together, the personal and social competency signals for the cultivation of a rich awareness and deep respect for all in this world, where students are not only attuned to themselves but they also advocate for and take active steps towards the betterment of themselves and the world around them.

2.4. Pulling it all together: The call for change

Now, to pull the aforementioned contextual strands together: Given the understanding of mental health and BC school policy as expansive, holistic, and emphasizing subjective experience as important, then it follows that mindfulness as is currently enacted, or mindfulness for coping, represents initial steps on the path towards mental health and the realization of education policy. The practice is limited in its ability to support long-term transformation towards mental health and how students perceive and pursue their education. Therefore, if mindfulness practice is to be undertaken to

support the mental health of youth and within the secondary school context – as the Guardian news article I referred to earlier implies that it should have been able to do (Weale, 2022) – then there needs to be a shift in the way the practice is approached in this setting. However, how to approach mindfulness practice so that it better aligns with the notion of mental health and school policy has yet to be clearly conceived and articulated such that it can be embraced by practitioners and researchers.

Indeed, Kabat-Zinn released a statement in 2021 to express caution about the current approach to mindfulness practice and that the intention of his work was not to reduce the practice to a coping technique. He aimed to remind those engaged in or wanting to embark on a journey of mindfulness practice that it is holistic, further expressing that the practice is about cultivating intimacy with the self (Kabat-Zinn, 2021). He described that the purpose of forming a relationship with ourselves was for understanding and shaping how our life unfolds (Kabat-Zinn, 2021). To move towards this purpose via mindfulness practice, it is framed that the practice invite awareness of and understanding towards all of human experiencing within our lives, and that this will, over time, generate an increasingly openhearted spaciousness that results in responding rather than reacting to ourselves and the world around us (Kabat-Zinn, 2021). Additionally, Kabat-Zinn (2021) emphasized ongoing intention and practice, where each practitioner is able to find their own “authentic way to practice, a way that feels intuitive and trustworthy.” In sum, he is effectively pointing out that mindfulness practice is part of a comprehensive system of learning.

2.4.1. Echoes from other scholars

Given the rich, deep, and personal purpose of mindfulness practice Kabat-Zinn reminds us of, and of mental health and school policy, then it becomes apparent that currently enacted mindfulness practice within secondary schools is missing exploration of this subjective complexity. Notable academic scholars on mindfulness echo and elaborate on this omitted complexity in practice and research.

In Ergas’ and Hadar’s (2019) systematic review for example, differing strands of mindfulness practice within education are observed. They name two strands: mindfulness “in” education and mindfulness “as” education. Currently enacted mindfulness for coping, can be classified here as mindfulness “in” education, whereby

mindfulness is inserted as means to facilitate everyday school functioning (Ergas & Hadar, 2019) – to support students in keeping up with the pressures and demands of school. In mindfulness as education, however, the mindfulness practice itself becomes the education; the practice is the teacher and it aims to facilitate meaning making and transformation for the practitioner (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). It is also noteworthy that mindfulness “as” education mostly occurred within higher education settings and was, to at least some degree, Buddhist informed (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). While the authors stop short of claiming a side, as they disclosed not all studies reviewed pertaining to mindfulness “in” education focused solely on school functioning, the authors voice a need to diversify mindfulness research such that the richness of mindfulness practice may begin to be expressed (Ergas & Hadar, 2019).

Hyland’s (2017) review, on the other hand, firmly placed currently enacted mindfulness on the side of mindfulness “in” education and openly critiqued this placement, viewing it as the reduction of mindfulness practice into a set of self-help techniques for the purpose of supporting capitalist dynamics of production. Hyland (2017) coined the term “McMindfulness” to encapsulate a superficial practice whose purpose is to sustain capitalism. He argued that practices in schools can be viewed as McMindfulness since their overarching aim is the achievement of learning outcomes, synonymizing achievement in education with production (Hyland, 2017). Instead, Hyland (2017) advocated for a mindfulness practice in education that he described as an intimate personal learning that is not divorced from ethical considerations, whereby ethical considerations in education means exploring the moral and spiritual dimensions of the standard education curriculum, as well as the links between education and wider social, political, and cultural contexts. He underscored that such mindfulness practice within education requires that it be informed by the Buddhist principles which underpin it, in order to change the practice from its current state of self-help to self-awareness, interconnectedness, and compassionate action (Hyland, 2017). Hyland (2017), however, left open whether such an anchoring of mindfulness can occur in schools due to the demands and pressures within educational systems.

2.4.2. Contemplative education

The field of contemplative education provides guidance on how mindfulness practice and educational content can come together in a way that is congruent with the

holistic and transformative view advocated by the aforementioned scholars of mindfulness. Here, educators intertwine students' internal subjective experiencing with external requirements of curriculum via mindfulness practice. However, contemplative education goes beyond meditation on breath awareness in education to help students better focus on class curricula. It is a philosophy of teaching that includes time spent contemplating on the mindfulness practice, the individual, and the classroom content – the relevant physiological, psychological, philosophical and spiritual background within each – and the themes that connect them (Roeser & Peck, 2009). Such vast and deep awareness supports the student in forming an engaged and relational connection to the mindfulness practice, curriculum, and others in the classroom (Roeser & Peck, 2009). The purpose of practice is to facilitate meaningful change for students with regards to their understanding and approach to mindfulness practice and education (Roeser & Peck, 2009). To generate such an environment for change, the teacher embodies the understanding that they are not only an instructor of knowledge, but also, and perhaps more importantly, a facilitator of human beings.

Putting the above pieces together means that, for contemplative educators, mindfulness practice is not something educators provide to their students; rather, they view the practice as its own pedagogy to be integrated within the classroom in order to "…connect with their students as whole persons, reaching their students on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. Such teaching can be pictured as an organic process, which evolves in connection to the immediate and ongoing context" (Waxler & Hall, 2011, p. 100). Such a holistic approach to mindfulness practice is also in better alignment with Buddhist philosophy.

Yet, contemplative education remains nearly exclusive to higher education, such as colleges and universities. Very few studies exist of contemplative education within high schools. A search of all databases on EBSCOhost produced only six articles within secondary education (see Appendix A for an explanation of the data sources and for a list of articles). Of these, three simply replaced the word "mindfulness" with the word "contemplative" (e.g., contemplative practice, contemplative meditation) and proceeded in the same manner of using the practice as a coping skill. While the other articles were better aligned with what it means to be contemplative education, only one of these embraced the intertwining complexity between mindfulness practice, students, and

curriculum. That study was regarding a teacher's development of contemplative education within a high school gender studies course (Shelton, 2021).

2.5. Heeding the call

While the abovementioned scholarship points towards a rich, deep, and personal mindfulness practice within schools and the authors direct attention to the Buddhist underpinnings surrounding mindfulness as the way towards embarking on such practice, they fall short of explicating a path in which to take steps in this direction. Further, there are few examples available, particularly regarding secondary education. As such, there is a need for an approach to mindfulness practice and research within secondary schools that explores the nature of consciousness and where the practice itself builds self-knowledge, wellbeing, and a sense of collective consciousness as a caring community.

2.5.1. The need to respond

The concerns for not exploring a path towards a rich, deep, and personal mindfulness practice in secondary schools are many, given increased rates of anxiety and depression (Santomauro et al., 2020), as well as loneliness (Demarinis, 2020). Moreover, psychological wellbeing is considered to be linked with physical and social health (Manwell et al., 2015). Currently enacted mindfulness as a means of coping can perpetuate and exacerbate these concerns, as it offers a practice of individual responsibility for interconnected issues. It is the student who is taught to individually do something (in this case, meditation to induce a state of relaxation or concentration) such that they can endure and/or perform better in their schoolwork and activities, without pause to consider how these pieces are woven together. To put it another way, current mindfulness practice focuses on the student inattentively accepting all that is around them, whether harmful or helpful, rather than cultivating an embodied personal understanding and responding to their situation. Add to this the presently ongoing crises in the world (e.g., war, climate change, COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism), as well as youth's inevitable dealing with the forces of these as future leaders and members of society, then currently enacted mindfulness practice in secondary schools is a missed opportunity for understanding, healing, and ultimately, change to occur. As such, a

mindfulness practice rooted in awareness, understanding, and responding can be viewed as a much-needed starting point in facilitating a different direction, perhaps now more than ever.

2.6. Preparations for responding: A holistic mindfulness framework

The remainder of this thesis, therefore, is dedicated to charting a different course in the direction pointed to by the aforementioned scholarship and taking the first steps. I will use the rest of this chapter to map the path by outlining a holistic mindfulness framework that is underscored by Buddhist concepts surrounding mindfulness. Thereafter, I will take the first steps by providing an example of mindfulness practice with secondary school students that is underpinned by this framework. In other words, it is the overarching aim of this thesis to carry forward the call for a rich, deep, and personal mindfulness practice, particularly with secondary students, and to explore what happens there.

I create an extension from the conceptual to the practical knowing that it can be invaluable for educators who wish to integrate, in their own way, a framework into their classrooms and schools. I am fully aware that educators working to enact BC's holistic education policy have encountered challenges due to chronic underfunding (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2019) that leaves little time and resources allocated for implementation of strategies and programs. Considering also the abrupt and ongoing changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to an already struggling school system, and educators, who already face a high risk of burnout during pre-pandemic times (García-Carmona et al., 2019), are asked to continuously improvise where the system falls short. Consequently, BC education policy – particularly that of the personal and social competency – oftentimes remains unrealized in secondary schools due to systemic pressures that are at no fault of teachers. As such, I recognize the need for a workable approach to mindfulness practice that has potential to foster mental health and is congruent with education policy, and so, I aim to demonstrate this via the remainder of this thesis. The holistic mindfulness framework and the example study that I will offer of it will showcase how mindfulness practice can support actualization of the personal and social competency by placing student subjective experiencing as the centre of knowledge. Moreover, given the language used within BC's education policy, education

has a responsibility to, and is indeed the process of, nurturing this personal centre of knowledge. As a reminder, placing subjective experience at the centre is also the approach conducive to fostering mental health (Keyes, 2003; Manwell et al., 2015).

2.6.1. Buddhist concepts surrounding mindfulness

The philosophical underpinnings of mindfulness provide guidance towards expanding mindfulness practice and research in schools, with particular notable Buddhist concepts being the Three Jewels and the Foundations of Mindfulness. While dedication to Buddhism is not necessary for practice – as these concepts can form a theoretical framework that can be separate from the particular rites and rituals of the religion of Buddhism – it is important to have some understanding of the Buddhist concepts surrounding mindfulness practice to direct process. Mindfulness practice is, after all, a practice. Like any other training, it can be helpful or hindering, intentionally or unintentionally. Having some understanding of the underpinnings, therefore, can support an intentional process of practice towards holistic benefit. As a summary of these two concepts in the simplest sense, the Three Jewels form the environment of practice and the Foundations of Mindfulness inform the practice itself, both of which will be elaborated on below.

The Three Jewels refer to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (Bhikkhu Cintita, 2019; Lomas, 2016). The Buddha refers not only to the historical figure, Siddhartha Gautama, but also to the Buddha-nature within all of us, which suggests an optimistic, strengths-based view of humankind (Bhikkhu Cintita, 2019). While the historical Buddha may be an exemplar to reference and a mindfulness practitioner may be a group leader, the idea here is that we are all capable of awakening and developing our consciousness or our inherent Buddha within. To walk the path towards Buddhahood is to bring our attention to various teachings, or Dharma, which are available all around, oftentimes in the everyday (e.g., texts, nature, the classroom, our relationships, our body, our perceptions). In paying attention to these various Dharma, we ignite our consciousness, sometimes in ways that may not have come about without such Dharma. Finally, the Sangha refers to a community of practitioners and encompasses more than the meditation hall to include any group setting where people come together to bring their attention to Dharma or teachings (Bhikkhu Cintita, 2019); it represents a caring community that shares a common purpose of training their consciousness. The Jewels

are to be taken together, recognized as three components of one functioning unit. Like a plant we wish to grow, the seed is not the only component required for a healthy and robust plant. There is also the location, soil, and water. It is the same with the Three Jewels. They come together to form an environment of safety, openness, and interconnectedness that cultivates awareness and insight; they support engaging in intimacy with the self.

Within this environment, the Foundations of Mindfulness guide practice, such as what teachings (Dharma) the group might bring their attention to and contemplate together on (Sangha). There are two foundations of training within this guide: One being the Four Frames and the other the Noble Eightfold Path. The Four Frames outlines what practitioners are to pay attention to during practice – body, heart, mind, and mental formations – and describes a common process of development through the frames (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994). The Four Frames, also known as Satipatthana Sutta or the discourse on mindfulness (with “sati” being mindfulness) when translated, represent the starting point for practice (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994). The Noble Eightfold Path is about furthering attention towards contemplation on certain principles of living (Bhikkhu Cintita, 2019) and comes sometime after having started with the Four Frames.

The Four Frames speak to paying attention to (i.e., mindfulness of) the body (literally our physical vessel), heart (feelings), mind (thoughts), and mental qualities (e.g., concepts, ideas, biases), beginning with the body and with a specific focus on the breath for some time, usually until the mind has accustomed to this practice (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994). From here, training in the other three frames can take place. Further, it is suggested that training be explored in all positions (e.g., sitting, laying down, walking) (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994). At this initial stage of repeated practice of the Four Frames and in exploring various positions, a feeling of calm is common (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994). Though, at some point after having practiced in this way, and again, within the conducive environment of the Three Jewels, it is posited that a feeling past relaxation will occur that can be described as concentration (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994). Perhaps a fleeting moment, perhaps longer. Regardless, the notion here is that starting with the Four Frames eventually leads to a breakthrough state that feels like an ability to concentrate (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994). This feeling of concentration is what is needed to access insight, or in other words, to be able to begin to contemplate on aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994).

The Noble Eightfold Path can be viewed as the way we think and go about living our lives. The path entails eight interwoven threads that come together to form three dimensions: mental discipline, ethics, and wisdom (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1999). Mental discipline is literal, referring to training of the mind. Mindfulness is here as one thread within this dimension, along with the threads of concentration and effort (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1999). Mindfulness is the discipline of paying attention to the Four Frames (body, heart, mind, and mental formations), concentration means intentionally allowing for and working with sensations of all kinds (e.g., pain, worry, restlessness, doubt, joy, gratitude), and effort is of the will to practice with mindfulness and concentration (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1999). Ethics is regarding how we live our lives, and involves attentiveness and understanding to the threads of speech, action, and livelihood (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1999). Finally, wisdom – which involves threads of thought and understanding – can be understood as the culmination of mental discipline and ethics coming together to inform how we view and respond to ourselves and the world (human and non-human) (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1999). In essence, wisdom on this path refers to skillful responding to whatever is arising.

2.6.2. A few words of caution before continuing

It is important to take a moment to note that the Buddhist concepts of the Three Jewels and Foundations of Mindfulness (i.e., Four Frames and Noble Eightfold Path) are not naming a reality that is already there, taken singly or even together. My understanding instead is that these concepts name what, instead, can become reality for experiencing subjects through their taking up the practice that would enact and instantiate these concepts. While a mindfulness facilitator might set the intention for the environment by articulating the Three Jewels to students, this does not mean that the setting immediately radiates of the Three Jewels. To think in this way would be an example of reification: mistaking something to be real when it is an abstract concept. Reification is a strong tendency for human beings due to the fact that we use language to name and describe reality.

Buddhist concepts describe a process. The Three Jewels are generated by the facilitator's modeling of and inviting students into mindfulness practices of the Four Frames, as well as having students participate and contribute to the mutual practice space (Sangha). It is this experiential and relational process of practice where

the synergistic and dynamic effect of the Three Jewels begin to take shape and become a reality for students. At that point, the Three Jewels radiate their brilliance: a felt sense of safety, openness, awareness, and interconnectedness arises. This, in turn, strengthens student openness and desire to practice – to further train in awareness of the self within the Four Frames – which then further strengthens the environment of practice. This in-the-moment, mutual enhancement of practice between facilitator and students over time, or what I will refer to as “emergence” of practice, then naturally lends itself to cultivating aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path beyond the path’s dimension of mental discipline (e.g., mindfulness, concentration). A personal wisdom, or what I will later refer to as “embodied wisdom”, starts to develop as all pieces continue to influence one another. To summarize the unfolding process, the Three Jewels, when combined with mindfulness practice of the Four Frames rouses a self-igniting practice that grows towards aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path. Such expansion over time generates a rich, deep, personal wisdom. The figure below aims to visually capture this process, which I will refer to as a holistic mindfulness framework.

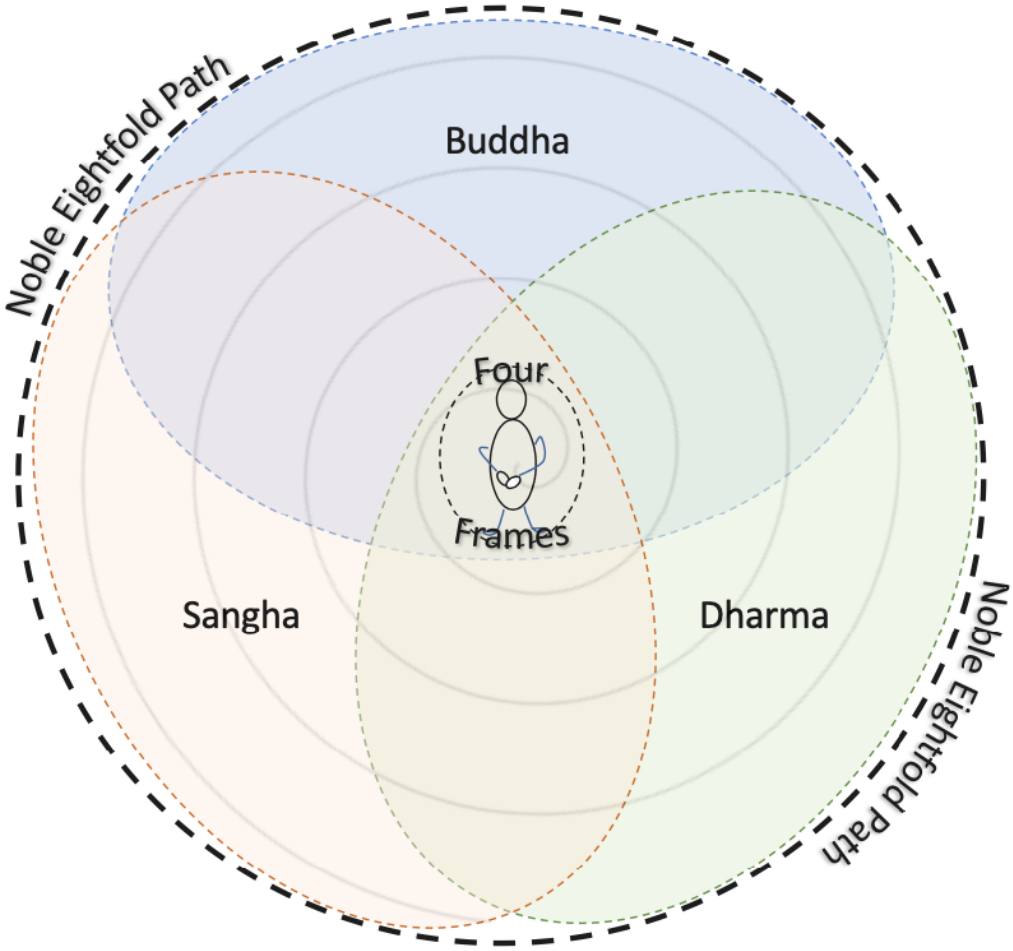

Figure 1. Holistic mindfulness framework visualization: Synergistic process among the Three Jewels and Foundations of Mindfulness (Four Frames and Noble Eightfold Path)

Mindfulness practice, when practiced within the environment of the Three Jewels (Sangha, Buddha, Dharma), grows our capacity of awareness and understanding of self (via our Four Frames) and, eventually, of other (both human and nonhuman alike). The purpose of growing this capacity is to build a foundation for thinking about and going about living life or the Noble Eightfold Path.

As such, the figure begins in the center, at the intersection of the Three Jewels and the self. From here, the capacity for awareness and understanding grows outward from the self via the spiral, to recognize more and other sources as teachings (Dharma), moments of personal growth (Buddha), and possibilities of interconnection (Sangha).

Further, the Noble Eightfold Path is the largest circle and encompasses the Three Jewels and the Four Frames because they are connected from the very beginning. In entering the space of mindfulness practice of the self the practitioner is already walking the Noble Eightfold Path under the dimension of mental discipline. As the practitioner's capacity for awareness and understanding of the self and beyond the self grows, it grows into other aspects of the path.

While I have paid careful attention to explaining the relevant Buddhist concepts and how they come together, I am also aware that knowledge gained through reading is not the same as embodied understanding. The facilitator of mindfulness practice needs to have personal experience of what I have explicated in some way. Like explaining the taste of something, I will be better able to describe it to others and invite others into their own experience of its taste if I have actually tried it! Personal experience has been my guide throughout this thesis, and it is my intention to encourage the reader to seek out their own experience by expressing below what mindfulness practice can be like within the role of counsellor and teacher. I also provide recommendations for educators wanting to engage in such practice with students in Chapter 5.

2.6.3. Buddhist concepts form a transferable framework

While the previously outlined concepts originate in Buddhism, they can form a holistic mindfulness framework that stands separate from dogmatic scriptures and rites of religion. To give an example of such separateness, let me return to the concept of the Four Frames. This concept refers to the various parts of experience (physical, emotional, mental, and psyche) that come together and give rise to us as human beings and doings. What then makes the Four Frames religious is not the concept itself, but the expectations around having certain beliefs and behaviours in relation to the concept (e.g., a rule to not eat certain vegetables, such as garlic, so as to not affect one's concentration of mind). Regarding the holistic mindfulness framework, the approach to the Four Frames was that, apart from a recommendation to begin with the body (particularly starting with breath-awareness), how a mindfulness practitioner pays attention to and moves through their Four Frames (e.g., one, some, all) is up to them.

I use the above example to show that the concepts described within the holistic mindfulness framework can come together to inform an overall yet comprehensive process of mindfulness practice that is person-centered. The framework speaks to an emergent process of awareness and insight into oneself and our interconnected experience via mindfulness practice. Such a mindfulness practice can be labeled as mindfulness towards embodied wisdom. The words "embodied wisdom" are used to signal a practice that makes room for awareness and understanding in all aspects of human experiencing (i.e., body, heart, mind, and mental formations) as they arise in the moment of practice, which then, over time, will naturally give rise to practitioners

regarding their own need for mental discipline, ethical considerations and wisdom making (i.e., various aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path). Further, once there is understanding and experience of the holistic mindfulness framework, it can then be transposed to generate a mindfulness practice towards embodied wisdom in any setting.

For counsellors. To demonstrate the transferability of the proposed framework, take for example the practice of counselling since counsellors form a part of many public education institutions. Let me first consider the Buddhist concept of the Three Jewels: Sangha, Buddha (or Buddha-nature), and Dharma. The Sangha, or communal practice space, forms when counsellor and client come together in genuine, mutual rapport and desire for collaboration; when they come into relationship. It is established by the counsellor's careful and intentional attunement to and deep respect for a client's experiencing, or in other words, by the counsellor's recognition of the client's as a fellow human being, or the client's inherent Buddha-nature. The Dharma is the therapeutic relationship itself, as teachings arise in the moment from the relationship, whether brought forth from the client or counsellor or in collaboration among the two. And it is in the nature and process of being in relationship together where important, deep nourishment and learning happens (Cohen & Bai, 2012).

The counsellor sets the intention for the development of the environment of the Three Jewels by modelling from the very first session with a client. For example, the counsellor may genuinely reflect back and validate client feelings and meaning-making, showing the client that the counsellor finds the client's experience worthy of respect and contemplation (modelling of Buddha-nature). The counsellor may also invite the client to consider a piece of information or an activity that the counsellor has experienced as helpful themselves and/or as helpful for other clients (modelling of Dharma). Additionally, somewhere within this first session, the counsellor may remark on how they might be able to help this client and perhaps also how they were able to help other clients in similar positions, thereby instilling hope in the counsellor-client therapeutic alliance (modelling of Sangha).

After setting the tone in the initial session, the counsellor proceeds to bring attention to client experiencing and meaning-making by guiding the client's focus to a particular lens of experiencing, such as thoughts (mind and/or mental formations), feelings (heart), the body, or a combination of these. For example, in cognitive-

behavioural therapy, attention is brought to client thoughts and behaviours. In emotion-focused therapy, feelings are the gateway into meaning making. In some cases, the counsellor may also decide to only follow where the client goes, which is commonplace in Rogerian therapy. Regardless of which lens(es) the counsellor encourages the client to look through, these can be viewed as synonymous with the Buddhist concept of training within the Four Frames.

Furthermore, while the counsellor may recognize a need to strengthen client coping strategies or to assist the client in reaching a certain level of functioning during sessions, the purpose of counselling is deep, long-term transformation that comes from a place of client empowerment. This is the case regardless of the counsellor working from a brief or extended therapy model. To put it another way, counsellors may provide strategies or interventions for clients to practice at times, but they do so keeping in mind their role as helpers, a role that is in recognition of and desires to support client complexities of experiencing, including client meaning-making, ethics, spirituality, and a host of other possibilities and their various combinations. So, too, it is with mindfulness practice; it begins as a practice of simple, present moment awareness while keeping in mind its natural purpose of supporting the practitioner towards the various aspects within the Noble Eightfold Path.

The above details are to showcase that counsellors, in a way, already have knowledge of and use the proposed framework. They can keep the environment and process of counselling in mind when facilitating mindfulness practices with clients. Counsellors can remind themselves that mindfulness practices, like the act of counselling, are to support the development of personal awareness through contemplation of human experiencing via ongoing attention to what emerges within relationship. This recollection can then guide the counsellor to what kind of mindfulness practice(s) may be helpful for the client and also support the counsellor in inviting the client into the process of finding or designing the practice(s). The counsellor then joins the client in their journey of mindfulness practice, not only in literally doing the practice together, but also in unpacking and working with client experiencing towards personal, long-term transformation for the client. Essentially, the counsellor's reverence for and attunement to whatever is emerging within and between counsellor and client directs the mindfulness practice. This process, over time, changes the practice for the client from a

coping skill to embodied attending towards understanding of self (body, heart, mind, and mental formations) and situatedness.

For educators. While classrooms are different in environment and process from counselling, the proposed holistic mindfulness framework can also be transposed to guide mindfulness practice in secondary schools. In considering the Three Jewels with high school students, I start with the assumption that each student as a fellow human being who has a valuable Buddha-nature – an energy, character, knowledge, wisdom and more, however deeply buried or forgotten it may be. As such, each student is recognized as a unique being and valid contributor in the room. The more such recognition is made, and the more the student responds to this recognition, the more their Buddha-nature will shine forth. In other words, none of us come into this world as a ready-made, fully realized Buddha; but we come with the seed of a Buddha-nature. Creating an environment with the Three Jewels is the way to nourish and nurture the seed so as to help the seed to grow and fully manifest its Buddha-nature.

Further, while an educator may initially lead a mindfulness group, student experiencing is valued and seen as inherent with teachings or as Dharma. Even student sharing that I may not agree with or see as helpful in the moment can be realized as teachings. Thus, contributions are always welcome. The Sangha is then created when students come together, along with their educator(s), in recognition of each being (their Buddha-nature) and their contribution to the practice space (Dharma). The Sangha is the classroom, not as four walls containing students and educator(s), but as a rich and vital space of interconnectedness that will nurture and grow its participants.

To begin creating the environment of the Three Jewels, the facilitator first sets the intentions for the space with students. The facilitator may endeavour this via discussion with students where they emphasize interest in students' individual experience of the practice, as it is, in whatever is arising – that students need only pay attention to what is occurring for them during practice. This sets the intention for awareness of their inner self (Buddha-nature). The facilitator may then disclose that they wish to share some practices with the group, but that students' personal practices (e.g., stories, art, spiritual, meditative) are more than welcome in the space. This piece then sets the intention for inviting various teachings (Dharma). Finally, while safety and openness may already exist within the aforementioned components of the discussion,

the facilitator may accentuate this by restating in some form that whatever is arising is welcome in the space. They may say something along the lines of: “If students should like to share any of their experience, then it will not be judged but will kind-heartedly listened to by members of the space.” In doing so, this explicitly sets the intention for a sense of community within the space (Sangha).

After setting the conditions for the space, mindfulness practice then ensues, with initial sessions focusing on the breath and then expanding to include the Four Frames, beginning with the frame of the body (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994). All the while practice is underway there is room for sharing, and a sense of community arises through student contributions of their experiences. In addition, because many unique experiences and interpretations of practice are possible – dependent on the focus of mindfulness practice that session and the individual student’s character and context for example – a student’s sharing can spark insight for another student. It is these disclosures over time which help to move the space into the Three Jewels – a space that is alive with awareness, interconnectedness, and wisdom. Continuing in this way, student experiencing expands from feelings of calm towards engaging in understanding of oneself and the entire range of one’s experience (Nyanasatta Thera, 1994), which includes touching upon concepts within Noble Eightfold path.

Considering the above description of the framework with secondary students, the understanding which arises is that students become necessary contributors to a mindfulness program rather than passive receivers of a dictated meditation practice who are then assessed for compliance or measured for success. Instead, the proposed holistic mindfulness framework provides an opportunity for students to nurture and strengthen their self-awareness and self-understanding because they are able to share their experiences, stories, thoughts, and needs – all of which the facilitator is taking into account for the mindfulness practice(s) that are offered. It is in the facilitator allowing for and working with participants’ emerging experience that is conducive to the development of awareness, understanding, and interconnectedness, or to exploration of the Noble Eightfold Path. In other words, because there is validation and empathy for whatever is arising for each individual in the space (i.e., emergence), it is likely that students and educators will, by their own stirring in the moment together, choose to reflect, discuss, and practice around matters relating to mental discipline, ethics, and wisdom (i.e., Noble Eightfold Path). Students are, in effect, co-constructing sessions through sharing.

Students may even want to lead sessions at times by bringing in their own practices. This emergent process allows for an array of mindfulness practices that may go beyond conventional or traditional poses and gestures of meditation. In practicing mindfulness together in this way over time, comes personal transformation (i.e., embodied wisdom).

2.7. Mind the research gap

While a rich, deep, personal mindfulness practice is possible if facilitated from an understanding and appreciation of the proposed holistic mindfulness framework, and such practice would better align with the understanding of mental health and BC education policy, there are few studies that incorporate a Buddhist framework for mindfulness practice with high school students. Moreover, there is scant research that captures student subjective experiencing of a mindfulness practice, let alone that explores the process of an emergent practice towards embodied wisdom as indicated by the proposed holistic mindfulness framework. Of the 37 articles I mentioned previously in Section 2.2.1, the majority (*n* = 28) used pre-determined self-report surveys that were collected before and after the study completed. The few studies (*n* = 9) that did consider student subjective experience (see Table A.2.5. in Appendix A for reference list) – in other words, studies that had some qualitative component along with self-report surveys (*n* = 5; e.g., mixed-methods design) or were entirely qualitative (*n* = 4; e.g., narrative inquiry) – also asked students to recall their experience once the number of practice sessions had completed, rather than asking for students' present-moment experience of the mindfulness practice.

Such quantitative approaches, meaning studies which give self-report surveys that ask participants to select from available options that are then statistically synthesized and reported, dominating the research base is a misstep. After all, the most often cited definition of mindfulness is present-moment awareness! Therefore, even without knowing of the scholarship on mindfulness or holistic mindfulness framework presented in this chapter, there is indication that research which takes into account students' present-moment subjective experiencing of the practice is needed. It is further unfortunate, then, that the few studies which captured subjective experience did so after the fact.

2.7.1. Responding: Starting a different path

The study that is depicted in the following chapters will address the above gap, by focusing on participants' subjective experiencing of a mindfulness practice that aims towards embodied wisdom. It does so via an exploratory constructionist multi-case study with secondary students. The overarching research question for the study is: How do secondary school students intra-act with a mindfulness practice that is underpinned by a holistic mindfulness framework?

To understand the scope of the research question, the appropriate focus is on the word "intra-act" that lies in between the case of students and the mindfulness practice underpinned by the proposed framework. The word "intra-act" was thoughtfully selected for the research question because it expresses an inseparable connection of entities, where these entities do not exist independently (like in an inter-action) but materialize in the moment within relationship among each other (Barad, 2007, p. 141). As such, it can encapsulate the synergistic process between the various entities under study – of students and the mindfulness practice – continuously exchanging and diffracting, developing inseparably from one another.

Since the research question explores intra-action, the study will consider how students are developing with the practice over time, how the mindfulness practice develops, as well as how these materialize by coming together. Students will be asked what they are paying attention to, how they are experiencing what they are paying attention to, and how they then interpret their experience. Such contributions from students can then be reviewed across time in two ways in order to answer the research question: On its own to uncover how students develop with the practice, and alongside the mindfulness practice to see how the practice evolved.

Concept of intra-action. To further support understanding "intra-action" and to tease apart the difference from "inter-action", I wish to give an example. I will use a potluck as a metaphor since I talked about taste earlier in the chapter (Section 2.6.2.) and since food is central in my culture and in many cultures.

Consider that a potluck is usually a group of people who each bring food (perhaps a dish or two each) to a place and gather together at that place to share a meal. This original concept of a potluck can be viewed as a form of inter-action. Each

person attending brings a prepared (perhaps even pre-determined) dish to the meeting place. The spread is laid out and everyone feasts. Now, imagine for a moment, that instead of prepared (and pre-determined) dishes, each person brings an ingredient (or few ingredients) and they come together at the meeting place to create the meal. This version of a bringing food and coming together to share a meal represents intra-action. This is because those involved generate something in the moment together. As a result, both the people and the food, perhaps even their understanding of what constitutes an ingredient or what a potluck is, has changed from their coming together. Intra-action is this relational, mutual and simultaneous changing of all involved, human and non-human, material and phenomenon.

2.8. Going in a different direction

In this chapter, I surveyed currently enacted mindfulness practice and considered the practice in relation to mental health and BC education policy. From this review, I made the case that a holistic understanding of mindfulness is needed such that the practice can aim beyond being another coping skill for stressed out students. Based on the direction from mindfulness scholars and the field of contemplative education, I then anchored mindfulness to its Buddhist roots and showed how this anchoring can work for counsellors and teachers if they wish to engage in mindfulness practice with youth. I ended the chapter by identifying that there is little research on such an anchored mindfulness practice with secondary school students. In the following chapters, I will address this gap via a constructionist multi-case study.

Chapter 3. Taking the first steps

3.1. Introduction to the study methods

Chapter 3 and onwards are about taking the first steps in the direction pointed to in Chapter 2. In particular, this chapter is all about the study details: from the research team to making a case about how the study met paradigm and method-specific criteria for rigour.

I begin Chapter 3 with the backgrounds of my collaborators, Dr. Heesoon Bai (supervisor) and Dr. Socholotiuk (committee member), as well as sharing my coming to know them. I describe more than their bios, to include my experience with them, since how I have worked with each team member provides insight into their influence on various aspects of the study. Next, I delve into details on the various aspects of the research design. I discuss the reasons behind secondary school students as participants, qualitative research, and the moderate constructionist paradigm as a lens for understanding along with case study method as the tool. From here, I describe the study procedures, including participant selection criteria, the recruitment process, the study structure, data storage and analysis. Should the reader wish for more regarding the procedures, further aspects are included in Appendix B.

The study aims to be first steps on a different path, as a representation of mindfulness towards embodied wisdom. As a reminder, the broad research question of the study is: How do secondary school students intra-act with a mindfulness practice that is underpinned by a holistic mindfulness framework? And, as noted in the previous chapter, the word “intra-act” captures the notion of a relational and simultaneous development of participants with the mindfulness practice. The sub-questions supporting the main research question are as follows: (1) What are students paying attention to during such a mindfulness practice? (2) How are they experiencing what they are paying attention to? (3) How are they then interpreting their experience?

3.2. The research team

The team consisted of Dr. Heesoon Bai (supervisor) and Dr. Krista Socholotiuk (committee member). While I am the one who initiated and undertook the journey of this

thesis, they have been walking alongside as my mentors. This rings true from the development of the concepts in the literature review, to the research design, as well as reviewing the findings and reporting. In other words, this thesis was formed by each of us offering our unique contributions over our time together.

3.2.1. Dr. Heesoon Bai: To know, to love, and to heal

Dr. Heesoon Bai is a registered clinical counsellor and professor within the faculty of education at SFU, namely teaching and supervising students under the philosophy of education stream at the university. Dr. Bai describes her understanding of philosophy's task to be to know, to love, and to heal (Panikkar, 1992) and brings this task about through contemplative inquiry and practices, such as Zen (Bai, n.d.). It is clear to me that Dr. Bai fully embodies this task – personally, in her research, and with her students – and it is because I was able to experience this task for myself over the years through her modeling that I was able to conceive of and develop this thesis.

I first had the opportunity to experience Dr. Bai model philosophy's task back in 2013, when I took an elective course that she was teaching while finishing up my teacher training program. It was by happenstance that I selected the undergraduate course, due to the title – Ethical Issues in Education – touching the core of my reasons for wanting to become an educator. I was taken aback by her approach towards the class and curriculum content, eventually reaching out to work with her as a master's student several years later because of this experience. Since then, I experienced the task of "to know, to love, and to heal" time and time again with Dr. Bai during our ongoing conversations as I prepared for graduate school by completing a graduate diploma. As well, I was able to experience this task merge with contemplative education in a graduate course she led on epistemology and education in the spring semester of 2021. As such, the concepts in this thesis represent an integration of my experience with Dr. Bai at the university level, as well as my own understanding and experience of teaching at the secondary school level and of mindfulness practice. In particular, Dr. Bai was instrumental in supporting me with the development of the holistic mindfulness framework, my facilitation of the study, as well as the analytic process, findings, and writing of the thesis.

3.2.2. Dr. Krista Socholotiuk: This seems important, let's look here!

Dr. Krista Socholotiuk is an assistant professor of counselling psychology at SFU and registered psychologist with specializations in research methodology and community-based counselling for youth and families (Socholotiuk, n.d.). Her research focuses on the applications of relational methodologies, as well as humanistic and multicultural values to evidence-based counselling practices.

I have had the pleasure of coming to know Dr. Socholotiuk over the last three years, beginning in 2019 during my very first graduate course of the Counselling Psychology program titled Individual Assessment in Counselling. From that course, I came to realize that she is a person who cares about the details but from a place of excitement and curiosity towards them. While supporting me with this thesis, Dr. Socholotiuk instilled the same feelings in me regarding research methods. This is not an easy task, given that I am a non-traditional and non-linear student – respectively meaning that my undergraduate background is not in counselling psychology and research (but in mathematics and music) and that I had to pick up basic knowledge and skills later on before I could enter graduate school in this field. Yet, Dr. Socholotiuk opened me up to much learning. She created a space for me to learn both from and with her, and as such, it helped pave the way for the many important details of this work. Some of the details Dr. Socholotiuk supported me with, for example, were in formulating the research problem, evaluating possible methods, reviewing study protocols for the ethics application, and reviewing early drafts of the thesis and providing feedback.

3.3. Study design

There are various approaches I could have used to address the research question that was generated from the issue of misalignment of currently enacted mindfulness for coping with the purpose and process of mindfulness towards embodied wisdom as expressed by the holistic mindfulness framework of Chapter 2. First, allow me to briefly make the case for students as participants, rather than educators or the classroom experience of a mindfulness practice, which also have their place perhaps in a future study. From here, I will continue on to the details of the study design.

3.3.1. Students as participants

As a reminder, putting the holistic mindfulness framework aside, the most often cited definition in the research base I reviewed is Kabat-Zinn's (1995, p. 4) that talks about mindfulness as present-moment awareness. Yet, none of the studies I reviewed took into consideration this definition that calls for students' in-the-moment experiencing. More commonly, these investigations of mindfulness practices have relied on students' self-report surveys of researcher-selected outcome variables. Only a few of the studies reviewed considered student subjective experience. Add to this: that students are the ones who are on the receiving end of a mindfulness practice and the purpose of engaging in practice is for their benefit. Given all this, then, students as participants makes the most sense for the current project.

3.3.2. Mindfulness calls for qualitative research

To put it simply, mindfulness practice is about getting in touch with the rich, deep, and personal nature of human experiencing and capturing such subjective experiencing is the domain of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Given the intention of a mindfulness practice as exploring one's inner world in order to grow in consciousness, the research question called for a methodological approach that could track and capture the complexity of the unique experiencing of each participant and of the holistic mindfulness framework at work. Such complexity cannot be directly observed by the researcher, nor can it be gleaned by questionnaires alone (e.g., trait and state mindfulness scales). Therefore, I have chosen to situate the study within the moderate constructionist paradigm (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010), as the assumptions of this paradigm align well with a mindfulness practice underpinned by the proposed holistic mindfulness framework.

The case for alignment begins with understanding that a mindfulness practice towards embodied wisdom is process-oriented and experiential. There is movement (process) of the inner self (experiential) that is generated by a mindfulness practice that is underpinned by the proposed holistic mindfulness framework. How participants practice will bear some uniqueness to each individual. This uniqueness in research terms is to say that there are multiple truths, or ontological relativism, and this view of multiple truths is compatible with constructionism (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Järvensivu &

Törnroos, 2010). As constructionism is a term that can be used to describe a range of philosophical commitments, the study aligns most closely as moderate constructionism given the research process towards these truths is abductive (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010). In other words, truth stems from both the holistic mindfulness framework (theory driven) and the emergent data (evidence driven), rather than being entirely data-driven as is the case within the purely constructionist paradigm. The study is also considered as moderate since it acknowledges specific, community-bounded truth claims (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010). For example, while individual contexts contribute to unique meaning making, there are also shared themes or issues that may be agreed upon by members. This differs from pure constructionism, which posits that there is no reality beyond each community member's subjective experiencing (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010).

The epistemological path to arriving at these various truths within constructionism is to have the data be created by the community involved with the study (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010). In other words, knowledge creation is active and relational (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010), with the community in this work referring to participants, myself as the principal researcher, and even the supportive role of the research team members. This view of data creation is well-suited to this study, since active collaboration among community is inherent within the conceptualization of the holistic mindfulness framework that guides the study.

Research paradigm as personal praxis. Fit between paradigm and research purpose is one indicator of goodness in qualitative work, but does not necessarily translate to a quality study. My position is that part of what makes a good study is when the researcher has embodied understanding of their paradigm, whether in research or elsewhere. Such a position is compatible with constructionist research, where the values, beliefs, and experiences of the researcher are acknowledged and embraced as part of the knowledge creation process (Haverkamp, 2005).

To illustrate my personal understanding of moderate constructionism, I will share two examples relevant to this study: my experience as a secondary mathematics teacher and a counsellor in training. They showcase how I attend to relationship as a way to understand reality and view this reality as both having rules or conditions (i.e., theory driven) and being formed in the moment within relationship (i.e., data driven). With these

examples, I intend to demonstrate how I operate in the world from the standpoint of moderate constructionism which flows between theory and data to arrive at truth claims (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010); and, in doing so, to imply that this paradigm's underlying beliefs have also been carried into this study.

Teaching mathematics is a good example of engaging in the abductive back-and-forth process outlined by moderate constructionism. While there are theories in mathematics and particular ways of working with theory to point to universal truths (i.e., the correct answer), how those theories and ways can best be understood and used by students comes from a collaborative process of inquiry between teacher and student to discover the methods that work for the student. The process is sometimes complex, difficult, yet exciting, and may not be as successful with either member working alone.

My view of theory and data as intertwined to inform reality has been further developed as a counsellor. While there is a particular theory of counselling that aligns with the way I naturally process, conceptualize, and language client presenting concerns and stories, and which I sometimes use to guide parts of a session, how clients move within and through these theoretical concepts are unique to them as an individual. The intricacies of their sharing and meaning making, for example, cannot be discovered by my using theory and being directive alone. Counselling, as a field, emphasizes the in-the-moment relationship in order to come to know the complex conditions and needs for a client that can then be drawn upon to support client transformation.

3.3.3. Multi-case study method

I have elected to use Stake's (2006) instrumental multi-case study research method as this approach is compatible with the constructionist paradigm (Abma & Stake, 2014; Stake, 2006), and capable of capturing a complex, process-oriented mindfulness practice with secondary school students. Regarding compatibility, the ontological assumptions of moderate constructionism acknowledge both theory and emerging data, and attending to the emerging data is an important feature of case study method (Abma & Stake, 2014). Particular to this study for example, is how the sub-questions, although formed beforehand based on the holistic mindfulness framework, indicate room for emergence since they ask participants to reflect on their in-the-moment experiencing.

Case study method also gives a lens for what type of emergent data is created: interpretive understanding and context (Abma & Stake, 2014; Stake, 2006).

The current project seeks to understand how high school students intra-act with a mindfulness practice underpinned by the holistic mindfulness framework. The processes by which students do this is known as the quintain or the "target collection" to be studied (Stake, 2006). Multiple cases are included such that a within and across case analyses can be undertaken to support a comprehensive understanding of this quintain (Stake, 2006). In other words, while analysis includes uncovering the complexity and situational uniqueness of each individual case, the focus of the study is beyond the case to illuminate the quintain that is the intra-action of students with the mindfulness practice. Such a focus classifies the study as an instrumental multi-case study (Stake, 2006).

3.4. Study procedures

The study was approved by SFU's Research Ethics Board (Study number: 30000500) and the participating school district's research ethics committee, with written informed consent obtained from the legal guardian of and participants included in the study. I would also like to note for the reader that the study was originally designed to be in-person and later was changed to take place online due to pandemic related restrictions. While the study itself took place during March and April 2022, a time where secondary schools were back to in-person classes, the district I was recruiting participants from did not permit visitors in schools. As such, the study was changed to be online and the procedures were updated and approved. This change is not a limitation, given that the holistic mindfulness framework emphasizes the process of an emergent mindfulness practice as of utmost importance. The practice is about being consciously engaged in all that arises in-the-moment, of which is flexible to time, place, and space.

3.4.1. Participants

There were three participants in this study and the participants were from two secondary school sites. In order to participate in this study, prospective participants must have been: (1) attending a large, urban public secondary school in order to support the possibility of recruiting diverse cases, (2) in grade 11 or 12, as students around this grade level are oftentimes developing their sense of identity and becoming in the world,

which can be well supported by a mindfulness practice, and (3) who expressed commitment and comfort with the study procedures and timeframe, as well as comfort with English-speaking and writing (including non-standard English) since the study was to be facilitated in English. Additionally, given that students in grade 11 or 12 are below the age of majority, both the participant and their legal guardian must have (4) provided written informed consent for the participant to be included in the study.

3.4.2. Recruitment

Determining the school sites for participant recruitment was dependent on (1) positive support and interest from prospective school principals, (2) the school's population (with large-sized schools with diverse populations being given preference), and (3) proximity of the school to myself. Once a school site was selected, recruitment posters (see Appendix B) for prospective student-participants were placed around the school site and in teacher mailboxes for distribution in their classrooms, as well as a school wide announcement was occasionally made over the school's PA system or on their online platform (e.g., Microsoft Teams). The advertisement of the study was done by the school's administration.

Interested prospective participants were assessed for inclusion via a brief screening interview (see Appendix B for the interview script) that was not recorded and took place via Zoom, where (1) basic information was collected, (2) the details of study involvement were described, and (3) informed consent was discussed. Prospective participants who met the inclusion criteria were provided a consent form (see Appendix B for the consent form) for review. After the interview, their legal guardian was contacted and provided the same consent form. Prospective participants that signed and whose legal guardian signed and returned the consent form prior to the study start-date were welcomed into the study.

3.4.3. Study structure

Participants met with me via Zoom for an hour after school, once a week for eight consecutive weeks. The session length and number of weeks involved was decided based on two combined considerations: (1) fit within the range of session length and number of weeks commonly used in mindfulness programs with students, and (2) my

experience as a teacher and counsellor. In the case of the former, the range for mindfulness articles reviewed is 30–150 minutes per session and 6–18 sessions. To better understand this range, it is helpful to note that a shorter meeting length oftentimes means more sessions (e.g., 30 minutes per session for 18 sessions). With regards to my experience, I note that it takes approximately 4–5 sessions for participants to become comfortable in a group. Further to my experience, the first and last meetings usually take much time away from the group's task for various housekeeping requirements (e.g., clarification of procedures, paperwork), pushing the range here to 6-7 sessions for participants to complete housekeeping tasks and reach a comfortable stage within a group. At the same time, while length and number of weeks are important considerations, I would like to reiterate that the holistic mindfulness framework outlined in Chapter 2 emphasizes the process of mindfulness practice as the fundamental component. Given the focus on process, the meeting length and number of meetings can and should vary dependent on the group.

Weekly group structure. Each 60-minute group mindfulness practice meeting began with a check-in (approximately 10 minutes), followed by a passage that was read aloud (approximately 10 minutes), self-reflective journaling on and elective group sharing of reflections from the passage (approximately 30 minutes), and ended with a check-out (approximately 10 minutes). Participant journals were collected, and meetings were audio recorded using a digital recording device to capture group sharing.

The check-in and check-out were the same activity, where I asked participants to take a moment to themselves and consider one, two, or three words that represented their state coming into or out of the group meetings. They were then asked to share their chosen words with the group, and if they wanted to do so, to explain why those words were selected. When participants contributed, I reflected back their experience in some way in order to help build rapport. I took part in this activity also, being first to share during initial meetings to model openness to experiencing. However, I made an exception for the check-in on two occasions, the first and last meeting, where I instead asked participants to write down what mindfulness means to them. Other than this variation, the check-in and check-out acted as predictable bookends for the meeting – a warm-up and cool-down, respectively. The bookends of one, two, or three words was an appropriate activity since it represents a simple yet reflective exercise, in alignment with mindfulness as developing present-moment awareness.

Within the opening and closing structure was the passage and reflection of passage (journal and elective group sharing), which formed the core of the weekly meeting. I would also like to add here that reflective journaling and group sharing of experience were not only selected as useful data generating activities, but also to further support the development of participant consciousness raising as is the purpose of mindfulness practice. During this part of the meeting, I read aloud a passage or two that considered a particular type of mindfulness practice (e.g., body-scan, practice of touching the earth, loving-kindness). Afterward, I asked participants to journal on their device about their experience. Participants were given the following version of the research sub-questions in the chat box each time they did their self-reflexive journaling: “What were you focused on during the practice?”, “What was arising for you (e.g., thoughts, feelings, sensations) as you were focusing?, and “How do you make sense of what was arising for you?” After time spent journaling, depending on how long participants felt they needed that day, they were then invited to verbally share with the group about their experience of the passage if they wished to do so. I, too, took part in the group sharing since I had also reflectively journaled on my experience of the passage when participants were writing. From here, we moved onto the check-out activity, and before signing off, participants were asked to privately and electronically send their journal reflections to me.

Approximately 2 months after the final group meeting, I met with each participant individually via Zoom. The scheduling for this one-on-one meeting was in order to allow sufficient time for data analysis. The meeting was a semi-structured interview, took between 60 to 90 minutes, and was also audio recorded so that I could transcribe and review participant responses later on. The interview served as a member check (see Appendix B for outline), an opportunity for me to elicit participant input on the findings. During the member check, I verbally described the across case assertions with relevant participant examples, as well as provided the write up and read aloud their individual case report. At various points throughout this process, I paused and asked for input. Participants gave feedback such as confirming the key assertions as prominent for them, offering further reflections regarding their experience of the journal entries quoted in the report, and asking for changes to wording on occasion. At the end of the interview, participants were sent an honorarium of $25 in recognition of the time involved for the interview.

Ethical considerations. Given the personal and vulnerable nature of sharing about experience, careful considerations were included as part of the study's design. Before the start of the study, participants were informed that their joining the study was entirely voluntary, and that they could withdraw consent at any time, for any reason, and without penalty. Then, at each meeting, I would remind participants that they could share as much or as little of themselves as they felt was comfortable, with regards to their journal writing and group sharing. I would also stay on the zoom call for several minutes after our meeting, in case a participant felt they needed one-on-one support. This is all to say that participants' comfort and safety during the study was first and foremost because of the study's focus on participant's subjective experience.

Apart from participants' personal comfort and safety, the next consideration was confidentiality. To support confidentiality, participants were informed that what was shared by others in the group was to remain private to group members, but that participants could share about their own personal experience in the group with others outside of the group. With regards to data, participant journal entries were confidentially submitted to me and verbal sharing was recorded on a simple digital recording device. Further, journals and audio recordings were stored in a digital format, on an encrypted and password-protected device that was securely stored when not in use by the research team.

3.4.4. Selected mindfulness practices

Given the study was conducted online, I was limited in the types of practices I could share with participants. Activities, such as a walking meditation exercise (e.g., carrying a bowl of water while walking) for example, were not possible given the confines of a private space required for online meetings. Nor was I able to be aware of or could prepare for certain materials to be available for each participant in their space. As such, I elected for a simple and consistent method of reading passages from various sources. While this may be a different way of approaching mindfulness for some, this method is not an impediment. It has roots within wisdom traditions, with Kramer (2014) dedicating a book to explaining this approach for those who wish to know more. Using this method with the participants of this study, in my view, allows them to use the passage as an anchor, which can be helpful in the case where looking inward is new or too overwhelming. Additionally, a line or theme within a passage can spark an important

piece of insight for a participant. The various passages that served as the springboard to consciousness raising are offered for the reader in Appendix B.

Furthermore, what is important about mindfulness practice is not the type practice but understanding and paying careful attention to the process of emergence that happens during practice. This is to say that mindfulness passages shared during the study were not planned before the start of the study, like a curriculum. Instead, they came about on a week-by-week basis and through a process of flow between what is outlined by the holistic mindfulness framework (e.g., starting with breath and body awareness as indicated by the Four Frames) and what arose for participants within a meeting. Over time, contributions – or in other words, what emerged for participants and within myself – became the guiding factor in what mindfulness practice we invited.

The process of emergence

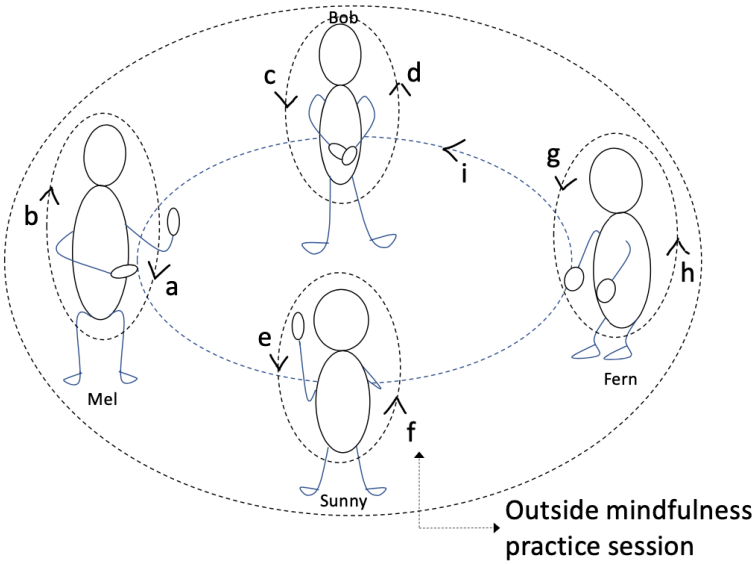

Figure 2. Process of emergence.

The above figure aims to summarize the dynamic process of working with emergence. The diagram presents three different loops: (1) smaller, individual loops, (2) the loop that connects practitioners, and (3) the loop that holds the mindfulness practice space.

Let me begin describing the diagram by referencing my individual loop. Part (a) in the diagram represents me paying attention to what participants shared during the

check-in and giving myself a few moments to sit with it to see what arises within me. It is a dashed line to show that my attention grabs hold of some aspects of their sharing. Further, since part (a) is about taking in, it uses a downward arrow. Sitting with what I heard from participants and, simultaneously, what I am sensing within myself, then leads to my selecting a passage. This represents part (b) in the figure. Part (b) is an upward arrow because I am processing what I have taken in and then make a choice around it.

Next comes the loop that connects me with participants, or part (i), because I act on my choice. I communicate to the group my choice for the passage, which includes my being explicit about the parts of their sharing that supported my choice. In other words, I communicate my process of (a) and (b) to participants. I then proceed to share the mindfulness passage, which is also communication to be received by participants or (i).

As I am communicating, participants individual loops are active. They are paying attention to and taking in pieces of what I am sharing, represented by parts (c), (e), and (g). They then similarly undergo some form of inner processing and choice making. This is represented by upward arrows (d), (f), and (h). From here, participants may or may not engage in verbally sharing with the group. Nonetheless, verbal and non-verbal is communication all the same. Therefore, participants also engage in part (i).

Now to add another layer of complexity, that is of simultaneous processes. At the same time that participants are engaging in their individual loop of (1) paying attention and taking in pieces of experience, (2) followed by processing and making choices, I am also undergoing my individual loop process again because I am still there within the practice space! I have not left the zoom room. I am watching and listening to members and myself as our time passes, taking in pieces of experience, processing it, and making choices about it. Further, we are all communicating all the time, whether we are conscious of it (e.g., unaware of certain nonverbals) or not. This is to say that the loop between us is also operating. In sum, to generate an emergent mindfulness practice is to consciously engage in the simultaneous processes of within and across.

And then there is the final loop, which represents the mindfulness practice space. It is a dashed circle around the group of practitioners with a dashed arrow penetrating it in order to signal that what we experience outside the mindfulness practice room (e.g., school, relationships) can enter the space and inform the previously mentioned

processes within the room. The arrow also works vice versa, whereby the processes consciously engaged in during the practice might carry over outside our time together. Hence the arrow is bi-directional.

Facilitator working with emergence. As indicated by Figure 2 and its description, the facilitator can cultivate an emergent mindfulness practice by taking an approach that recognizes and honours, and in doing so thereby invites, participants as contributors in shaping the practice. My approach encompassed two parts: my actions in preparing the mindfulness passage and my subsequent transparency by communicating those actions with participants.

Regarding my actions in preparing for each week, I would take some time to myself, a day or two before our gathering, to sit quietly with my various books on mindfulness practices spread out in front of me. During this time, I would reflect on the previous meeting, without reviewing participant journals or audio recordings before each session. Instead, I sat to see if something would emerge within me from what participants shared the previous week – thoughts, feelings, sensations in my body (such as paying attention to a warm feeling in my chest when a thought or idea came to mind) – as well as would flip through the books to see if any practices or passages called out to me. In other words, I allowed myself time to sit and contemplate on the group using my Four Frames as my guide along with my mindfulness resources each week. This process of sitting in contemplation informed the practice of the next meeting.

I was then transparent with participants on how I prepared for the session during our meeting. For example, I would describe what stayed with me from the previous week that I wanted to bring into the current meeting. I intentionally shared this with them as part of the preamble to the meeting's mindfulness passage(s). By sharing with participants my emergent process of coming to the practice for the current meeting, I was giving the message that subjective experiencing is a worthwhile path of exploration and modelling what such exploration might be like.

Further supporting emergence: Permission. An additional piece to my facilitation was my consistent message to participants about giving themselves permission for their present-moment experiencing or emergence. As an example within our very first meeting, as I was preparing to read a short passage by Thich Nhat Hanh

on mindful breathing, I signalled permission by saying "…just let your mind-heart-body go wherever it's gonna go." I made similar statements each week thereafter, and sometimes more than once within the same session. When participants were to journal about their experience of the mindfulness practice, I placed the sub-questions in the chat to support participant journaling and emphasized, with the exception of the final meeting, that the questions "are just prompts." I went even further in our first session, telling participants they did "not have to answer them (the sub-questions) linearly" and that participants could write freely by stating: "It's best to just, whatever comes to mind as you look at these prompts, or anything else that comes to mind as you were practicing, anything in mind-heart-body, just write about that, whatever that is." I then walked the talk by sharing my own in-the-moment experience of the mindfulness practice with the group, being first to do so during our initial sessions and thus setting the foundation for exploration.

3.5. Data Analysis

As indicated in Section 3.4.3, two types of data were collected during the weekly group sessions: participant journals of reflective writing and audio recordings of verbal group sharing. The member check interviews were audio recorded. These various forms of collected data support triangulation or looking across different data sources to support a clearer picture of participant meaning making.

Participant journals of reflective writing constituted the main source of data, with transcripts of audio recordings (group sharing) as supplementary. I would like to add that, while data analysis did not begin until after the eight weekly sessions concluded, I did scan through a participant's journal if there was indication of overwhelm during the meeting in order to look for and address any concerns regarding their safety. This was a rare occasion during the study.

After the eight meetings, I transcribed verbatim the weekly audio recordings without software assistance and grouped responses by case (i.e., a participant's responses were collected to form its own document separate from the other's responses). I then began my analysis. I analyzed each case, one at a time, consistent with a multi-case study approach where the first stage of analysis is a holistic and embedded look at each case (Stake, 2006). Once a case was analyzed, I would put it

aside and dive into the next. While some across case thinking is inevitable during this process, my focus was on the details of the case in front of me as if it were the only one, alive “within its own world” (Stake, 2006). I reviewed each case several times before moving to a cross-case analysis. To support faithfulness of the analysis, I provided a copy of the data to and engaged in regular consultation with the research team.

When reviewing a case, my process was to first read the participant’s journal entries, before considering the transcripts to supplement and extend understanding. My analytic approach considered the holistic mindfulness framework and the unique meanings that emerged from participants’ contributions, with a focus on what seemed important to the particular case. Each within-case analysis was concluded by writing assertions regarding what was important or prominent about the participant’s experience of the mindfulness practice.

After analyzing each case, I looked across the cases for commonalities and concluded the analysis with assertions regarding what was important or prominent about the collection of cases. To do this, I engaged in a back-and-forth reviewing of the data from the lens of across cases, an individual case, and the mindfulness practices shared. Three key assertions emerged from this process. Finally, the member check interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed to confirm and occasionally extend the understanding of the assertions.

3.6. Rigour

Rigour in qualitative research involves congruence between the theoretical framework, scientific paradigm, and approach to the study (Morrow, 2005). First, I have given thoughtful consideration to each aspect and included explanations on the alignment between them within this chapter to demonstrate methodological congruence. Second, I described the procedures and analytic strategy in this chapter, and the mindfulness practices of the study are provided in Appendix B. This was not for replicability, but to provide enough detail so others may come to their own relevant assessment of the study, and their own generalizations as a springboard for future projects suitable to their interests and context (Stake, 2000, p. 442), should they wish to do so. Third, multiple types of data were collected over an extended period of time, speaking to the adequacy of data. Fourth, participant quotes are included in the following

chapter to support interpretations and the research team acted as extra sets of eyes on the data and findings. Further to this, the study also included a member check interview whereby I reviewed the findings in detail with participants.

3.7. Prepared to keep walking

This chapter encapsulated the many considerations of the study, from the beings (e.g., research team) to the doings (e.g., study design, procedures, analysis). I intended to give plentiful detail such that fellow researchers and/or facilitators of mindfulness practice can understand the complexity involved and ascertain the quality of the study design in order to make decisions on how they might carry the information forward in their own way. The next chapter describes the paths participants took during the study and includes ample participant quotations to honour their voices.

Chapter 4. Walking our own paths together

4.1. Introduction to the cases and findings

Chapter 4 is dedicated to voicing participant experience. It includes rich, descriptive reporting of the cases and of the assertions from the study, and in doing so, it aims to answer the research question of: How do secondary school students intra-act with a mindfulness practice underpinned by a holistic mindfulness framework? As a reminder, the word “intra-act” (see Section 2.7.1) was chosen to encapsulate the idea of a synergistic and interconnected development of participants and the mindfulness practice.

I first acquaint the reader with each case: Bob, Fern, and Sunny, respectively. I provide background information and offer my impressions to showcase their characters, as well as describe their trajectory over our time in practicing mindfulness. Next, I describe the assertions from my analysis of intra-action that emerged across the three cases. Finally, I show that our practice had value from participants’ perspective.

Participant contributions are enveloped throughout the chapter to not only support the findings, but as an honouring of participant contributions. Further, ample raw data can support the reader in deciding the fit for themselves and making their own relevant interpretations.

4.2. Meeting each participant

The introductions to each case represent my initial impressions, which were mainly formed from my observations and reflections at the pre-screening interview with each participant. My intention in presenting the cases in this way is to give a sense of their characters – their wonderful Buddha-natures that they shared with me and that developed over time in practicing mindfulness together. These narratives also showcase the diversity across the cases, an important quality for multi-case method as variety provides opportunity to uncover complexities relating to the quintain (Stake, 2006).

4.2.1. Bob

Bob was 17 years old and in grade 11 at the time of the study and heard about the study via a short, online school wide announcement. He was present for seven of eight group meetings, unintentionally missing the second meeting due to his many obligations. Bob and I had not met before the study, and our first interactions were via email followed by our first time seeing each other at the pre-screening interview.

My first impressions of Bob were that he was polite and very curious. During the pre-screening interview, his speech was fast, in a way revealing the speed of his thoughts. As a testament to his curiosity, Bob interjected with many questions, oftentimes in quick succession, from nearly the very start of my sharing about the study details. Some example questions were around what kind of practices, how the eight weeks were designed, what we would be answering in the journal, and if he could have the mindfulness practices in advance. From Bob's questions, I had the sense that he desired a controlled, rigorous mindfulness practice even though I had mentioned several times the words or variation of the words "in-the-moment" to signal the qualitative and unfolding nature of what we would be doing for the study. As such, I asked him how he understood mindfulness (since earlier in the interview he had alluded to practicing) in order to get some insight into this desire. By his answer, his questions made sense. Mindfulness for Bob was meditation as a tool for daily interrogation of the self via "a journal of sorts", of "experiences", "habits", "thoughts" to see "what I'm doing" in order to figure out "how to change." He then reported that he tried this, but it "never stuck."

To summarize the feeling of this first meeting for me is to say this was a screening interview in reverse! Bob interviewed me as much as I interviewed him. This was unexpected, but also very welcome and refreshing. It is rare for a student to openly share their questions, especially in their first meeting with someone, let alone with someone who they may perceive as being in a position of authority. Bob made me very curious, in turn, to see how he would end up experiencing our time together.

4.2.2. Fern

Fern was 17 years old and in grade 12 at the time of the study and heard about the study via a short, online school wide announcement. They were present for all eight

group meetings. When Fern and I met for our online pre-study screening interview, I realized we had met before. Although not one of my students, we had occasionally interacted. These interactions were not enough for me to come to know Fern, however.

The above is to say that my impressions of Fern started forming during the pre-study screening interview. My initial perceptions were that Fern was articulate and polite. They let me finish all my sentences regarding the study structure without interruption, with short replies when I checked in for questions or understanding regarding various aspects of the study procedures. Then there was a shift.

There was a change in Fern's voice when they interjected after I explained the purpose of the study, where I stated that I wanted to hear student voices about how they experience mindfulness practices as the research to date is mostly interested in surveys. Fern's voice brightened as they told me of recent university affiliated research survey they were asked to complete, which asked about mental health experiences at school. They went on to say that for some of the questions, they did not know where on the Likert scale to choose their answer because they were thinking of "different scenarios" and were wondering why there was no comment box to provide more context. The end of the survey had a textbox for further "details or comments" though, where Fern let the surveyor know that there should have been comment boxes after each question. Context sounded important for Fern. It was important indeed, as that was where Fern went when expressing the core issue that emerged for them – they grappled with the context of the of the relationship.

4.2.3. Sunny

Sunny was 18 years old and in grade 12 during the study and also heard about the study via a short, online school wide announcement. She was present for seven of eight group meetings of the study, missing meeting seven due to a medical appointment. Sunny knew me since I had taught her before, and I remembered that we had good rapport. Indeed, when asked at the pre-study screening interview, Sunny's reason for joining the study was as follows: "Because I recognized your name and thought 'why not?'"

Recalling my interactions with Sunny from my memory, she was a very quiet and timid student. She barely spoke in class or asked questions, except for one key moment where she mustered up the courage to push past her nervousness to come up to me to ask a question after all the students left the classroom. From this, I came to learn how attentive and intelligent Sunny is. After this key moment, she still did not interact too often with me or others when in class; not even in the year I taught her again. It was similar for the pre-screening interview, where Sunny mostly listened to my explanations and asked a question here and there. But I knew she was present – listening, observing, absorbing. And so, here she was again, mustering up the courage to try something new with me.

4.3. Within case: Unique process of coming to trust the self

Here, I will outline the process that emerged for each participant. This is where the uniqueness of each case stands out. While each participant moved towards an open and reflective posture regarding their in-the-moment experience, their paths were unique and varied.

4.3.1. Bob's path

While I expected Bob to initially struggle with the exploratory style of our meetings given his desire for as much upfront information as possible regarding our mindfulness practices, I did not anticipate this manifesting for him as uncertainty. Over time, the insecurity started to change, where Bob was able to push past it to include some reflection of his present-moment experiencing about the strain and stress of school. Such exploration was most notable in meetings four and five. In the final meetings, Bob's uncertainty nearly disappeared and reflectiveness was very present. Trust of his inner experiencing had formed as he openly contemplated on the mindfulness passages.

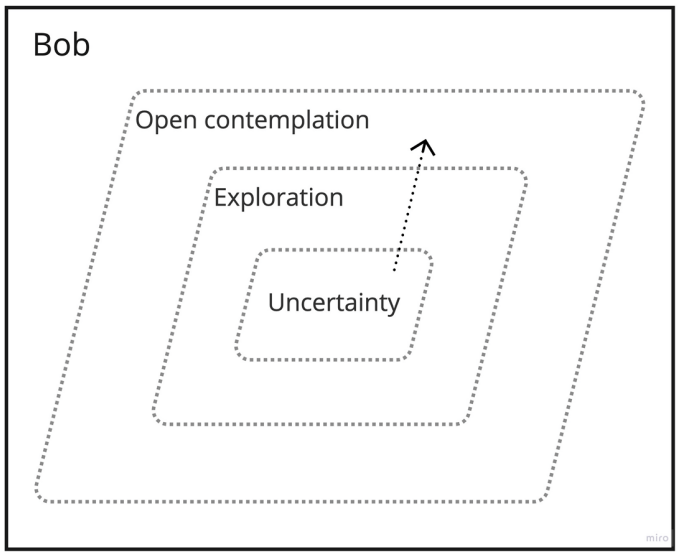

Figure 3. Bob's pathway in growing self-trust
The three phases overlap and increase in size to reflect that self-trust is a capacity that builds (or diminishes), rather than reaching a point of self-trust that is achieved by moving through linear and discrete phases. The lines defining the phases are perforated to further highlight this fluid and overlapping process of growth. The dashed arrow reflects Bob's movement over the time of the study. Each phase will be elaborated on below.

Uncertainty. Bob had difficulty settling into the open style of the practices. His core struggle regarding the stress of school was only momentarily acknowledged in these initial meetings, alluded to as "current worries" in meeting one and again afterward as "…I'm still thinking about the things, um, I need to do…" in the verbal check-out of that meeting. Rather, there is uncertainty blocking him from reflecting on what was arising in the moment. This is indicated by brief journal entries that were oftentimes written in a questioning tone. To use meeting three as an example, after our practice about cherishing one's body for a day, Bob wrote:

> I guess just waking up at an early time, exercising and stretching to get it up and ready, hygiene, then doing the daily tasks like hobbies and whatnot before going to school. After that, just sleeping at an early time. I suppose its response would be "Thank you"? I'm not sure what personality my anthropomorphized body would have if it was separated from my mind, aside from my own. "Thank you for making the most of your time without sacrificing your physical health?"

Bob attributed the uncertainty to his need to answer the study prompts correctly, which he indicated aptly in the meeting one group sharing of how participants experienced the practice. Bob described: "…I kind of started thinking about, was um, less on how my breathing was, but how am I going to answer the questions that are

going to come?" When I clarified with Bob how he makes sense of his focus and worry around answering the journal prompts, he responded that it is more than his character to want and enjoy finding a solution but also part of being a well-trained and efficient student. He stated: "I mean like, we always answer questions, right? … I just want to figure out, like, the answer to something, like, as soon as possible…"

Exploration. While Bob's uncertainty was present in his subsequent journal entries of meetings four and five, it was also transforming. In these entries, he began to delve into the substance of his present-moment experiencing even if he started out with questions. The substance for both of these journals was the pressure and fatigue of school, which had Bob feeling like he was "walking on autopilot" as he so aptly put it in meeting four. I will use the meeting five entry as an illustration of his willingness to explore, regardless of uncertainty. In his own words, Bob wrote:

> I suppose (I was paying attention) to the pain, which in the passage that was read out to me said should be embraced? I guess the main points I thought about was the feeling of not being able to focus on the things what really matter to me? The stress of getting a good mark rather than enjoying the things I do learn. Feeling rushed to be better. The frustration of time seemingly slipping by. Maybe a little bit of loneliness? I don't think I thought much of them (feelings) aside from just being tired. There are a lot of things I can't change, but I guess I should start with just trying to get into a better schedule/not wasting time and letting it pass me by without using it to its fullest? I suppose it's just me wanting to slow down for just a little, just so that there isn't a new thing to stress over and study for every week. I guess I'd also like just a bit more free-time, as well as having myself direct that free time to something meaningful to me.

Perhaps there was right timing for Bob to be able to explore his experiencing – timing not only in that there is some comfort with the group process and members by this point, but also regarding the mindfulness practices of these meetings and of Bob's context. Considering the mindfulness practices, the practice in meeting four was regarding intentionally looking into the substance of whatever arises and meeting five was about tending to painful states so that they would not develop into fetters. These practices aim towards a more reflective attunement of thoughts and feelings, respectively. Concerning context, students had returned to school from spring break when meeting four occurred and Bob found this coming back rather difficult.

Open contemplation. In the final meetings, Bob's stance had transformed. The question marks were nearly gone from his writing and he openly reflected on the

topic of the mindfulness practice. To use meeting six as an example, where the mindfulness passage was about connecting with the earth, Bob wrote in his journal:

> I was mainly focused on what I would be able to do to "touch the earth", as well as interesting ways in which I could do it which could relate to the hobbies I have currently. The first that came to mind was painting/drawing en plein air. I haven't done it yet as I still feel I could use some more practise in some areas, and an ever changing subject feels daunting, though, I feel it would work nicely with the theme of "touching the earth." Just standing enjoying some nice weather while looking at a subject and noticing all of the little things about it that would normally be filtered out! It just seems really fun to me personally. I guess I'm a bit excited? The prospect that I could one day start to paint en plein air and have the pleasure of being outdoors, as well as doing one of my favourite hobbies. …

The last session, meeting eight, is another wonderful example of open contemplation. Here, Bob took the passage on a caterpillar developing into a butterfly beyond his present-moment experiencing of that topic. After he shared details of the passage that stood out to him, he recognized how the mindfulness passage I shared – that was originally derived from a science article – could be viewed "in a more metaphorical light." He further reflected on this:

> … I found it interesting, how some things can be seen from multiple angles aside from the writer's original intent. It was fascinating to try and conjure up my own interpretation as well, which was probably affected from my own background. …

Bob's reflectiveness in the above examples suggest trust of his inner experiencing. Further, he was contemplative of the mindfulness passages in ways that were important for him in these later journal entries. In the journal six example, Bob imagined incorporating a meaningful hobby into his life – something he longed for but felt he could not make room to include in the previous weeks where school responsibilities were at the forefront. A key piece for him in the final journal of meeting eight was his realization that there is room for exploration even in something that seemingly has a literal purpose, in this case, to educate people on how caterpillars develop. Indeed, the final meeting stayed with Bob. He further reflected on this journal entry during the member check stating that viewing "things in a more metaphorical light" to see "what we are getting out of it" was not something he had done before and wondered if there was less "pressure to do tests" then he might apply this lens to subjects he is not interested in but is good at, "like math or physics" and find them "very fascinating." To put this together is to say that

the content of these entries is a significant indicator of self-trust because they demonstrate Bob moving himself towards where he needs to go, towards flexibility and curiosity rather than being bogged down by constraints.

4.3.2. Fern's path

The culminating moment for Fern in coming to trust their inner experiencing occurred during our fifth meeting, where they leaned into their here-and-now experience and more fully expressed their core issue of a "relationship trouble." The meetings leading up to the catharsis of meeting five have two phases for Fern: one where they push away the relationship when it arises and the other where they distract themselves by looking towards their future.

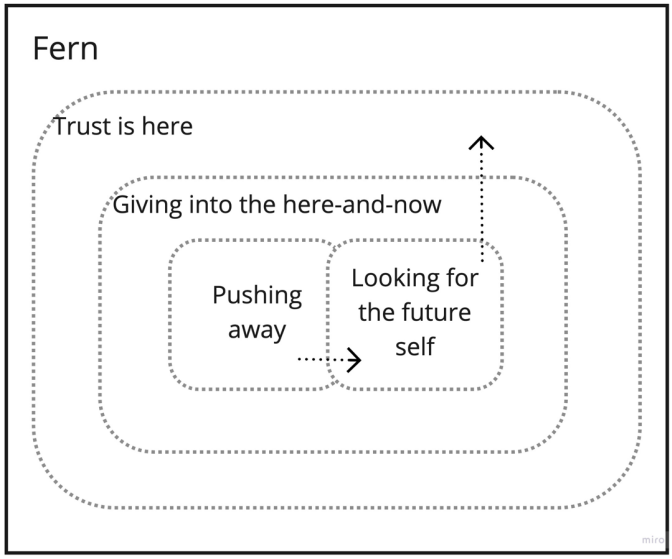

Figure 4. Fern's pathway in growing self-trust
A different shape is chosen for Fern as they are a unique individual. The initial phases of pushing away and looking to the future self are placed together and are roughly the same size since Fern stated in the member check interview that this was their, almost intentional, way of ignoring their concerns regarding the relationship. Once again, the dashed arrows reflect the trajectory over the time of the study.

Pushing away. Fern tried to not focus on their relationship concern when it emerged during our initial meetings, only briefly alluding to the relationship in journals one and two. In the first meeting, they covertly acknowledge the relationship as well as that they have pushed it aside before. In the one and only sentence regarding the relationship that was at the end of the journal, Fern wrote, "I did think of something that

has been weighing on me for a while, but that I have been pushing back doing/dealing with it."

In the second journal entry, Fern pushed the relationship aside and moved on from the topic. They do this midway, after Fern shared that they were focused on themselves and feeling "pretty calm throughout" the mindfulness practice. From here, Fern stated that they began to "feel a little anxious" towards the end of the practice, and then directly referenced the relationship before moving on. Again, there is only one sentence regarding the relationship, which was written as follows:

> … I think maybe just the somewhat long period of awareness was maybe a little unnerving to me or maybe I was thinking about a current (for lack of better wording) 'relationship trouble' I am having with someone. Anyways, I think Mel read something about happiness/smiles that reminded me…

Looking for the future self. Rather than tend to the arising issue of their relationship, Fern's focus naturally moved towards their future self in meetings three and four. I use the word naturally, because the mindfulness practices that preceded Fern's reflections on their future were not directed towards this topic. The practice in meeting three was a description of a pebble sinking into a river as metaphor for the idea of resting. In meeting four, the mindfulness practice was about intentionally seeing what's within – looking into the substance of our thoughts as they arise. Fern looked elsewhere during these practices, searching for possibilities that may lie for them ahead. In doing so, Fern was filled with desire and excitement and they were able to forget about the weight of their relationship as it was not mentioned at all in meetings three and four. To use meeting three as an example, as part of their journal Fern wrote:

> I was focused on thinking about my future mostly. Lots of post-secondary thoughts and what I am doing to do to prepare and better myself. I was thinking about my style and how I want to change my clothing as well. I was feeling a sort of longing for the next chapter in my life and how I will have so many possibilities. Feeling like I need to find my identity and express it more.

Giving into the here-and-now. The process of pushing away inner experiencing and focusing elsewhere coloured Fern's contributions in the meetings leading up to meeting five. In meeting five, however, they could no longer ignore the inner call to focus on the relationship. There was right timing in this meeting for this to occur, as Fern had taken a step towards dealing with the relationship by requesting a

break from their partner and the mindfulness practice for that meeting was about allowing painful states to be tended to. This timing put Fern over the threshold of being able to push aside the relationship and direct their focus elsewhere as they had done in previous meetings. They gave into their state as it emerged and the entire journal entry was now dedicated to deeply expressing how they experience the relationship, including feelings, bodily sensations, and context. The entry reads:

> I am so confused to be honest. The emotional and mental tiredness is making me physically exhausted, and I just feel like my brain and heart is so heavy, I can physically feel it. The tea is that my partner and I are on a break because I felt not really "right" with them and how they acted towards me. I told them I needed space to focus on school which is half-truth and half false. They were just really pushing my boundaries way too much, but they made me feel like it was not too much pushing. Kind of manipulative, but I really don't want to say that it was manipulative because they were also kind and respectful in a way. For example, I would say no, and they would say oh but really? /Are you sure / come on / it is not too bad / etc. Then I would say no for real, and they would sometimes repeat their doubting-type-sentences, but they would also be like oh I would never force you to do something or say something you're not comfortable with, etc. They would also compliment me and make me feel good about myself sometimes. I hate that, it is so yadggwkdahkdhakhsaw (I don't know how to describe it). Anyways, that has been weighing on me for a while and I always think about it, but I have not told anyone about it because of how confused I am about it. So, when Mel said some stuff about attachment, it just really hit hard for me, making me a little teary, sad, mad, but also kind of something like longing? I really needed to talk about it right now though. It is pretty distressing for me currently. There are so many stressors right now and I feel dead, but I love it when I am able to get free time and I can treat myself better.

Trust is here. Meeting five was a moment of catharsis for Fern. It was a time where Fern expressed what was arising for them in the here-and-now, where they leaned into their experiencing. Fern allowed themselves to tend to what they were sensing within, even if they could not understand all that they were experiencing. And it was this moment of tending to heartache and confusion that enabled Fern to be more expressive of their inner state in subsequent meetings, to trust in what was arising. To use meeting seven for example, Fern acknowledged and accepted that their mind was focused elsewhere instead of on the mindfulness practice and then continued to reflect on the substance of their emerging thoughts rather than pushing them aside. They wrote:

> It was really hard for me to focus on what I was feeling as well as the practice today because I was thinking about what I must do later and homework that is due as well. I couldn't stop thinking which isn't a bad thing, but I wanted to focus on the practice. Coming back from a long weekend is great, but it also sucks because I always want more days off. I really hate how there are only 2 and a bit more months left of high school before graduation too which was what I was thinking when Mel mentioned how this year is a transition to adulthood for us. As they talked about when we were children and our inner child, I was thinking about what kid me would say to current me if we met today. It made me wonder if I would be proud of myself or a little disappointed because I have not achieved everything I wished to. I think I spent so much time focused on school and responsibility that it is catching up to me, needing me to have a break and do fun things instead of stressing about upcoming assignments. I do feel like I have done more than kid me expected. I think I would also be a little sad that everyone is so focused on everything else that prevents time for other things.

There is a sense of openness to and expressiveness of the here-and-now in the final meetings, even with inner states that are uncomfortable or difficult, that is different than Fern's approach previously. In these meetings, they continued to turn toward rather than away from what arises, indicating that Fern has come to trust their inner experiencing.

4.3.3. Sunny's path

Sunny's struggle to stay and work with in-the-moment experience sets her case apart from the others. After trying to initially release herself from powerful experiencing, Sunny's ability to trust her inner state made a sudden appearance. From this point onward, an inner battle ensued. Sunny had great difficulty continuing to openly reflect on what was arising. Nonetheless, this battle is still indicative of self-trust for Sunny who usually does not share painful in-the-moment experiencing.

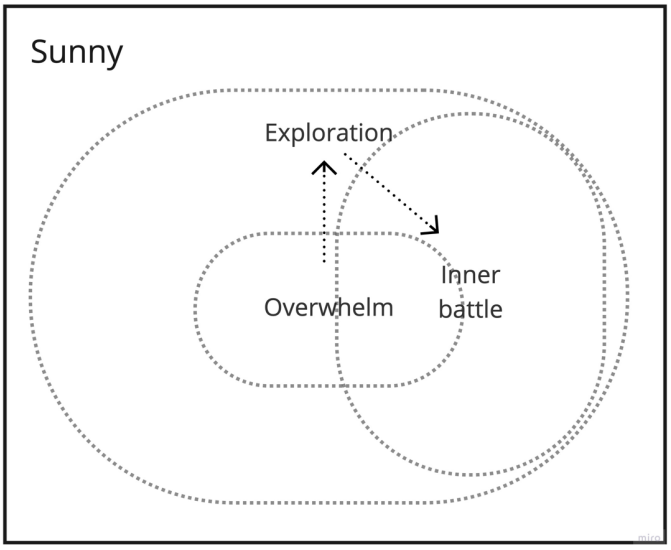

Figure 5. Sunny's pathway in growing self-trust
Sunny represents another unique trajectory and so, has a different shape. She begins in a state of overwhelm before, quite suddenly, moving to a place of exploring her present-moment experiencing during the middle sessions of the study. This movement is indicated by the dashed arrow going upwards. From here, Sunny moves to the oval representing her final phase during the study, of the inner battle, which overlaps with the previous phases of overwhelm and exploration to reflect that Sunny is now oscillating between the two within our mindfulness practice sessions.

Overwhelm. Regardless of knowing and trusting me as her former teacher, Sunny found it difficult to look inward during our initial sessions. The first two meetings revealed that Sunny did sit with the practice as best she could, but that something was festering within her that took her away from the practice. She presented many thoughts and feelings during these initial meetings, of which Sunny struggled to reflect on more deeply. In the first meeting for example, Sunny stated that while she was able to initially focus on her breath, her mind soon wandered to all the obligations she had. She also reported physical discomfort. This powerful experiencing resulted in Sunny having to "completely abandon" the meditation exercise. The second meeting had a similar sentiment, where Sunny tried the body-scan practice, faced overwhelming experience, and struggled to be reflective of this experience. In this meeting, in particular, she tried to resolve what was happening for her, almost desperately. Unable to do so, Sunny tried to release herself from her experience. In her own words, she wrote:

> Exhaustion. I spent my lunch with a friend but now I'm physically tired (mentally a bit too.) My back and shoulders are tight. During the exercise those pains were distracting. I also noticed that my face and jaw were tensed. I tried to relieve some of that tension by opening and closing my

> mouth and relaxing my mouth. Those efforts were no help. The muscles ended up tensing again. Maybe it's from tiredness? A whole afternoon of smiling? Too much socialization? For sure there was a feeling of tightness everywhere in the body. Fidgety. I cannot keep still. Even during the listening, I had to be playing with my hands or moving something. I feel overwhelmed, useless, and incompetent. My small list of obligations feels like a mountain tasks. But at the same time, I don't feel physically tired. Everything feels daunting.

Exploration. After grappling with her present-moment experiencing, Sunny suddenly shifted in meetings three and four. She was better able to stay with the mindfulness practices and was more reflective of thoughts as they arose, exploring their substance. To use meeting three as an illustration of this, there were two practices that day and Sunny's shift is apparent in the journal entries of both, in different ways. In the first mindfulness practice about cherishing one's body for a day, the entire entry was focused on the topic of practice and was reflective of her needs, such as "…taking everything at my pace and having space to reflect." While Sunny was then unable to stay with the focus of the second mindfulness passage on resting, she was able to explore this difficulty. She wrote:

> I struggle with being present because I'm always distracted. I always have my phone nearby and when I'm eating, I always turn on the TV. I don't intend to turn this into a rant about modern technology, but I really wish that my parents didn't give access to the internet at such a young age. It has become something of an addiction, a dependency. Since I'm so used to constant mental stimulation, being still is worrisome. I always want to be doing something else, not wasting time. This 'addiction' might have manifested into the many worries I have now.

The inner battle. Sunny's open reflection in meetings three and four was a sudden and significant shift that was not able to freely continue in subsequent sessions. In these meetings, Sunny battled between exploring her experience and angrily pushing away reflectiveness. Referencing meeting five for example, Sunny began her journal entry with a contemplative stance before taking a sharp turn towards self-blame. She wrote:

> I could not focus on my 'inner turmoil'. I think it's because I'm forcing myself to think about it. These negative thoughts would come out when I'm quiet and unaware. During the three minutes (?) I was reflecting on my day at school. Academically, I am not pleased. Today, in my 'passion classes' I did not perform well. I'm a bit embarrassed… Honestly, I can't even think straight right now. Lately, I've been sleeping at 1am. As soon as I get home from school, I nap until dinner. Obviously, this unhealthy schedule is what's

> preventing me from being all sunshine and rainbows. And honestly, I have nobody else to blame but me. I am aware of all the things that are stressing me. That's why it seems silly to me that I'm all worked up. These negative emotions are a direct result of my failures. Like get over it!

In meeting six, Sunny further clashed with herself, this time rapidly and messily moving between self-reflection and anger. The passage gives a feeling of out of control. In her own words:

> Right now, I'm not in the right space to be thinking about myself. I cannot take a break until I've sorted everything out. I'm just overwhelmed. The five minutes of silent reflection was an okay break. I say okay because there's this cloud of stress brooding over me. I can't breathe without groaning at the thought of my stressors. Honestly, I just feel pathetic. Writing about MY feelings feels wrong. Like dude, there are people dying and you're over here crying about a poor mark. It feels ridiculous. I have a personal theory: if I think too much about myself then I will be upset. Sometimes all I need is to go outside and breathe the Vancouver smog. I don't want to be all 'poor me, I have such a terrible life blah blah blah'. The inside of my mind is all 'soupy.' It's just a mess that I cannot sort out. I know that this period of hardship will subside eventually. I'm trying to hold onto that positivity.

It is heartbreaking each time I read these final passages, as it shows me that so much is happening within Sunny, and, simultaneously, it reminds me that this is the case for many students, which is then stuffed down because the student feels they do not know how or cannot handle the intensity and/or complexity they experience. While heartbreaking, it is also unsurprising that Sunny is at war with herself. I write that it is unsurprising because I am visualizing a pendulum as a symbol for her trajectory: with the need to abandon overwhelming experience on one side and trust of inner experiencing on the other. Sunny started on one side and then swung to the other side in meetings three and four, compared with the gradual paths experienced by the other participants. In these final meetings, the pendulum had been released and is swinging back and forth, sometimes wildly. Swinging to the side of self-trust is apparent as Sunny stays with and breaks through overwhelming anger at times; she is reacting to her powerful experience, rather than trying to forgo it as she had done initially. As Sunny described during the member check interview, self-trust is still present because of how dynamic the journal entries are – that she usually processes and refines what arises before sharing. Here, she gave her true, "unfiltered" in-the-moment experiencing.

4.4. Three key assertions

As a reminder for the reader, the research question considers intra-action and the study of intra-action seeks to explore the inseparable connection of all entities involved. My analysis of intra-action between participants and the mindfulness practice over time revealed three key assertions: Participants were coming to trust their present-moment experience and the mindfulness practice became more emergent. Furthermore, within these key assertions lies another assertion: That participants more deeply expressed a core issue. For the three cases, these aspects seem interconnected, whereby participants grew in self-trust as the process of working with emergence evolved, and such development seemed to allow participants to be better able to work with their core issue. The connection between these facets was validated by participants during the member check interview. What follows represents my best efforts to evidence them, by pulling together the within-case and between-case analyses.

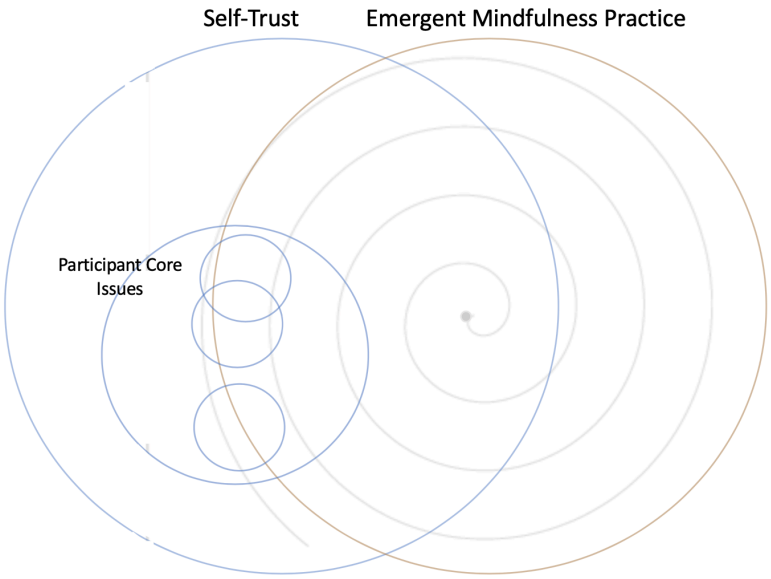

Figure 6. Visualization of the assertions
The figure begins at the center of the spiral and moves outward to encompass more space as a reference to growth. It starts at a point of intersection between self-trust and the emergent mindfulness practice, since participants will have self-trust to some extent in order to function as human beings. From here, attention and care were given to what arose for participants during the mindfulness practice and then was used to inform subsequent mindfulness practice. Doing so acknowledges participant present-moment experience as valuable, thereby supporting participants in starting to reflect on their present-moment experience. The more participants grew in self-trust, the more our emergent mindfulness practice strengthened; and vice versa. As these two facets grew in tandem, then participants could use the mindfulness practice to focus their increasing self-trust to grapple with their core issue. Over time, growth in these various aspects can continue.

4.4.1. Coming to trust the inner landscape

Referring back to Sunny's sixth journal entry that was provided above, the level of expression shared and the subsequent member check where she expressed vulnerability to share in this entry indicate that she was coming to trust her present-moment inner state – that it is worthy of consideration, even if uncomfortable and chaotic. As an example of further development in vulnerability, there were also instances of participant verbal sharing that expressed a leap of faith. To continue with Sunny as an illustration, during part of our fifth meeting she said: "Okay… I'll just say it out loud… like…sorry (*Sunny becomes emotionally activated*) … if God will forgive me, then I'll be fine." Here, she is pushing through pauses and through perceived risk of sharing with the group in her statement in the third person to speak out rather than keep to herself.

Vulnerability regarding the self and of the risk involved in sharing, as in the above example, is a marker of self-trust (Govier, 1993). There are three other indicators that can come together with vulnerability to signal robust self-trust (Govier, 1993). They include seeing oneself as having integrity, generally viewing oneself in a positive light, and believing that one's motivations and competencies are constructive (Govier, 1993). Over time practicing together, participants most commonly showed vulnerability, along with that of positive beliefs in their motivations and competencies.

The latter was not only indicated by changes within the journal content, where participants began to show a state of contemplation of their present-moment subjective experiencing, but for Fern and Bob, was also demonstrated by changes in their writing style over time. Regarding changes with Fern for example, their earlier journal entries of our first and second meetings included several instances of the word "maybe" whereas this marker of uncertainty disappeared thereafter. Bob's writing also initially contained markers of uncertainty, such as "I guess" or "I suppose" or "I'm not sure" and question marks. For Bob, this gradually faded out over time and was notably absent in our final meetings of six, seven, and eight. Movement towards surety reflects a more positive stance by participants' regarding themselves.

Further evidence of participants coming to trust is visible from the changes in their written definitions of what mindfulness means to them. I asked participants this in our first and last meeting. Compared to their initial explanations, the definitions of the

last meeting show more openness and flexibility regarding human experiencing. As a brief example of such change, all participants alluded to mindfulness practice for controlling experience in some way (e.g., “managing those emotions” as Sunny put it) but dropped this element of control from their final definitions. Some participants moved further towards openness and flexibility. Bob’s later definition expanded to include an emphasis on the heart (feelings) rather than just the mind (thoughts). And Fern’s final explanation was remarkably free:

> Mindfulness is awareness and acceptance of yourself, your feelings, and your thoughts. It is different for everyone and can change from day to day. It does not have strict rules for the way it is. Think about yourself and let all feelings happen. Aware of body, mind, and surroundings.

The change from control to openness and flexibility can be understood as movement in viewing human experiencing – and by extension oneself – from a more negative light to that of a more positive light.

4.4.2. The deeper, hidden issue

Each student participant revealed and grappled with a core issue that was important to them yet was oftentimes kept hidden from others. For Fern, it was an intimate relationship that they felt was both caring and hurtful. In the case of Bob and Sunny, the issue was around the constant stress and strain of needing to perform at school, but in different ways. For Bob, he enjoys the challenge of learning. Yet, the continuous grind required of him stripped the joy and meaning of learning, to the point where his state was affected outside of school. For Sunny, her innate need for quiet reflection to process and understand runs against the unyielding requirement to produce.

I came to recognize these core issues not from a single moment shared, but gradually over time. As participants continued to practice looking and reflecting inward – or in other words, growing in self-trust – these hidden issues became more deeply expressed. By depth over time I am referring to the participant sharing in multiple aspects of The Four Frames (mind, heart, body, and mental formations), as well as of context and meaning making around the issue. I will share part of Sunny’s sixth journal entry to refer to such depth. She wrote:

> … I can't breathe without groaning at the thought of my stressors. Honestly, I just feel pathetic. Writing about MY feelings feels wrong. Like dude, there are people dying and you're over here crying about a poor mark. It feels ridiculous. I have a personal theory: if I think too much about myself then I will be upset. …

In this sample, Sunny delves into her feelings and her feelings about her feelings (heart), gives a comparison of what she perceives is happening in the world versus her situation (context), and even alludes to the idea (a mental formation) that if she stops and takes time to reflect upon herself then it will result in a negative feeling. All of this expression occurs within a handful of sentences. Sunny also shared with me in the member check interview that such an intense moment would have, under her usual circumstances, been kept to herself to pass. In the past, such raw and dynamic experiencing would not have been written about, and certainly not verbally expressed as she subsequently did during the group sharing portion of this meeting.

4.4.3. Sowing the seed of self-trust together: Evolving emergence

Participants gradually expressed and contemplated more of themselves as I allowed myself to be affected by their contributions and to incorporate what was shared into the mindfulness practice. This eventual opening up of participant experience, in turn, helped me to respond to them in the here-and-now. In other words, our mindfulness practice became more emergent over time. This process of strengthening in our ability to work with emergence in practice also seemed interconnected with participants' growth in self-trust.

As an example of budding emergence, it so happened that in our third and fourth meetings I could improvise from what participants had shared during the group check-in to form the preamble to the mindfulness practice for that day. I was able to recognize how various pieces of what was said came together thematically and then incorporate that theme into the introduction of the mindfulness practices I had prepared. To use our fourth meeting as a specific example, Sunny and Bob shared during their check-in themes of tiredness and tension from and the ongoing toll of the requirements placed on them at school. After listening and validating their experience, I was able to then let go of my planned preamble to the mindfulness practice to instead tie in what participants had just shared. Below I have included part of that preamble:

> …Looking within, but always drawn out there, I feel. And the pressures and expectation is very real to be constantly drawn out there, like you were saying (Sunny), I actually have heavy things I have to carry, courses I need to go to, this I need to achieve…and that was kind of where I was going to go for today…sometimes we don't have the chance to slow down or if we do, it's so foreign that it can be really scary or unnerving to sit with…thinking about last week, what you folks had shared and just sitting with that, and the fact that you're back to school and being drawn outwards again, I was gonna invite us to just sit or lie down, and just observe our thoughts, like letting them go wild, letting them be free, just for three minutes, so it's like a small dose, I guess, of exposure to your inner world, and then from there, I'll redirect to focusing on our breath, to sort of ground us, for another three minutes…

Further, practicing the ability to recognize and integrate the fit between what participants are saying during the check-in with the mindfulness practice(s) chosen, paved the way for us to be able to eventually spontaneously choose a mindfulness practice within a meeting. This occurred during our fifth meeting, where, as a result of participants' check-in, I felt a pull to invite them into the process of choosing the mindfulness practice that day. Participants shared feelings of stress and fatigue regarding the busyness of school and/or work, and how this affected their being. For example, Bob stated:

> …I was busy a bit later than usual and a little stressed since I just had a quiz and about I'm about to have a test on Thursday (two days later), so I guess I'm a bit tired, a little disappointed, since I've kind of been struggling to keep up with doing my hobbies…

During the check-in, Fern shared a sense of emptiness due to all the busyness. In their own words:

> For me, I'm tired, I had nine hour shifts on the weekend and I still have some more (work) to do, so, I have like no down time, yea, and with school, um, it's always work, and then, I guess, other than that, I dunno, I'm like so tired that there's just no thoughts.

What Sunny then said felt very raw to me, like a pot bubbling up that is almost ready to spill over. Part of what she described was:

> …superficially, I'm functioning, like I can, I can go to school, interact with my friends, um, politely, but really, I'm like, inside, there's something grumbling, like I'm feeling all the negative emotion. It's not just from work, my wifi not connecting, but like, personal, um, conflict, and those are spilling into other relationships…But, yea, other than that, I'm like…I have to get stuff done…

Not only was there a common theme across participants in the above check-ins that felt important to address, but what Sunny shared, in particular, was revealed with such intensity that it created a feeling of urgency in me. My in-the-moment awareness of other and of myself had me pause to process what I was hearing and experiencing, and then choose to stop my plan and share my processing with the group. In my sharing I also asked the group to consider together what they might need. The section of the preamble where I communicated the feeling to pause and turn towards the group was as follows:

> …(last week) we did the practice where we just let our minds go for three minutes, freely, no matter what it was, wherever it needed to go…but the idea was letting yourself be, which is a bit in contrast to what you are all saying to start today, hey? I cannot let myself be, or I cannot enjoy, or I cannot make room for, or I cannot deal with whatever is happening within me…while I do have a practice for today, I also am considering all the themes that you folks brought up and what makes me wonder also instead, is maybe what you might need, or if you'd like me to just carry into the one I have, but, and maybe I should give you a bit of history as to what types of things we've done so far…

What I did here, by listening to what was arising within me, my being telling me to pause and ask for participant contributions, to then guide the mindfulness practice, is essentially the same process I had undertaken by myself to prepare the mindfulness practice for our meetings. Only this time, it was occurring with participants present. As such, the above example of our fifth meeting represents what an emergent mindfulness practice is in the most robust sense, because we came together in the present-moment to choose, try, and reflect on a practice. We were able to improvise based on what was happening within and between us.

Furthermore, this trajectory of evolving emergence corresponded with participant growth in self-trust. Take the aforementioned fifth meeting for example. This meeting represented an emergent mindfulness practice in the truest sense, and it was this meeting where Fern experienced their moment of catharsis that then lead to Fern openly trusting themselves thereafter. It was also after this meeting that Bob was able to take a contemplative stance. And for Sunny moving forward from here, while she was not able to be as open to herself, she allowed herself to express her true, unfiltered state, with moments of reflection breaking through.

4.5. Value for participants

A mindfulness practice that is facilitated with an understanding of the holistic mindfulness framework not only strengthens itself over time in ways where participants grew in self-trust and grappled with issues important to them, but it is also a practice that is helpful and meaningful from participants' point of view. For example, at the member check interview, Bob stated that he was able to "explore a different facet of myself that I kind of, neglect, like 99% of the time, if I'm honest." At her follow up interview, Sunny shared that taking time to work with her inner experience helped her get done the things she needed to do. In her own words:

> …leading up to the 4 o'clock meetings I think, I was like 'Oh my gosh, I could be, I could be doing whatever, whatever'…but, I'm gonna be at this zoom meeting. And so really, I wanted to uh, like, uh, let's get this over with…But, it, you know, when you really pay attention, when I've actually focused on the task at hand, honestly, you know what, this is, this is what I needed to be able to do the stuff I needed to do later…

At Fern's member check, they shared with me that they had told a classmate, about a month after the weekly sessions ended, that they missed our time together. They were reflecting on how helpful it would have been to have our practice during a time of accumulating stress and decline in wellbeing from a mathematics 12 course (e.g., "…like, I had a breakdown about that…"). Fern lamented how much they struggled between opposing messages: the voices of their parents, teacher, and school counsellor compared with their subjective experience. The overwhelming messages were "…oh, but, you're doing so well! … You can do it. You can just push yourself to do math..." Fern's internal message was "…but like, that doesn't matter! It *hurts*!" Fern gave this example to express that practicing mindfulness together would have been helpful for supporting Fern with their dilemma of who to listen to.

4.6. Carrying forward the honour of witnessing

The findings described in this chapter were brought forth by using the moderate constructionist lens. The purpose of using this perspective was to uncover emerging individual (e.g., pathways towards self-trust) and community (e.g., key assertions, value in practice for participants) truths that can also be situated within the holistic mindfulness

framework as relevant. In this chapter, I focused on showcasing the emergent truths. In the following chapter, I will showcase the relevance of these truths.

Chapter 5. Towards Embodied Wisdom

5.1. Introduction to the discussion

The mindfulness practices of the study and subsequent findings presented in Chapter 4 were not predetermined but emerged during the course of the study. This is because of the nature of an emergent mindfulness practice: experiential and relational, with both these pieces arising in the moment of practice. Trying to predict and control goes against this nature. Hence, the findings paid close attention to and described the process that occurred.

The focus on process is what makes this study different. It explores what arises for participants as they experience an emergent mindfulness practice and considers how the practice evolved with participants. What occurred for participants along with the emergent mindfulness practice is new territory. That being said, given that explanation on what an emergent mindfulness practice is and aims to do has already been provided in previous chapters, I will mainly focus on and discuss the value of participants' development in self-trust and sharing of a core issue in this chapter.

As a reminder, the interconnected findings were that: participants grew in self-trust as our emergent mindfulness strengthened, and eventually, they revealed and began to grapple with a core issue that was important for them. In this chapter, I situate what emerged for participants in three aspects. First, I discuss the relevance to the holistic mindfulness framework, particularly the Noble Eightfold Path. Second, I show the importance of participants' emerging self-trust in light of an existing body of work on the topic of self-trust by Govier (1993) and Lehrer (2011a; 2011b; 1997). Third, I indicate the ways in which participant findings suggest that generating an emergent mindfulness practice has the potential to foster mental health and actualize holistic education policy.

From here, I point to considerations for next steps in practice and research. Regarding mindfulness practice, I emphasize that an emergent practice is dynamic and complex, and as such, requires time and care to generate. I suggest how educators might pursue helpful experience and come together with students to be able to facilitate an emergent mindfulness practice. I also propose systemic ways of helping educators learn to listen to, understand, and communicate about human subjective experiencing,

such that they can become skilled facilitators. I then make recommendations for further research.

Finally, I close the chapter, and thereby close the thesis, with an anecdote from a participant. Indeed, participant contributions are embedded within this chapter as well, given the value represented comes from them working with me. In recognizing our interconnectedness and including examples throughout, I walk the Noble Eightfold Path, reflecting right understanding and speech.

5.2. Walking the Noble Eightfold Path

The holistic mindfulness framework outlined previously in Chapter 2 suggested that students and facilitators engaged in an emergent mindfulness practice could, over time, begin to cultivate aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path. Recollecting briefly here, the path is a way of conceptualizing how we think about and go about living our lives. It consists of eight threads grouped into three dimensions (see Section 2.6.1).

Indeed, when participants allowed for, stayed with, and contemplated on (whether part or all of these together) what was arising for them during our mindfulness practice – in other words, when they practiced trusting themselves with their experience – they are viewed as walking the Noble Eightfold Path. Of course, in the least sense, all are on the part of the path, that is mindfulness, by allowing for their experience to arise. More importantly, as self-trust grows, the capacity to stay and engage with one's experience grows. And the ability to stay and engage with experience is what is needed to be able to consider our experience in light of the various aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path. Growing in self-trust gives rise to the possibility of walking towards embodied wisdom.

To illustrate an interpretation of steps on the path with Bob for example, take the meeting eight journal sample that I shared where he realized that flexibility and novelty are possible upon contemplation of things that seemingly appear bounded. This moment of realization represented wisdom, as it contained thought and understanding that Bob can then carry into his life in ways that will be meaningful. Such wisdom was possible because of Bob's working in the dimension of mental discipline. Bob was open to staying with the passage of this meeting (right effort) and what arose within himself (right

mindfulness). These two pieces then merged together during the reflective journaling component (right concentration), resulting in Bob going beyond his present moment experience to an important realization (dimension of wisdom). From here, he might then practice applying this insight in ways that are important and helpful for him, thereby further walking on the path under the dimension of ethical conduct (i.e., right speech, action, and livelihood).

Each participant's reflections can be similarly recognized as steps on the Noble Eightfold Path. For brevity, I will not describe all the possible associations between participants and the path. However, I do wish to point out some differences.

Consider Fern and their meeting five journal entry for example, that represented the culminating moment towards self-trust and where Fern decided it was time to reflect on her core issue. The mindfulness passage of that meeting suddenly brought back the relationship issue they were trying to move away from. This time, however, they stayed with what was arising for them (dimension of mental discipline). They talked about how their partner was manipulative yet kind and respectful. Fern went beyond the duality of the relationship as good or bad, and grappled with the heartache – the heart (good parts they remember and desire of their partner) and the ache (feeling of manipulation). Such grappling in this journal entry reflected right speech. This is all to say that, in this meeting of contemplating on their present-moment experience, Fern walked within the dimension of ethical conduct.

In Sunny's case, I want to address the later meetings where she was at battle with herself. These journal reflections also represent steps on the path, namely those under the dimension of mental discipline. This is because, instead of trying to rid herself of overwhelming experience as she had done in initial meetings, she faced her experience (right effort); and, in doing so, had moments of reflection other than anger and blame (right mindfulness). In using Sunny's later meetings here, I intend to emphasize that mindfulness practice can be dynamic, vivid, and intense. The path need not be calm and peaceful. Quite the contrary, it can be lively work!

What is wonderfully important to recognize in the above illustrations, and that of which is recollected by the holistic mindfulness framework, is that practitioners themselves walk the path towards embodied wisdom. I did not explicitly tell them to pay

attention to particular inner experience (i.e., particular aspects of the Four Frames, and for a specific purpose such as to focus on a core issue) and explicitly tie that experience to the various dimensions of the Noble Eightfold Path. It is the mindfulness practice that, over time, becomes a self-igniting practice. I carefully and thoughtfully set up the conditions for practice week after week, helping to foster a communal mindfulness practice that allowed for what emerged within each individual and the collective. These conditions for and process of practice are what can support self-trust of inner experience to grow and the possibility of a personal and embodied wisdom to follow.

5.3. Self-trust and the filtering of experience

In the study, participants were coming to trust their present-moment experience as our emergent mindfulness practice strengthened. This mutual and synergistic growth supported participants to work with a core issue important to them. To gain insights into these findings, there exists a longstanding body of work on the topic of self-trust that merits consideration in light of the study.

Of particular relevance to the study is that self-trust concerns the process of filtering experience (Govier, 1993; Lehrer, 2011b), both internal (e.g., feelings, thoughts) and external (e.g., what the teacher just said). Such filtering may include, at any one given time, introspection, retrospection, critical reflection, deliberation, and reconciliation of conflicting values (Meyers, 1989, p. 5). Autonomy lies within this filtering process (Govier, 1993; Lehrer, 1997; p. 89). If there is self-trust present, then a person will be able to bring in their own voice, experiences, needs, desires, beliefs into the filtering process, to be considered alongside those of others, such as family, friends, teachers, counsellors, facilitators of mindfulness practice, even strangers. They can take themselves and others into account as they choose what to keep in the sieve and what to shake through the holes (i.e., autonomy) (Govier, 1993; Lehrer, 2011b; Lehrer, 1997, p. 92). In building self-trust, they also feel they can rely on their capacity to arrive at and accept their evaluations (Govier, 1993; Lehrer, 2011a; Lehrer, 2011b). It is this complex filtering process that formulates the reasons (e.g., beliefs, values, goals, intentions) that drive action, or results in agency, and formulates the ability to be responsible for taken action (i.e., agency) (Govier, 1993; Lehrer, 2011b).

On the other hand, if there is low self-trust then filtering is subdued and the result is passive action and lack of responsibility (Govier, 1993). This can appear in all kinds of forms, depending on context. A simple example is a youth that completes an assignment or activity because they "have to." They have no power in the situation, so there is little contemplation and they complete what is required of them. This is different from the youth reflecting, at least to themselves, that they do not want to partake and giving their reasons, taking on the perspective of the other person(s), and considering relevant situations experienced or known of, before deciding to complete the task anyway. They may still feel like they "have to" in this second version I am outlining here. But, this time, they are consciously engaged in their filtering process and the action. Here, the youth is an autonomous agent. This is all to say that very different processes can sometimes yield the same action, but it is the process of filtering that is critical. Paying attention to, understanding, and using the filtering process requires self-trust, as well as simultaneously strengthens self-trust (Govier, 1993; Lehrer, 2011a; Lehrer, 1997, p. 19).

While the above anecdote of low self-trust has few consequences with regards to mental health, academic achievement, and citizenship perhaps, self-trust that is left underdeveloped or is eroded can have much greater effects. A lack of self-trust over time breeds self-doubt (Govier, 1993). As self-doubt grows there is more room for others to take over the filtering process (Govier, 1993), rather than be considered alongside. Manipulation, coercion, and internalized harmful messages are the results that then drive action (Govier, 1993; Lehrer, 1997, p.98). One need only reflect on a crisis (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, war, racism) to recognize this path.

Even when on a grave path, however, there is some engaged filtering or self-trust present that is embedded within that path. We are rarely completely empty vessels, devoid of thinking, feeling, reflecting, etc. Although, the acting self may not be aware of which parts of their filtering process, even if only kernels, come from a place of self-trust.

And so, the above becomes an important reason for working with our experience via an emergent mindfulness practice – to bring the various parts of the filtering process mentioned earlier (e.g., introspection, retrospection, critical reflection) to conscious awareness so that we might trust that we can engage and grow our capacity to engage with the process in order to guide subsequent experience. The various practices of the study allowed participants to recognize, contemplate on, and work with their filtering

process. As they continued to practice bringing their attention and engagement to the filtering process, self-trust of engaging in the process developed. Self-trust then creates the potential to carry over into moments of engaged decision making (autonomy) and action taking (agency). This is because over time as one continues to develop self-trust, they learn to add, delete, solidify, modify – in sum, to transform – their filtering process. Over time, the process is transformed in ways where a person can then "conduct one's own life so as to lead an authentic personal existence" (Govier, 1993).

Furthermore, given that self-trust is related to the aforementioned complex filtering process of experience, then it makes sense that participants growth in self-trust supported them to reveal and work with an issue important to them (i.e., a type of experience). They began to not only increasingly engage with their filtering process via our emergent mindfulness practice, but to also increasingly bring themselves into the process. And as Govier (1993) in particular suggests, transformation towards authenticity is possible as one continues to grow in trusting themselves. Indeed, moments for deep and personal transformation were occasionally recognizable at the points within our mindfulness practice where self-trust was strengthening. To circle back to the final meeting for Bob as an example, his open contemplation on the mindfulness practice to arrive at an important realization reflects autonomy. If Bob then decided to change his actions as a result of such contemplation, this would be an exercise of agency in a personally meaningful and potentially transformative way. To put it another way, facilitating further contemplation on Bob's experience of that meeting's mindfulness practice could possibly change his perception of what education means and his approach to getting an education.

5.4. Towards individual and collective healing

As a brief reminder once more, participants were developing in self-trust as our emergent mindfulness strengthened, and eventually, they revealed and began to grapple with a core issue that was important for them. This process of mutual enhancement has potential to foster mental health. Indeed, as shared in Chapter 2, the concern for mental health is a central reason why mindfulness has been so widely adopted in schools. Moreover, support during the time of adolescence is imperative (Youth Mental Health Canada, 2016). As such, it is important to reflect on the findings with regards to youth mental health and beyond.

First, allow me to refer to the hidden, core issue that participants revealed and began to grapple with. This is what is intended to occur in counselling: a counsellor and client come together to collaboratively work on concerns brought in by the client as a means of fostering the client's mental health. The important difference between the participants of the study and counselling is that, in counselling, client concerns may have reached the point of significant interference with functioning by the time the client is able to access a counsellor; hence, counsellors require years of training and skillful expertise to be able to support clients. What the study reflects, however, is that students may have the opportunity to be proactive with their mental health as they grow in self-trust via an emergent mindfulness practice.

Second, supporting growth towards mental health requires a focus on fostering positive subjective experience of the individual. As indicated by a multidisciplinary international survey on the understanding of mental health (Manwell et al., 2015) and Keyes' (2003) model, such a focus is fundamental. In the study, there were several instances occurring for participants where self-trust was present for them. To give but one example, take Bob's journal entry from the sixth meeting that was shared previously. Here, the "touching the earth" mindfulness practice sparked excitement for Bob as he considered how the practice applies to him and could be carried forward into his life.

Third, regarding youth in particular, counselling psychology views fostering positive identity as one of the most important tasks with regards to youth mental health (Geldard et al., 2015, p. 9), along with positive experience and functioning. To connect the piece of positive identity formation back to participants, movement towards this was reflected in participants changes in what mindfulness means to them. The change of mindfulness from a practice of control to that of openness and flexibility towards subjective experiencing reflects that participants saw our practice as a way of coming to know themselves. And, as practitioners increasingly become aware of themselves over time, they may then focus the practice towards shaping themselves. Indeed, an example of this possibility was demonstrated by Fern. As Fern was learning to be more open with and pay closer attention to their experience via our mindfulness practice, they contemplated on what kind of person they want to be, both for themselves (e.g., journal entries regarding personal identity) and towards others (e.g., journal entry regarding romantic relationship).

The above connections are to show that it is not a far stretch to say that through generating an emergent mindfulness practice that can grow self-trust and support students in working through issues that are important to them, so too there can be movement towards mental health. Further, mental health is intimately connected to physical and social health (Manwell et al., 2015). This connection is inherent within the relationship between self-trust with autonomy and agency, given that the concept of agency synergistically overlaps with all three domains of health (mental, physical, and social) (Manwell et al., 2015). To put it another way, an emergent mindfulness practice that aims towards embodied wisdom can become a source for holistic healing.

Such a practice can also become a source for collective healing. For example, there were instances in later meetings where participants verbally offered support to one another or drew on something a participant shared to further describe their own experience. Such moments of having a positive attitude towards and acknowledging others in their complexity generate a sense of belonging. Further, the example can be extended to say that an emergent mindfulness practice can not only be important for the individual's sense of belonging within a collective but eventually for the collective itself. We need students to work with experience if they are to become citizens who can lead a life that takes into account others in their network, society, and the greater world – citizens who can come together to contemplate on and work through our worldly concerns.

5.5. Realization of holistic education

Since this thesis considers the high school setting and students spend many hours during most of the week in this environment, it is important that educators reflect on the message received there. As indicated in my reflections about my teaching experience and in participant contributions, the volume and pressure of curricular content in secondary schools remains high. This is oftentimes to the point where educators, such as myself, have foregone integrating the personal and social competency: the part of education policy that emphasizes developing students' personal and social identities. I recall this to say that we are conditioned within the school system to focus on learning outcomes first and foremost, rather than subjective experience. The implicit message from this conditioning is that what is experienced is of lesser worth. Indeed, as participants pointed out, particularly Bob who lamented from week to week,

students are well aware of where they must put their time and energy: towards evaluations rather than towards themselves as human beings.

Collectively, participants and I show that education still emphasizes performance in secondary schools, more so than working with the student "behind the performance or with providing students with meaningful reasons for why they should perform at all" (Ergas, 2015). The terminology may have changed – such as evaluating learning outcomes and competencies via formative and summative assessments – but the focus is on performance all the same. Most of the high school day is spent floating from task to task and drawing students' attention out-there – to textbooks, homework, projects, quizzes and tests. Attention out-there gives the message that "in-here", of how students experience what is happening within and around them, apart from analytical thinking and problem-solving, is not valuable (Ergas, 2015). Moreover, such devaluing of subjective experience leads to the hindrance and eventual erosion of self-trust (Govier, 1993; Lehrer 1997, p. 98). Currently enacted mindfulness practice in secondary schools perpetuates this message and its consequence by not allowing room for and working with participant experience as they practice. It implicitly tells students that their experience is their own to be dealt with or taken to someone else to support them, and at a later time; valuable learning does not lie within right now.

The paradox is that BC education policy also supposes that students cultivate a personal and cultural identity, and social awareness and responsibility (Personal and Social, n.d.), reflecting that policy makers recognize these pieces as fundamental and interconnected for engendering a healthy and just world. Yet, learning to contemplate on what is experienced and on one's capacity and ability to integrate experience into living is needed for a student to form their own ideas, beliefs, and values around who they are and what kind of life they want to live (Govier, 1993) – or in other words, to actualize BC holistic education policy. Thus, BC educators have assumed responsibility for supporting students in learning to work with their subjective experience and in their ability to perform on assessments.

A mindfulness practice which foregoes in-the-moment experience – whether 5-minutes or 50-minutes, with or without scientific explanation of concepts such as thoughts and emotions – is likely to be insufficient in actualizing either educational aim. This is because what occurs "in-here" has manifestations "out-there", as the field of

counselling psychology perhaps knows all too well. The two cannot be fully separated. And it is in recognizing their relationship where the value of generating an emergent mindfulness practice as a means of actualizing school policy becomes apparent. Facilitating a practice that emphasizes what arises within participants as they practice is a way that educators can support holistic development of the student that also then translates to meaningful academic achievement.

Furthermore, intentional time and attention given in secondary schools for a mindfulness practice that takes into account students' subjective experiencing as they are experiencing it, to their internal worlds, has the potential to foster student health. This is particularly useful in the case of high schools, given the structure of public secondary schools. Schools counsellors in this setting have not been able to give sufficient time and care to the majority of students as the counsellor is responsible for an entire grade level, which can be hundreds of students depending on the size of the school. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated youth mental health concerns (Dale et al., 2022; Kurtz et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2021). As such, secondary schools cannot continue to download the responsibility of student wellbeing to a few individuals, namely the school counsellor and legal guardian(s); or, as I have experienced as a teacher in some occasions, only one individual – the student. There is a great need for all within the school system, teachers, counsellors, administrators, and students to come together to give attention and care to students' internal worlds (Dale et al., 2022; Kurtz et al., 2021). An emergent mindfulness practice towards embodied wisdom is a way that all within the system can come together to support students.

While I will make recommendations in the following section for educators who wish to engage in such mindfulness practice with students, I wish to take a moment to clarify my emphasis on the need to consider students' internal worlds as part of education by all involved within the system, so that I am not misunderstood. I am not suggesting that we forego curricula or learning about what is going on "out-there" (e.g., math, science, socials). What I am suggesting is an integrated balance in secondary schools via intentional, thoughtful mindfulness practice that is eventually embedded with curricular aims. We cannot continue to forgo the "in-here" to favour the "out-there", for what is happening within students is happening whether we (students and educators) give our attention and care to it or not (Ergas, 2015). Moreover, as cited previously in this section and indicated by participants' reflections on the value our practice had for

them, the hidden process of “in-here” becomes the recognizable “out-there.” They are two parts to becoming whole.

5.6. Considerations for next steps

The message I wish to return to for educators who wish to engage in mindfulness practice is regarding the process of mindfulness practice with secondary school students. Mindfulness practice is not about coping: breathing meditation as a quick fix that requires only a few minutes per day/week for a few weeks, in order to take a short break from the pressures of pursuing success; although this, too, has its place at times to be able to support a transformative practice. Nor is it about compartmentalizing human experience into modules with accompanying homework exercises, as presented in some mindfulness curriculums. Mindfulness practice is about looking at both the inward and outward aspects that shape our experience in order to understand the entirety of our dynamic complexity, and it can be hard work. Growth and transformation can come from intentional time and care towards our subjective experiencing, rather than from the amount of time or type of practice. And, as showcased by this thesis, an emergent mindfulness practice presents the possibility of personal transformation by building self-trust in our capacity to contemplate and act on experience.

5.6.1. Time and care for mindfulness practice

I recognize that time and care towards facilitating an emergent mindfulness practice that is deep, rich, and personal can be difficult for educators to make room for, particularly for upper-level classrooms where there is pressure to prepare students for next steps of post-secondary and workforce or in situations where students are struggling to achieve learning outcomes. As mentioned previously, my intention is not to push achievement or learning outcomes aside, but to suggest ways in which time and care for mindfulness practice can also be integrated within secondary schools. There are two key pieces for educators to be able to do this, which were mentioned within Chapter 2 and will be given further attention below.

The first is that educators should have some form of embodied understanding of a mindfulness practice that is underscored by the Buddhist concepts I outlined in the holistic mindfulness framework. This can be any combination of experiences that call to

them, such as in my case, of books and podcasts along with a living, breathing Sangha on occasion. While I hope various resources and some personal experience of mindfulness practice will be pursued before endeavouring to engage in a rich, deep, personal practice with students, I wish to offer a reminder that it is the type of experience that matters. What is needed is some form of experience from out-there that helps us turn towards and deeply listen to the dynamic complexity of in-here until we are familiar with listening to our own in-here and can begin to integrate our inner and outer world. Then we can better hear others and guide them towards hearing themselves through mindfulness practice.

Educators developing the ability to listen to and guide others leads me to the second point, of developing a collective mindfulness practice – not from educator "to" students but educators "with" students. Students are included throughout and grow the process of mindfulness practice because we hope students will be able to develop and carry forward the ability to deeply listen to themselves and others as a compass for living life. This also means that facilitators need not be an expert in mindfulness (e.g., read all the latest books, go on many retreats, complete a graduate degree on the subject) to facilitate a helpful and meaningful mindfulness practice, but strive to develop expertise in listening to and communicating experience through practice so that students can learn to do the same.

Recognizing the importance for students in becoming experts of their own lives means that educators do not need years of experience or training to begin practicing mindfulness with students. The essential aspect of mindfulness practice to become adept at as a facilitator, that supports sowing the seed of self-trust for participants, is the process of practice: making room for emergence of experience within participants, the facilitator, and between them as they practice. In communicating understanding of and working with what arises for all involved and using that to inform mindfulness practice, the facilitator does more than build rapport with students so that they will believe us when we suggest to them to sit with their experience (i.e., interpersonal trust). We invite them to turn towards their experience and to contemplate on it until students learn how to start doing so themselves (i.e., grow self-trust). Given this, I suggest that a small group of educators and students who would like to try practicing can come together to start and grow a practice given some considerations, similar to a pilot study. One important consideration is having an educator in the group who is trained in deep

listening, such as the school counsellor or a long-time educator who works closely with students beyond academic achievement for some time. This is because the practice is of looking inward and working with what emerges for the individuals and the group, as well as because students may have much going on inside as they practice; all of which an educator experienced in deep listening will be able to support. Later on, teachers who have experienced facilitation of such deep listening can guide their own groups and use their judgement to direct any needs to the school counsellor and/or administration. The second consideration, of course, is having someone in the group who is familiar with what mindfulness practice is and does as it relates to the surrounding Buddhist concepts described in Chapter 2.

Both of the abovementioned facets do not need to be within one individual either, and students are encouraged to bring in their understanding of each other and of mindfulness into the group. The group then mutually agrees to come together at a dedicated interval to practice, reflect, and share experiences with each other, which shape subsequent practice. As they become more comfortable with one another and mindfulness practice, they can expand the group. The options are open! The group can become more creative with the types of practices, invite more members into the group, create various branches of groups etc. In sum, they collectively develop the practice over time based on their collective experiences.

Apart from the above considerations for educators and students coming together to start and develop a mindfulness practice, I wish to also propose a more systemic way of cultivating the two facets for educators. I suggest that teacher training programs include a module (e.g., once a week for a semester) on mindfulness practice underpinned by the holistic framework. The module can also carry the practice further by demonstrating how it may be interwoven with various curriculum (i.e., demonstration of contemplative education). Further still, to cultivate a robust foundation for educators to be able to deeply listen to self and other, would be to incorporate a basic counselling skills course within or as pre-requisite for teacher training programs. This course would train teachers-to-be in the essentials of help-intended awareness and communication. Such training would not only be beneficial for facilitating mindfulness practice but also for generating a person-centred approach to learning outcomes in increasingly diverse public schools.

5.6.2. Future research

This thesis aimed to advocate for a thoughtful understanding and approach to mindfulness practice with secondary school students, as well as to shine light on how students experience the practice as they practice and how the practice itself develops via a moderate constructionist multi-case study. Three interconnected key assertions came forward from the study. They were that, over time: (1) participants grew in self-trust (2) and revealed and began to grapple with a core issue that was important for them, (3) as our emergent mindfulness strengthened. Various important connections to participants' development with the practice were then described. Recommendations for educators who wish to create an emergent mindfulness practice towards embodied wisdom in secondary schools were also shared.

While the study included a small sample from BC schools that is not generalizable to all students, there is merit to the study. First, BC's education policy was redesigned taking into account "research and global trends" (Provincial Curriculum and Assessment Development Process, n.d.), and so, it is likely that the policy mirrors national and international educational standards. Thus, how the policy is considered in the thesis is likely applicable to schools beyond BC. Second, the study is in its rich and thick description that allows the reader to compare and contrast the various parts with their context. Third, the study is timely in its focus on participant subjective experience during mindfulness practice and that it occurred online. There are no studies at the time of this thesis, to my knowledge, that capture student subjective experience of a mindfulness practice facilitated online, neither of elementary nor high school students. While there are few studies that capture high school students' subjective experience of mindfulness practice, when they do, they oftentimes gather data at the end, when the mindfulness practices of the study have concluded. This study is novel in that it captures participant subjective experience immediately after the facilitation of a mindfulness practice and each time we practiced. The study is further unique as it showcases the development and value of participants engaging in a mindfulness practice in an online setting – an important point since education is likely to continue to be online or in a hybrid format (i.e., mix of in-person and online) for an indefinite amount of time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducting the study online also showcases the flexibility permitted in mindfulness practice, and, particularly, that a valuable practice comes about

from thoughtful attention to the emerging process of practice rather than a focus on the amount or type of practice.

The study represented a beginning. Further exploration of student in-the-moment experiencing of an emergent mindfulness practice is needed, with particular attention given to self-trust to further gauge its prominence and development, as well as the relationship of the practice to other constructs included within and beyond this thesis. For example, one connection discussed in this thesis was to mental health. Since mindfulness practice to support youth mental health is now being contested (e.g., Weale, 2022) further qualitative research is warranted on an emergent mindfulness practice that aims towards embodied wisdom and how the practice relates to building youth's health. Additionally, because this work concerns mindfulness practice with secondary school students, it is important to also explore the connection between the practice, the development of self-trust, and the actualization of school policy for students.

5.7. Saying farewell (for now)

I wish to close the thesis with a participant's contribution. Closing in this way keeps true to the wisdom that participants are interconnected with this thesis and to honouring their voices. The example I will share is also fitting for a temporary ending (a placemark in the journey), as it will not only highlight the relationship between an emergent mindfulness practice and the actualization of holistic education policy, but also drive home the greater message behind this work – the possibility of transformation.

In the findings, I had presented Bob's final journal entry where he wrote about, and later reflected on at the member check, how significant our mindfulness practice of that session was for him. I shared that Bob had contemplated that if he could apply what he learned from our practice that day to other subjects, then he would not be so worried about his grades; he would instead deeply enjoy and find meaning in learning, regardless of the subject matter. Not only does this example reflect the possibility of an emergent mindfulness practice leading to a moment of realization of BC's education policy, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the example reflects the following understanding: If students can develop such an engaged awareness via mindfulness practice underpinned by the holistic mindfulness framework towards the pursuit of personal and meaningful wellbeing and education, then they can further grow this

capacity to understand and maneuver complex concerns. Growing this seed through such a holistic practice is an imperative, to empower movement towards an innovative, equitable, and sustainable future.

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Appendix A.

Supplementary materials of Chapter 2

Data Sources

Data source for literature search and article selection process on mindfulness practice in secondary schools

I conducted a literature search on EBSCOhost on July 3, 2020 for e-resources under the following databases related to education and psychology: Academic Search Premier, Education Source, Eric, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES. The search terms used were “mindfulness” and “secondary school” or “high school” or “junior high school” or “middle school” or “grade school” or “secondary education”. Further restrictive parameters included publication date (2016 – 2020) and language (English). This initial search provided 320 results. Using Microsoft Excel, the 320 results were then filtered by searching titles and abstracts to exclude duplicates and irrelevant populations (e.g., college, undergraduate, teachers, leaders, parents) providing 276 unique and relevant results. The remaining 276 results were then individually reviewed by title and abstract to identify research articles that examined a mindfulness practice with high school students and where students were not a specialized population (e.g., students with cancer, high school athletes). There were found to be 22 such articles.

I then conducted a similar literature search on EBSCOhost on November 12, 2022 to update the literature review before publication of the thesis, in order to ensure the review gives a current snapshot of the topic of mindfulness practice with high school students. In this second instance, I used the same databases and search terms as listed above to look for e-resources in English. What was different for this search was the publication date parameter, which included articles from July 1, 2020 until November 12, 2022. This search provided 370 results. After duplicates were removed, 277 unique results remained. These remaining 277 results were then individually reviewed by title and abstract to identify research articles that examined a mindfulness practice with high school students and where students were not a specialized population. There were found to be 15 such articles.

Taking the two searches together means that 37 articles were included as part of the literature review for this thesis.

Data source for literature search and article selection process on contemplative research

I accessed EBSCOhost on July 18, 2022 for e-resources under all databases on the platform. The search terms used were “contemplative practices” or “contemplative education” and “secondary school” or “high school” or “secondary education”. Further restrictive parameters included year (1914 – 2022) and language (English). This initial search provided 32 results. Using Microsoft Excel, the 32 results were then filtered by searching titles and abstracts to exclude duplicates and irrelevant results (e.g., teachers, curriculum). This filtering process produced 6 results with regards to research articles that examined high school students undertaking contemplative education or contemplative practices.

Tables

Table A.2.1. Reference list of mindfulness practice studies for literature review (*N* = 37)

1. Alvarez, A. A. (2020). *Urban student perspectives on classroom-based daily mindfulness practices* (Order Number: AAI27603004) [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toledo]. In Dissertation Abstracts International Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 81(6-B).
2. Campbell, A. J., Lanthier, R. P., Weiss, B., & Shain, M. D. (2019). The impact of a schoolwide mindfulness program on adolescent well-being, stress, and emotion regulation: A nonrandomized controlled study in a naturalistic setting. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Counselling, 5*(1), 18-34. https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2018.1556989
3. Carmona, S. (2016). *An exploration of mindfulness as a stress reduction prevention for adolescents.* (Order Number: AAI3582089) [Doctoral Dissertation, California State University]. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 76(7-A)(E).
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11. Fung, J., Guo, S., Jin, J., Bear, L., & Lau, A. S. (2016). A pilot randomized trial evaluating a school-based mindfulness intervention for ethnic minority youth. *Mindfulness, 7*, 819-828. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-016-0519-7
12. Groark, S. (2020). *Mindfulness intervention to support school engagement with at-risk students at an urban charter high school.* (Order No. AAI27664474) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Northern Colorado]. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 81(7-A).
13. Hagins, M. & Rundle, A. (2016). Yoga improves academic performance in urban high school students compared to physical education: A randomized controlled trial. *Mind, Brain, & Education, 10*(2), 105-116. https://doi.org/10.1111/mbe.12107
14. Lawson, T. D. (2019). *A comparison of student focus, engagement, and classroom climate after the implementation of mindful meditation* (Order Number: AAI13864275) [Doctoral Dissertation, Trevecca Nazarene University]. In Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 80(11-A)(E).
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Table A.2.2. Reviewed mindfulness practice studies (*N* = 37) arranged by type of practice

Mindfulness Practice	Focus or Program and Authors
Established mindfulness-based program (*n* = 19) Meditation with breath awareness and other psychoeducational components	**Learning to Breathe (L2B) (*n* = 6)** Eva & Thayer (2017) Frank et al. (2021) Fung et al. (2016) Mauceri (2022) Schussler et al. (2021) Ceballos et al. (2021) **.b from the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) (*n* = 3)** Campbell et al. (2019) Sanger, Thierry, & Dorjee (2018) Liu et al. (2022) **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (*n* = 3)** Franco et al. (2016) Luong et al. (2019) Salazar (2018) **Inner Strength Teen Mindfulness Program (*n* = 2)** Zhang et al. (2022) Reid et al. (2022) **Compassionate Mind Training (*n* = 1)** O'Driscoll & McAleese (2022) **Mindfulness-Based Gaia Program (*n* = 1)** Scafuto et al. (2022) **Mindfulness Program (*n* = 1)** Özcan & Isildar (2021) **Mindful Schools (*n* = 1)** Groark (2020) **Radiant Beginnings Mindfulness Program (*n* = 1)** Fournier (2021)

Meditation (*n* = 9)	**Breath-awareness (*n* = 9)** Alvarez (2020) Carmona (2016) Lawson (2019) Quach, Mano, & Alexander (2016) Shoemaker (2018) Tharaldsen (2019) Titone, Feldman, & DeRosato (2018) Tenaglia (2021) Ferland (2022)
An activity (*n* = 8)	**Art (*n* = 4)** Lindsey, Robertson, & Lindsey (2018) McDonough & Andrea (2020) Morrell (2019) Rose & Lomas (2020) **Yoga (*n* = 4)** Chancey (2019) Hagins & Rundle (2016) Wang & Hagins (2016) McMahon et al. (2021)
Unclassified (*n* = 1)	**Not Available (*n* = 1)** Luiselli et al. (2017)

Table A.2.3. Reviewed mindfulness practice studies (*N* = 37) by outcome

Stated Outcome	Authors
Stress-reduction (*n* = 19)	Campbell et al. (2019) Carmona (2016) Chancey (2019) Eva & Thayer (2017) Ferland (2022) Fournier (2021) Lawson (2019) Lindsey, Robertson, & Lindsey (2018) Liu et al. (2022) Luiselli et al. (2017) Luong et al. (2019) McMahon et al. (2021) Özcan & Isildar (2021) Reid et al. (2022) Salazar (2018) Schussler et al. (2021) Tenaglia (2021) Tharaldsen (2019) Wang & Hagins (2016)
Self-regulation (*n* = 18)	Alvarez (2020) Campbell et al. (2019) Ceballos et al. (2021) Chancey (2019) Fournier (2021) Groark (2020) Hagins & Rundle (2016) Luong et al. (2019) Mauceri (2022) McMahon et al. (2021) Quach, Mano, & Alexander (2016) Reid et al. (2022) Salazar (2018) Sanger, Thierry, & Dorjee (2018) Scafuto et al. (2022) Schussler et al. (2021) Wang & Hagins (2016) Zhang et al. (2022)
Mindfulness (*n* = 6)	Ceballos et al. (2021) Fournier (2021) Liu et al. (2022) Mauceri (2022) McMahon et al. (2021) Özcan & Isildar (2021)

Behaviour problems (*n* = 5)	Ceballos et al. (2021) Fournier (2021) Fung et al. (2016) Scafuto et al. (2022) Tenaglia (2021)
Self-compassion (*n* = 5)	Fournier (2021) O'Driscoll & McAleese (2022) Reid et al. (2022) Schussler et al. (2021) Zhang et al. (2022)
Academic achievement (*n* = 4)	Carmona (2016) Groark (2020) Hagins & Rundle (2016) Wang & Hagins (2016)
Attention (*n* = 4)	Ferland (2022) Fournier (2021) Groark (2020) Schussler et al. (2021)
Test anxiety (*n* = 4)	Shoemaker (2018) Morrell (2019) O'Driscoll & McAleese (2022) Rose & Lomas (2020)
Well-being (*n* = 4)	Campbell et al. (2019) Frank et al. (2021) Hagins & Rundle (2016) Schussler et al. (2021)
Anxiety (*n* = 3)	McMahon et al. (2021) O'Driscoll & McAleese (2022) Tenaglia (2021)
Depression (*n* = 3)	McMahon et al. (2021) Tenaglia (2021) Schussler et al. (2021)
Executive functioning (*n* = 3)	Groark (2020) Frank et al. (2021) Hagins & Rundle (2016)
Classroom engagement (*n* = 2)	Lawson (2019) Shoemaker (2018)
Creativity (*n* = 1)	Luong et al. (2019)
Impulsivity and aggression (*n* = 1)	Franco et al. (2016)

Memory (*n* = 1)	Salazar (2018)
Peer relationships (*n* = 1)	Fournier (2021)
Pro-social behavior (*n* = 1)	Fournier (2021)
Resilience (*n* = 1)	Liu et al. (2022)
Self-concept (*n* = 1)	Tenaglia (2021)
Self-efficacy (*n* = 1)	Özcan & Isildar (2021)
Sense of connection (*n* = 1)	Ceballos et al. (2021)
Stabilization of heartrate (*n* = 1)	Ferland (2022)
Substance use (*n* = 1)	Frank et al. (2021)
Trauma of adolescence (*n* = 1)	McDonough & Andrea (2020)

All reviewed studies (*N* = 37) were classified by outcome. Some examined multiple outcomes and, as such, those authors are relisted accordingly.

Table A.2.4. Reference list of reviewed studies (*N* = 6) regarding contemplative education in secondary schools

1. Crawford, A., Joseph, S., & Sellman, E. (2021). A Quiet Revolution? Reflecting on the Potentiality and Ethics of Mindfulness in a Junior School. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *69*(2), 237–255.
2. Holstine, K. W. (2015). Effect of contemplative meditation on behavior of urban public middle school students [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences* (Vol. 75, Issue 10–A(E)).
3. Shelton, S. A. (2021). Queer contemplative pedagogy: Challenging gender and sexuality norms through contemplation. *Journal of Homosexuality*. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/00918369.2021.1984789
4. Snell, J. J. (2013). Student stress and contemplative practice in the special needs classroom: Practice and possibilities [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences* (Vol. 74, Issue 2–A(E)).
5. Srijumnong, S., Sri-ampai, P., & Chano, J. (2015). Developing Public Mind Curriculum for Lower Secondary School Classes Using Contemplative Education Methods. *Educational Research and Reviews*, *10*(16), 2387–2399.
6. Wang, D. S., & Tice-Brown, D. (2021). “It helped, the mindfulness, ... so let me help”: High school students developing social work values through yoga. *International Journal of Social Work Values & Ethics*, *18*(1), 49–59.

Table A.2.5. Reference list (*n* = 9) of studies from literature review (*N* = 37) that included qualitative component

Mixed-methods studies (*n* = 5)

1. Carmona, S. (2016). *An exploration of mindfulness as a stress reduction prevention for adolescents.* (Order Number: AAI3582089) [Doctoral Dissertation, California State University]. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 76(7-A)(E).
2. Lawson, T. D. (2019). *A comparison of student focus, engagement, and classroom climate after the implementation of mindful meditation* (Order Number: AAI13864275) [Doctoral Dissertation, Trevecca Nazarene University]. In Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 80(11-A)(E).
3. Luong, M. T., Gouda, S., Bauer, J., & Schmidt, S. (2019). Exploring mindfulness benefits for students and teachers in three German high schools. *Mindfulness, 10*, 2682-2702. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01231-6
4. Schussler, D. L., Oh, Y., Mahfouz, J., Levitan, J., Frank, J. L., Broderick, P. C., Mitra, J. L., Berrena, E., Kohler, K., & Greenberg, M. T. (2021). Stress and Well-Being: A Systematic Case Study of Adolescents' Experiences in a Mindfulness-Based Program. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, *30*(2), 431–446. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1007/s10826-020-01864-5
5. Wang, D., & Hagins, M. (2016). Perceived Benefits of Yoga among Urban School Students: A Qualitative Analysis. *Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine (ECAM)*, *2016*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/8725654

Qualitative studies (*n* = 4)

1. Alvarez, A. A. (2020). *Urban student perspectives on classroom-based daily mindfulness practices* (Order Number: AAI27603004) [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toledo]. In Dissertation Abstracts International Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 81(6-B).
2. Ceballos, P. L., Lemberger-Truelove, M. E., Molina, C. E., Laird, A., & Carbonneau, K. J. (2021). Culturally diverse middle school students' perceptions of a social and emotional learning and mindfulness school counseling intervention. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, *7*(2), 72–86. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/23727810.2021.1948809
3. Ferland, T. (2022). Mindfulness in a middle school science classroom: A practitioner inquiry [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering* (Vol. 83, Issue 12–B)
4. McDonough Varner, A. M. (2020). *Creative mindfulness in secondary art education: A narrative inquiry* (Order Number: AAI13901087) [Doctoral Dissertation, Drexel University]. In Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 81(3-A).

Appendix B.

Supplementary materials of Chapter 3

Pre-study screening interview

(1) Basic Information

Interview Date & Time: Interview Modality: Online call	**Researcher Notes:**
Student-Participant Name: Pronouns: Age: Current grade: Confirmation of email (for consent form and session reminders):	
Breaking the Ice: How did you hear about the study? What interests you about the study?	

(2) Research Project Overview (Part of Informed Consent)

What's Involved? I'm holding a weekly mindfulness practice with a small group of students (maximum 4) from your school, after school for an hour from 4:00pm – 5:00pm, every Tuesday for 8 weeks on either Zoom or Microsoft Teams. - Starting on (1st week): XXX. X, 202X - Ending on (8th week): XXX. X, 202X There will also be a follow-up interview with each student individually, approximately 2 months after our last group meeting, to discuss some of the experiences shared	
About the Study: The goal of the study is to understand how you experience the mindfulness practice. I'm really interested in learning what's happening for young people during the meditation. There are many ways to do meditation. The approach I'm going to use will focus involve different activities such as	

ones that focus on breathing, the body, and visualizing a story.	
What's Required of You: The weekly meeting will start and end with a check-in and check-out. The mindfulness practice will come in the middle of our 1-hour meeting. You will be journaling after the mindfulness practice, and I will give you some journaling questions to support your writing. Journals will be submitted online at each session (instructions to be provided later). If you wish, there will also be time to talk about your experiences with the group. Some students like to share, others don't – and either is totally okay. To help me learn from your experience, I'll be audio recording each meeting so I can study it later for themes and meanings.	
After: After the group ends, I will carefully review the journals and the audio recordings. I will write a summary of student experiences and share it with my research team for feedback. I would also meet once more with you, one-on-one, so you can review my summary and give me feedback, too. This follow-up interview will also be audio recorded and take about an hour or so. If you'd like, I will email a final copy of the study findings to you once it's all over, too. **Honorarium:** $25 Visa gift-card will be given to all participants at the end of the follow-up interview for your time spent at the interview.	
Potential Benefits & Risks: There may not be any personal benefits or risks to your participation, but here are a few **possible benefits:** People who practice meditation sometimes report increased feelings of calm and ability to cope. Taking part in the study may also provide insights into what is important to you, along with a sense of connection from being part of a group. Here are a few **possible risks**: Chance that unexpected or even negative thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories can arise during meditation practice. What you and other participants say in the group is confidential and all members must promise not to talk about their fellow group members' experiences to others. Even so, there is always a risk that someone in the group may accidentally or intentionally share something.	
Questions: What questions do you have for me?	

(3) Reviewing Criteria and Consent

Does the group and the time commitment sound good to you? (i.e., Do you have a private and quiet space to connect online for the meetings? Do you think you will be able to attend all 8 weeks of the 1-hr group, as well as the follow-up interview 2 months later?) While it is my hope that each student can be present for our meetings and the follow-up interview, missing 1 or 2 meetings because of life is understandable. Please note, however, that because this is a research study, missing more than 2 meetings will indicate that you have withdrawn from the study. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time up until the follow-up interview by letting me know in-person or via email. You don't have to provide a reason; things happen! You can just say "I am withdrawing", and it's not a problem.	
Does your legal guardian support your involvement in the study? Are you willing for me to contact them so they can sign a consent form for you, as well? **Legal Guardian** **Name:** **Telephone:** **Email:** **Address (for emergency):**	
Comfortable with writing and speaking in English or non-standard English.	
Aware of optional group sharing opportunity.	
Aware of potential benefits and risks associated with study.	
Aware that all parts of the study, weekly meetings and follow-up interview, will be audio recorded and all data will be securely stored, viewed only in its anonymized form by myself and my supervisory committee, and destroyed after a 5-year period.	

(4) Additional

Anything else you think is important and would like me to know at this time?	
Anything more you would like to ask me?	

Participant and guardian consent form

Thesis Title

Beyond Mindfulness Mondays in High Schools: An Emergent Mindfulness Practice Towards Embodied Wisdom

Who is Conducting the Study?

Principal Researcher:
Mel Voulgaris
MA Student, Counselling Psychology
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Email: xxx@sfu.ca

Faculty Supervisor:
Dr. Heesoon Bai
Professor, Philosophy of Education
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Tel: 778 xxx xxxx
Email: xxxx@sfu.ca

Committee Member:
Dr. Krista Socholotiuk
Assistant Professor, Counselling Psychology
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Email: xxxxxxxxxxxx@sfu.ca

Why This Particular Study?

Background:
Mindfulness practice with secondary school students has shown to be helpful for youth in supporting improvements in cognitive tasks (e.g., memory, attention) and socioemotional outcomes (e.g., stress, engagement). Couple such results with the need to support students with their mental health, as youth ages 15-21 face the highest rates of mental health disorders in Canada, and mindfulness to facilitate student wellbeing has skyrocketed in popularity.

Problem:
Few studies on mindfulness practice with secondary school students focus on exploring how students experience a mindfulness practice. Further, most approaches teach students instrumental mindfulness rather than holistic mindfulness, meaning students come away viewing mindfulness practice as a means to some other end rather than a practice with inherent value.

Purpose & Research Question:
The goal of this research is to gain an understanding of holistic mindfulness practice from the lens of students. To support this inquiry, particular focus will be on what student-participants are paying attention to during the practice, how they are interpreting

what they are paying attention to, and how they then respond to this interpretation. The overarching inquiry question for the study is “How do secondary school students intra-act with a mindfulness practice underpinned by a holistic mindfulness framework?”.

Anticipated Contribution of the Study:
The insights gained from participation in the study will support researchers, educators, and students in making informed choices regarding mindfulness practice in secondary schools, such as if they should, how they would, and why they would choose to incorporate a mindfulness practice with students.

Why Are *We* Doing This Study?

The study is being conducted as part of the Master of Arts thesis of Mel Voulgaris, under the supervision of Dr. Heesoon Bai (Supervisor) and Dr. Krista Socholotiuk (Committee Member). Mel will be the one facilitating the study. The study is inspired by Mel’s experiences as a secondary school teacher (2013 – 2021), as a student under Dr. Heesoon Bai (2013 – present), as well as a counsellor-trainee with Dr. Krista Socholotiuk (2019 – present) and other counselling psychology faculty. Taking these experiences in combination, the mission of Mel’s current and future work is to elevate student voices to inform the choices made in education.

What Will Happen During This Study?

Study Procedures:
If you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to commit to eight 1-hour meetings (once per week) in a small group setting (maximum 4 student-participants). Group meetings will take place via a secure and encrypted platform (Microsoft Teams or Zoom) on **Tuesdays, 4:00pm – 5:00pm** (start date to be determined, when sufficient participants enroll) with Mel, the principal researcher. During these meetings, you will be practicing mindfulness, journaling about your experiences, and will have the option to share with the group. Approximately 2 months after the last group meeting, Mel will also host a follow-up interview (maximum 90 minutes) with each of you individually. The purpose of this interview is to make sure they understood your experiences and to get your input on how to report your experiences. Essentially, this follow-up interview is a chance to clarify and add further to your written and verbal contributions. Arrangement of this follow-up meeting will occur via email and this meeting will also take place online. You will receive a $25 Visa gift-card after the follow-up interview in recognition of the time involved for the interview. Gift cards will be given to your school’s administration office for you to pick up at your convenience. Please also note that the group meetings and follow-up interview will be audio recorded on a digital recorder.

To provide some further details on the study process, each group meeting entails (1) a check-in, (2) mindfulness practice and personal reflection, and (3) a check-out, respectively. During each meeting, you will be asked to write about your experience of the mindfulness practice in a journal (instructions will be provided) and will be invited to share out with the group (optional). Mel will also be reflexively writing in a journal of their own during and in between group meetings. All information collected will be kept confidential and in a secure location (see Confidentiality, and Data Protection and Storage sections below for more information). Additionally, your contributions will be reviewed by the research team named above after the 8 group meetings but before your follow-up interview.

How Will My Confidentiality Be Protected?

Privacy:
All information you share will be kept confidential by the research team named above. Additionally, you are to respect confidentiality of the group. You are to honour the privacy of your fellow group members who choose to share with the group and commit to not repeating what other participants share. That being said, perfect confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and there is a risk that participants might tell other people about what was discussed in the meeting(s).

Regarding data, any written material you provide will be identified by a number rather than your name up until our last meeting. At the last meeting, you will be asked to confidentially submit a chosen pseudonym to Mel, and only the pseudonym will be used to identify your data from that point forward. You may be quoted or paraphrased in the final report of this study, and if so, it will be done under your chosen pseudonym. You will be given the opportunity to review such data for your input on reporting during the follow-up interview with Mel.

Data Protection and Storage:
Physical data (e.g., printouts, digital recording device) will be kept in a locked cabinet when not in use by the research team named above. Digital data (e.g., audio recordings, document files) will be kept on an encrypted and password-protected device and stored in the same locked cabinet. Once the study is completed, physical data will be converted into electronic files and the paper copies destroyed. This electronic data will be stored in the same manner for electronic data noted above. XXXX. XXXX….the device will remain in this secure storage without any transfer or secondary use for 5 years. At the 5-year mark (December 2026), the device will be securely destroyed.

What are the Potential Benefits and Risks of Participating?

You may or may not benefit from participating in this study. However, given the research base on mindfulness, you may gain increased feelings of calm and ability to cope, as well as insights to what is important to you. You may also develop a sense of connection from being part of a group.

There is a small chance that unexpected or negative thoughts, feelings, sensations can arise during a group meeting with peers due to the introspective nature of mindfulness practice, but these are not expected to be greater in and of themselves than what you would encounter in daily life. Mel will be monitoring students during the study and may involve guardian(s) to support someone if they become distressed but will always discuss this privately with the student-participant before doing so.

The group format of this study means personal experiences may be shared with fellow group members/peers. In such circumstances, perfect confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. It is always possible that your personal information might be shared outside the group by other participants, whether intentionally or by accident. Your safety is paramount, and you are encouraged to journal and share with the group as much or as little of yourself as is comfortable for you.

What Will Happen with the Study Results?

The results of the study will be reported in a graduate thesis, a copy of which will be made available to you via email should you wish to receive it. Results of the study may also be published in relevant journals (e.g., Mindfulness), periodicals (e.g., British

Columbia's Teacher Federation Teacher Magazine), and presented at conferences (e.g., Teacher Professional Development).

Your Participation is Voluntary!

You must be in grade 11 or 12 to participate in this study. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and requires your legal guardian's consent. You have the right to refuse to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent at any point during the study up until the follow-up interview, without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your school standing. You can withdraw your consent via email to Mel, the principal researcher. Further, missing more than two sessions will indicate your withdrawal from the study. If withdrawal occurs, you will be asked at the time of withdrawal whether you would also like your data to be withdrawn.

How Do I Get More Information?

If you have any questions or concerns about this study at any time (including before, during, or after the study), please contact Mel Voulgaris (email: xxxx@sfu.ca).

What If I Have a Concern or Complaint?

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact XXXX. Please reference the study number 30000500 when contacting the office so that you can be better assisted.

Providing signatures below indicates that both named below have received a copy of this consent form for their own records and have given consent for the student-participant to take part in this study. Both parties do not waive any of their legal rights by granting permission for the student-participant to take part in this study.

_____	_____
Student-Participant Legal Name (Printed)	Student-Participant Signature
_____	_____
Guardian Legal Name (Printed)	Guardian Signature
	_____
	Date (yyyy/mm/dd)

Member check interview guide

(1) Warm-up (5 – 10 min)

- How have you been since the group?
- What did you think, overall (reactions, impressions), about the experience?

(2) About the data (40 – 50 min)

(A) Remind participants of the RQ: How do students intra-act with a mindfulness practice that is underpinned by a holistic mindfulness framework?

- Specific thing I was trying to learn from you within this bigger question was how you might move or develop with the practice
    - You answered the 3 prompts that were related to this bigger question (what you are paying attention to, what was arising for you as you were paying attention, and how you make sense of it)
    - First want to talk together a bit about what I noticed overall, before getting into the 'how' part of the question

(B) Discuss core issue + coming to trust

- Talk about cross case findings, with specific reference to the case:
    - "When looked at data, this is what stood out to me…"
- Stop and ask what they think:
    - Anything they would change or didn't get right in their eyes?

(C) The 'How': review unique trajectory with each case by reading case report together

- Ask the participant 'how' they think they were able to come to trust (i.e., stay with and explore) their inner experiencing
- Review my case report written narrative of the 'how' with them (as suitable, depending on their answer to the previous question)
    - Ask what would change or anything didn't get right in their eyes

(3) Curious Questions (5 – 10 min)

- How much of what you shared with me (in the journals or group sharing) do you think you would have also shared with your peers or teachers?
    - What do you think made you able to share here, during the study?

(4) Closing (10 – 20 min)

- **Housekeeping**: Inform participants of the following:
    - Potential data use (e.g., thesis, conferences, peer-reviewed journals, professional development workshops) and data storage
    - Destruction of linking list
    - My contact (for questions, concerns, copy of thesis and mindfulness practices, as well as copies of anything else they might want such as their journal entries)
    - $25 visa gift card (e-visa not available in Canada)

- **Questions from participants for me?**

- **Saying goodbye:** Share with each participant one impactful thing I noticed from them during our time together, and thank them for their generosity in time and in contribution to this work

Excerpt from facilitation

Presented below is a sample from my facilitation process that was described in Sub-Section 3.4.4 (please refer to Section 3.5 regarding data). The excerpt is from a transcription of an audio recording from the second meeting, and occurred after I validated each participants' check-in. The excerpt demonstrates my early efforts at working with emergence: It shows my incorporating what arose for participants and stayed with me from the previous week into a preamble for our mindfulness practice of this meeting.

> …based on the reading and what you folks shared (last week), so for me, the part of the reading, there's a piece that said not changing part, that I feel naturally kind of came up in the discussion, and one of you said that as soon as we stopped, we stopped our session or we stopped our practice, your mind automatically, because you're also at the busyness of school, went back to school, work, and like how that's okay and noting that… And so, today, I'm gonna keep on that theme of like, allowing yourself to be as you are in this space today, that mind-heart-body, and we'll get into the practice of a different passage from the same book, Thich Nhat Hanh's The Pocket…

Mindfulness passages of the study

Apart from the group check-in and check-out reflective practice for each meeting, the other practices we engaged in were oftentimes passages that I read. Oftentimes, the passage was either from a book I had or that I scripted. After the passage, I would ask participants to sit quietly for a few minutes before signaling them to engage in journaling. After individually journaling, we would share about our experience with the passage. All practices of the study are provided below. Each represents an excerpt from a transcription of an audio recording. Regarding data, please refer to Section 3.5.

Meeting 1

The following practice was a passage from Thich Nhat Hanh's (2012, p.16) book "The Pocket". The particular passage from the book is titled "Mindfulness of Breath".

> The way to maintain your presence in the here-and-now is through mindfulness of breath. There is no need to manipulate the breath. Breath is a natural thing, like air, like light. We should we leave it as it is and not interfere with it. What we are doing is simply lighting up the lamp of

awareness to illuminate our breathing. We generate the energy of mindfulness to illuminate everything that is happening in the present moment.

As you breathe in, you can say to yourself “Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in”. When you do this, the energy of mindfulness embraces your in-breath, just like sunlight touching the leaves and branches of a tree. The light of mindfulness is content just to be there and embrace the breath, without doing it any violence, without intervening directly. As you breathe out, you can gently say “Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out”.

So, as you breathe in, respect the in-breath. Light up the lamp of mindfulness so that it illuminates your breath. “Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in”. It’s simple. When the in-breath is short, you take note of the fact that it’s short. That’s all. You don’t need to judge. Just note, very simply, “My in-breath is short and I know that it’s short”. Do not try to make it longer. Let it be short. And when your in-breath is long, you simply say to yourself “My in-breath is long”. You respect your in-breath, your out-breath, your physical body, and your mental formations. The in-breath moves inward, the out-breath moves outward. In and out. That is mindful breathing. Mindful breathing is a kind of bridge that brings the body and the mind together.

Meeting 2

There were two practices in this meeting. The first was also from Thich Nhat Hanh’s (2012, p. 32) book, and the passage is called “Darkness Becomes Light”. It is offered below:

Observe the changes that take place in your mind under the light of awareness. Even your breathing has changed and become not-two – I don’t want to say one – With your observing self. This is also true of your thoughts and feelings, which, together with their effects, are suddenly transformed. When you do not try to judge or suppress them, they become intertwined with the observing mind.

From time to time, you may become restless and the restlessness will not go away. At such times, just sit quietly, follow your breathing, smile a half-smile, and shine your awareness on the restlessness. Don’t judge it or try to destroy it, because this restlessness is you yourself. It is born, has some period of existence, and fades away quite naturally. Don’t be in too big a hurry to find its source. Don’t try too hard to make it disappear. Just illuminate it. You will see that, little by little, it will change, merge, become connected with you the observer.

Any psychological state that you subject this illumination to will eventually soften and acquire the same nature as the observing mind. Throughout your meditation, keep the sun of your awareness shining. Like the physical

sun, which lights every leaf and every blade of grass, our awareness lights our every thought and feeling, allowing us to recognize them – be aware of their birth, duration, and dissolution – without judging or evaluating, welcoming or banishing them.

It is important that you do not consider awareness to be your ally, called on to suppress the enemies, that are your unruly thoughts. Do not turn your mind into a battlefield. Do not have a war there, for all your feelings – joy, sorrow, anger, hatred – are part of yourself. Awareness is like an elder, gentle and attentive, who is there to guide and enlighten. It is a tolerant and lucid presence, never violent or discriminating. It is there to recognize and identity thoughts and feelings, not to judge them as good or bad, or place them into opposing camps in order to fight with each other. Opposition between good and bad is often compared to light and dark. But if we look at it in a different way, we will see that when light shines, darkness does not disappear, it doesn't leave, it merges with the light; it becomes the light. To meditate, therefore, does not mean to fight with a problem. To meditate means to observe.

Second practice. The second practice of this meeting offered a body-scan to participants that shared in the moment with them, without a script to read from. My version of the body-scan practice is as follows:

Let's start with bringing our attention to the very top, our heads, the very, very top of your head. Can you feel the hair on your scalp? Or what the top of your head might feel like? Just noticing if there are any sensations there…trying to trace down to our forehead next…just noticing if there are any sensations there.

Then our eyes…our nose…our cheeks…our lips…what about your chin? From there, let's move to the back of our head…back of the skull….down to your neck…down to your shoulders…bring your awareness to your shoulders, the top of the shoulders…the back and the front…from there, I invite you to go down your arms slowly, at your own pace…your biceps…down, down…elbows…go at your own pace to your fingertips.

Now let's return to the chest…the middle part, moving down the trunk…can you notice your chest?...Down next to your belly….and what about the backside of your trunk?...Your shoulder blades…if you can sense them or anything there…moving down through your mid back to check there…to the base of your lower back, of your trunk…from here, might as well carry to the bum…can you feel yourself in the chair?...

The back of the legs now…Going all the way down, see if you can trace anything, if there's anything there in your body signaling you, as you go down your calves, down to your feet…perhaps the heels, depending on where your feet are…

> And then let's bring our awareness to the front of our legs, our thighs…put our awareness there, to see if there's anything there…and work our way down, to our knees…to the shins…to the top of the feet…and lastly, your toes.
>
> I invite you to take a few breaths here at your toes…and then bring your awareness to any part of your body that's holding tension right now…that's calling for your attention by doing so…maybe as you were scanning, you noticed something in your neck…or your knee…go to that place, bring your awareness to that place, or places… but start with one if there are many, and just invite your breath there into that place…just stay, keep your awareness there and breathe a few breaths, in…out…in…and out…allow yourself to stay and be present there with your body's signal…take a few more breaths there… And if you'd like, you can try to deepen your breath if you'd like…(Mel demonstrates)…and as you prepare to return to the group, take a few breaths in your own time, as you need, before we return to the group.

Meeting 3

This meeting also included two practices. The first was a passage is from Rick Hanson's (2011, p. 46) book "Just One Thing". The particular passage from the book is titled "Befriend Your Body".

> Remember a time when you treated a good friend well. What was your attitude toward your friend? And what kinds of things did you do with them? How did it feel inside to be nice towards your friend?
>
> I'll read that again, and I hope you can conjure it to mind…
>
> Remember a time when you treated a good friend well. What was your attitude toward your friend? And what kinds of things did you do with them? How did it feel inside to be nice towards your friend?
>
> Now, I'd like you to imagine a day of treating your body like it's a good friend. Imagine loving this friend, your body, as you wake up and help it out of bed. Being gentle with it. Staying connected to it. Not rushing about. What would this feel like?
>
> Imagine cherishing your body as you move through the morning, such as helping it kindly to some water, maybe giving it a nice shower, and serving it healthy and delicious food. Imagine treating your body with love as you do other activities, such as driving, playing games, exercising, and working with others…or even brushing your teeth.
>
> What would cherishing your body, treating it like a good friend, look like for you? How would this approach feel? And if your body could speak, what might it say to you after being treated with love for a day?

After all, kindness begins at home. And your home is your body.

Second passage. The second practice of this meeting was a passage from Thich Nhat Hanh's book (2012, p. 11) "The Pocket". The passage is titled "Resting".

> My dear friends! Suppose someone is holding a pebble and throws it in the air, and the pebble begins to fall down into a river. After the pebble touches the surface of the water, it allows itself to sink slowly into the river. It will reach the bed of the river without any effort. Once the pebble is at the bottom of the river, it continues to rest. It allows the water to pass by.
>
> I think the pebble reaches the bed of the river by the shortest path, because it allows itself to fall without making any effort. During our sitting meditation, we can allow ourselves to rest like a pebble. We can allow ourselves to sink naturally without effort, to the position of sitting, to the position of resting. Resting is a very important practice. We have to learn the art of resting. Resting is the first part of Buddhist meditation. You should allow your body and your mind to rest. Our mind as well as our body needs to rest. The problem is that not many of us know how to allow our body and mind to rest. We are always struggling. Struggling has become a kind of habit. We cannot resist being active, struggling all the time. We struggle even during our sleep. It is very important to realize that we have the habit energy of struggling. We have to be able to recognize a habit when it manifests itself because, if we know how to recognize our habit, it will lose its energy and will not be able to push us anymore.
>
> To meditate, means first of all, to be there – to be on your cushion, or on your seat, to be on your walking meditation path. Eating is also a meditation if you are really there, present 100 percent with your food. The essential is to be there. So please, when you practice meditation, don't make any effort. Allow yourself to be like that pebble at rest. The pebble is resting at the bottom of the river and the pebble does not have to do anything. While you are walking, you are resting. While you are sitting, you are resting. The Buddha said, 'My practice is the practice of non-practice'. That means a lot. Give up all struggle. Allow yourself to be, to rest.
>
> When I sit on my meditation cushion, I don't struggle at all on my cushion. I allow myself to be. I don't make any effort and that's why I don't get into any trouble while sitting. If you struggle during your sitting meditation, you will very soon have pain in your shoulders and back. But if you allow yourself to be rested on your cushion and not struggle, you can sit for a long time.
>
> We do not sit in order to struggle to get to enlightenment. No. Sitting, first of all, is for the pleasure of sitting. Walking, first of all, is for the pleasure of walking. And eating is for the pleasure of eating. The art is to be there 100 percent. Be there truly. Be there 100 percent of yourself. That is the essence of true Buddhist meditation. Each of us knows that we can do that, so let us train to live each moment of our daily life deeply. That is why I like to define mindfulness as the energy that helps us to be there 100 percent.

> It is the energy of your true presence. Breathing in, repeat 'in the here, in the here'. Breathing out, 'in the now, in the now'. Although these are different words, they mean exactly the same thing. I have arrived in the here, I have arrived in the now. I am home in the here, I am home in the now. When you practice like that, you practice stopping. Stopping is the basic Buddhist practice of meditation. You stop running, you stop struggling. You allow yourself to be, to rest, to heal, to calm.

Meeting 4

This meeting contained two meditation practices. The first was being still for 3 minutes and allowing our minds to wander like wild horses, in order to become aware of what is there. After our group check-in and tying the practice to what participants shared during the check-in, I introduced the practice as follows:

> Okay…So, the idea is for 3 minutes we'll, it can be either sitting or laying down…I'm gonna invite you though, for your eyes to be closed for this one, so you can sort of visualize and see, and what you're doing is, is just going into and letting your mind literally be free and go…and let whatever thoughts happen, just watch them…what are they? Don't need to judge them…don't need to push them away…just let them float around for a bit…and like we're doing, is basically seeing them, shining a light…shining a light on them to see what's there, but then let them be there for 3 minutes…and then I'll redirect us into the breathing, grounding into the breathing, and then we'll go from there in the usual journaling etc..so, I invite you to get comfy if you need a moment, because sometimes your positioning….either in your seat…if you wanna lay down, go ahead….I'll give us, I'll give us 30 seconds to a minute…I've got a timer as well, so I can join to and I'm not worried about the 3 minutes and other 3 minutes… so like wild horses, you're kinda just letting them out of the gate…so…I invite you to settle yourself into your position…we'll do 3 minutes of observing our thoughts and 3 minutes of breathing, so 6 minutes total…take a few breaths as you close your eyes…I've started our 3 minutes now…and just let yourself see what thoughts you have within you.

Second practice. After the timer signaled 3 minutes had passed of sitting with the first practice, I then moved directly into the second practice of a grounding meditation as I recognized that participants' minds may have become particularly active and themselves emotionally activated, especially if they are not used to allowing their mind to move freely. As such, I introduced them to counting their breaths as I had learned at my Korean Buddhist temple stay. We did this practice also for 3 minutes, and I introduced it as follows:

So I invite you to tune into your breath by counting now…I'll start the counting, and then I invite you to continue with the counting…so, breathing in for one…out one…up to 5…two in…two out…three in…three out…four in…four out…five in…five out…and then count down….five in…five out….four in….four out…try to anchor to the breath when you're counting, three in…three out…two in…two out….one in…one out…and continue this cycle, one to five, five to one, in and out…until the timer is done.

Meeting 5

This meeting entailed two practices. The first was a passage from Thich Nhat Hanh's (2012 p. 93) book "The Pocket" and is titled "Blocks and Knots". The passage is as follows:

> To oppose, brush aside, or deny pain – in our body or mind – only makes that feeling more intense. Our painful feelings are not other than ourselves. Or to put it more precisely, they are part of us. To deny them is to deny our very selves. The moment that we accept that we have these feelings, that these feelings are part of us, we begin to feel a little bit more peaceful and the pain begins to lose some of its intensity. To smile to our pain is the wisest, the most intelligent, the most beautiful thing we can do. There is no better way.
>
> Every time we acknowledge a feeling of pain and make its acquaintance, we come in close contact with ourselves. Bit by bit, we look deeply into the substance and the roots of that pain – fear, insecurity, anger, sadness, jealousy, and attachment – form blocks of feelings and thoughts within us. In Sanskrit known as samoyana – internal formation. And we need time and opportunity to acknowledge them and to look into them.
>
> The mindfulness of breathing does the work of making painful feelings bearable. Mindfulness recognizes the presence of the feelings, acknowledges them, soothes them, and enables the work of observation to continue until the substance, the substance of the block can be seen. Mindfulness, or illuminating it, is the only way to transform it. All the seeds of pain are present within us and if we live in forgetfulness, the seeds of pain will be watered every day. They will grow strong and the internal blocks will become more solid. Conscious breathing transforms internal formations of painful feelings.
>
> Internal formation can also be seen as fetters or knots of suffering deep within our consciousness. The knots are created when we react emotionally to what others say and do, and also when we repeatedly suppress our awareness of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings and thoughts. The fetters that bind us can be identified as any painful feeling or addictive pleasant feeling, such as anger, hatred, pride, doubt, sorrow, or attachment. They are forged by confusion and a lack of understanding – by our misperceptions regarding ourselves and our reality. By practicing

> mindfulness, we are able to recognize and transform the unpleasant feelings and emotions when they first arise, so that they don't become fetters. When we do not let ourselves react to the words and actions of others, when we are able to keep our minds calm and peaceful, the fetters of internal formations cannot be made and we will experience greater happiness and joy.

Second practice. The second practice of this meeting was a loving kindness practice that I have experienced before. I improvised the practice in-the-moment with participants because of their check-in. We spent a couple minutes at each stage of the loving kindness practice, breathing in and out for ourselves as individuals first, then for our group, and then beyond our group. I introduced and guided the practice as follows:

> So this one, I've used a lot, in instances…where I really just…I need something…whether it's to help me fall asleep, or help me keep up…and so I might do it lying down before sleeping at the end of the night to try to support…telling my body I, I can't right now……here's what I've got and I promise I'll look at this later, kind of…negotiation with myself in a way?...and so, basically what it is, is you just breath in and out because that's the foundation but…on your in-breath you pick a couple words that you need…so for me a lot of the times I will, I might say the word 'peace', usually, I, I want peacefulness but short words are better like…like… 'peace and relax'…so what you need, you recite on the in-breath…and the thing that's gripping you…that you need to release a little bit, you say in your mind on the out-breath…one, two, or three words…so for me, it might be like 'peace and relaxation' on the way in…and then I might say 'sadness, loneliness' on the way or 'sad and lonely' are shorter versions of that…so I would breathe in and say 'peace, relax'…and then as I breathe out, I would say 'sad, lonely'…so basically on the in-breath your inviting in, on the out-breath you're letting go…and so we can do that for a few minutes…and you're starting and you're inviting that for yourself first, and then I'll guide it from there…so take a moment, because you might need to think about what the words are…that you want to invite your way, one, two or three…you could do as many words, but I find that one to three is the classic…that you might say as you breathe in through the nose…then you might need a moment also to think about the out words…sometimes if there's physical pain in my body I'll say 'pain' on the out-breath to release some of the physical pain…so it could be emotions, body, whatever it is…let me know when you, give me some sort of signal when you've got some words, and then we'll go into it…and you wanna repeat the same words in/out, in/out…
>
> Ready? Semi-ready? Yea…one of us is ready…you don't have to believe the words when you start, so pick some words…okay, so…I need to re-orient myself…let's try.
>
> So, again I'll invite you to either close your eyes or drop your gaze to a little bit in front of you…breathe in through the nose (Mel demonstrates), out

through the mouth (Mel demonstrates)…as you breathe in (Mel inhales)… say those words you have in your mind's eye that you need…mine are peace, relaxation….on the out-breath (Mel exhales), as you breathe out, say the words that you want to loosen…sad, hurt…(Mel inhales)…say your words that you need...release the words, that you need to loosen…continue in this way…for yourself, genuinely…or as genuinely as possible, as if you were caring for yourself or a small child.

Continue to say your words, keep going as you are, the words in, the words out, but now not for yourself only, but for us, as the entire group…breathing in, I invite peace and relaxation to the group here with me today…on the out, releasing some of the sadness and the responsibility…breathe in your words to give to the group, as well as yourself…breathe out your words to loosen for yourself and the group.

And one more time, continue with those words, and extend further…to others you care about…and perhaps, even the world unknown…give those in-breath words, release, a little bit, those out-breath words, for others.

Meeting 6

For this meeting, I shared my own version of a practice I had experienced called "Touching the Earth". I realized that this practice is also available in Thich Nhat Hanh's (2017, p. 22) book "The Pocket". My version that I scripted for our group is below:

Touching the earth is a wonderful practice as a reminder for us to step out of ourselves…For me, when I feel myself running out of curiosity, care, consideration, energy, when I feel myself becoming consumed by the world out there, and then also myself consuming to fill myself up, whether that be to avoid the distress of the next thing that needs to be done…or maybe because I can't stand to look at and recognize my own depletion…or the depletion of others and the world around me…then this is a crucial moment for me to remind myself to touch the earth in some way.

The earth is ever present for us. It does not care about socioeconomic status, the various identities we hold, the things we strive to reach, the routines we try to have, the weight we try to carry from the pressures we feel, and so on…the earth, to me meaning everything here that's seen and unseen, the trees, the sky, the sun, the moon, the air, the waters, the animals, the insects, down to the microbes…all the underground networks and the networks above the ground…they are all there for us, as we are…they embrace us as we are, as we are now…

What a relief that can be! Or at least a moment of tender holding, that touching the earth can provide for us…a reminder that we are but one small part of a vast web of interconnection on this earth…and that today, or whenever you need it, you can momentarily rest in the embrace of the earth…like an animal or insect that is tired and/or wounded, they retreat

> towards the earth's comfort, making a burrow or resting in or under a tree…until they are ready to continue trying their part in the intricate net of interconnection … are we not also like animals and insects? …
>
> So, I invite us to consider the ways that are available to us, where we might touch the earth…it could be a slow, slow walk…nearby where we live…where we carefully and intentionally plant each foot fully for every step, breathing in intentionally and looking around to the earth's aliveness intentionally…the distinct colours of a tree perhaps…and it's pattern of leaves…or trunk…for example…touching the earth could be our sitting near a window to see all that is alive around us…or it could be a surrendering bow to the powers and wisdom of the earth by kneeling down in our space, and gently placing our foreheads on the ground, with our arms stretched out in front and palms facing upwards…there are so many ways that we could touch the earth, and take a rest in the earth's embrace, even for a moment…In what ways might you consider touching the earth?

Meeting 7

For this meeting, a passage from Thich Nhat Hanh's (2017, p. 83) book called to me based on what participants had shared the week before and during this meeting's check in. The passage was titled "The Wounded Child Inside".

> In each of us there is a young suffering child…we have all had times of difficulty as children, and many of us have experienced a lot… To protect and defend ourselves against future suffering we often try to forget those painful times…Yet every time we're in touch with that experience of suffering…we believe we can't bear it…and so we stuff our feelings and memories deep down in our unconscious mind…But, just because we may have ignored the child, doesn't mean they aren't there.
>
> The wounded child is always there…trying to get our attention…The child says, 'I'm here! I'm here…You can't avoid me. You can't run away from me.'…We want to end our suffering by sending the child to a deep place inside and staying as far away as possible…but running away doesn't end our suffering….it only prolongs it…When we become aware that we've forgotten that wounded child in ourselves, we feel great compassion for that child…and we begin to generate the energy of mindfulness…
>
> The practices of mindful walking, mindful sitting, and mindful breathing, are our foundation…with our mindful breath, and mindful steps, we can produce the energy of mindfulness and return to the awakened wisdom lying in each cell of our body…that energy will embrace us, and heal us…it will heal the wounded child in us… the first function of mindfulness is to recognize and not to fight…we can stop and become aware of the child within us…when we recognize the wounded child for the first time, all we need to do is be aware of them and say "hello".. that's all…perhaps this child is sad…if we notice is, we can just breath in and say to ourselves,

> breathing in “I know that sorrow has manifested in me. Hello my sadness…”. Breathing out, “I will take good care of you”…Once we have recognized our inner child, the second function of mindfulness is to embrace them…instead of fighting our emotions, we are taking good of care of ourselves…because mindfulness brings with it an ally, called concentration…the first few minutes of recognizing and embracing our inner child with tenderness will bring some relief…the difficult emotions will still be there…but we won’t suffer as much anymore…After recognizing and embracing our inner child, the third function of mindfulness is to soothe and relieve our difficult emotions…just by holding the child gently, we are soothing these difficult emotions, and we can begin to feel at ease…
>
> When we embrace our strong emotions with mindfulness and concentration, we’ll be able to see the roots of these mental formations…we’ll know where our suffering has come from…when we see the roots of things, our suffering will lesson…therefore, mindfulness recognizes, embraces, and relieves…this is because the energy of mindfulness contains the energy of concentration, as well as the energy of insight…concentration helps us focus on just one thing…with concentration, the energy of looking becomes more powerful and so insight is possible…and it is insight that has the power of liberating us…if mindfulness is there, and if we know how to keep mindfulness alive, then concentration will be there too….and then if we know how to keep concentration alive, then insight will also come…the energy of mindfulness enables us to look deeply, and gain the understanding we need, so that transformation is possible.

I also carried the passage further after sharing it. I felt the need to improvise, sharing how the passage ties into what we are trying to do in our mindfulness practice space. My riffing was as follows:

> And so this is what we are slowly trying to do, week by week. We want to return to ourselves…return to concentrating within…return to looking deeply within…and slowly, slowly, by saying ‘hello’ and not fighting….by embracing and putting our concentration within ourselves, then we can start to see the roots… we can, as he says ‘return to the awakened wisdom lying in each cell of our body’…within us, we not only have many questions, but within us we also have wisdom, understanding, that can guide us and transform us…so what we are trying to do here, is create, a very, curious, compassionate, intimacy with ourselves, so we can see ourselves deeply, to come towards understanding of ourselves…and in doing so, then we can learn to see others and the world in this way.

Meeting 8

In this final meeting, I shared a science article by Jabr (2012) titled “How Does a Caterpillar Turn into a Butterfly?” I shared the passage as follows:

As children, many of us learn about the wonderous process by which a caterpillar morphs into a butterfly. The story usually begins with a very hungry caterpillar, hatching from an egg…the caterpillar, or what is more scientifically termed, a larvae, stuffs itself with leaves, growing plumper and longer, through a series of molts, in which it sheds its skin…one day, the caterpillar stops eating…hangs upside down from a twig or leaf, and spins itself a silky cocoon…or, molts into a shiny chrysalis…within its protective casing, the caterpillar radically transforms its body…eventually emerging as a butterfly or a moth…But what does that radical transformation entail?... How does a caterpillar rearrange itself into a butterfly?... What happens inside the chrysalis or cocoon?

First, the caterpillar digests itself…releasing enzymes to dissolve all of its tissues…if you were to cut open a cocoon or chrysalis at just the right time, caterpillar soup would ooze out…but, the contents of the pupa are not entirely an amorphous mess…certain highly organized groups of cells, known as imaginal discs, survive the digestive process…before hatching, when a caterpillar is still developing inside its egg, it grows an imaginal disc for each of the adult body parts it will need as a mature butterfly or moth…discs for its eyes, for its wings, its legs, and so on…in some species, these imaginal discs remain dormant throughout the caterpillar's life…in other species, the discs begin to take the shape of adult body parts even before the caterpillar forms a chrysalis or cocoon…some caterpillars walk around with tiny rudimentary wings tucked inside their bodies…though you would never know it by looking at them…

Once a caterpillar has disintegrated all of its tissues…except for the imaginal discs…those discs use the protein rich soup all around them to fuel the rapid cell division required to form the wings, antennae, legs, eyes, genitals, and all the other features of an adult butterfly or moth…the imaginal disc for a fruit fly's wing for example, might begin with only 50 cells, and increase to more than 50,000 cells, by the end of metamorphosis…depending on the species, certain caterpillar muscles and sections of the nervous system are largely preserved in the adult butterfly…one study even suggests that moths remember what they learned in later stages of their lives as caterpillars…getting a look at this metamorphosis as it happens is difficult…disturbing a caterpillar inside its cocoon or chrysalis risks botching the transformation…but Michael Cook, who maintains a fantastic website about silkworm, has some incredible photos of tooth-saw silk moth, that failed to spin a cocoon…you can see the delicate, translucent jade wings, antennae, and legs of a pupa, that has not yet matured into an adult moth…a glimpse of what usually remains concealed.