Duquesne University
Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Spring 2008

Developing Higher Consciousness: The Effects of Mantra Meditation on the Development of Self-Actualizing Qualities in Teachers

Lisa M. Klein

Follow this and additional works at: https://dsc.duq.edu/etd

DEVELOPING HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS: THE EFFECTS OF MANTRA

MEDITATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ACTUALIZING QUALITIES

IN TEACHERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Education

By

Lisa Klein

February 2008

DEVELOPING HIGHER SCONSCIOUSNESS: THE EFFECTS OF MANTRA

MEDITATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ACTUALIZING QUALITIES

IN TEACHERS

By

Lisa Klein

Approved February 29, 2008

_____
Margaret Ford, Ph. D.
Associate Professor of Education
(Dissertation Chair)

_____
Ruth Biro, Ph. D.
Associate Professor of Education
(Committee Member)

_____
John Miller, Ph. D.
Professor and Acting Chair, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
(Committee Member)

_____
Dr. Olga Walsh, Ed. D.
Dean, School of Education
Duquesne University

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS: THE EFFECTS OF MANTRA

MEDITATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ACTUALIZING QUALITIES

IN TEACHERS

By

Lisa Klein

February 2008

Dissertation Supervised by Margaret Ford, Ph. D.

No. of Pages in Text: 212

This qualitative study focuses on teachers ranging from the elementary to

secondary level who have practiced mantra meditation for at least three years while also

teaching. By utilizing the methodology of portraiture, this study endeavored to determine

if the practice of mantra meditation creates self-actualizing qualities in teachers, how

teachers who practice mantra meditation perceive their response to stress and conflict in

the classroom, and how teachers who practice mantra meditation perceive the effects of

meditation on their personal and professional lives. The methodology of portraiture was

chosen because according to Lawrence-Lightfoot, "with its focus on narrative, with its

use of metaphor and symbol, portraiture intends to address wider, more eclectic

audiences. The attempt is to move beyond academy's inner circle, to speak in a language

that is not coded or exclusive…" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 10). Through

personal narratives composed by the three participants and interviews conducted by the

researcher, data was collected and analyzed. The findings indicate that each participant

perceived the practice of mantra meditation as positively contributing to his/her personal

and professional lives, enabled him/her to feel psychologically healthier and better

equipped to handle the stress and conflict encountered within the classroom, and created

a sense of interactions with students being more positive and rewarding. Each of the

three participants also displayed certain dispositions, and demonstrated through their

narratives and their interviews, that they embody certain qualities of self-actualization.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Jason Coll. He makes everything possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I tell my students that every person they encounter they encounter for a reason. Whether that person is viewed in a positive or a negative light, there is something that can be learned from the interaction with that particular individual. Throughout my teaching career, I have found myself in a number of situations that required me to hold tightly onto this philosophy so that I would not lose sight of the bigger picture, so that I would be able to make the most out of even the most daunting circumstances. My four-year journey to complete this dissertation proves to be no exception to this philosophy. Knowledge, hard work, and dedication alone cannot lead one to successful completion of a doctoral program. It takes human interactions, support, and the synergistic energy that is created between people who are working together with the same goals and ideals. With tremendous gratitude, I must acknowledge the people who made this dissertation possible.

Over ten years ago, Dr. Margaret Ford opened my eyes to a whole new world—a world that transcended boundaries and provided me with a feast of cultural opportunities that has forever changed my life. Dr. Ford guided my first trip abroad on a backpacking/study tour of Europe, which culminated in completing a teaching practicum in the Lake District of England. That study tour taught me more than four years worth of classes at the university level. I left Pittsburgh that spring as a shy, sheltered creature. Dr. Ford not only helped me to leave my comfort zone—she insisted on it. Through laughter and tears, I became a stronger person. It also created an indelible urge within me to continue to expand my horizons, to learn more about different cultures and to become a more independent woman. The connections that I made during this first trip

have kept me coming back to the Lake District to work in various schools and to visit the lifelong friends made there. I went on to attend several other study abroad trips with Dr. Ford, and each one taught me something new about the world and about myself. Dr. Ford has become one of my key role models embodying great courage, independence, intelligence, wisdom and endless energy. I value Dr. Margaret Ford as a professor, a mentor and a friend. Thank you, Dr. Ford for all that you have instilled within me over the years. I hope to always have your passion and zest for life.

Dr. Ruth Biro further instilled the love of learning and of exploring the world in me. After completing two study abroad experiences with Dr. Biro in Italy and taking several multicultural literature and cultures courses with her, I have come to greatly admire this remarkable woman. Upon first meeting Dr. Biro, most people would undoubtedly recognize her eccentricity and passion for education. By getting to know Dr. Biro better, one would come to realize her photographic memory, her dedication to her research on the Holocaust and her undying love of children's literature. Dr. Biro has been an advocate of cultural awareness and educational equality. When I teach, I frequently hear her anecdotal stories emanating through me. She taught me how to help students make connections that extend far beyond the material at hand. With admiration of a career that has positively influenced generations of teachers, I applaud and thank Dr. Ruth Biro as she retires at the end of this year. Dr. Biro, Duquesne will not be the same without you.

My third committee member, Dr. John Miller, provides proof that when one is working in alignment with one's inner purpose and is working in the flow of universal energy, then people and circumstances miraculously appear for guidance and support. I

cannot begin to express my gratitude to Dr. Miller for being so giving of his time and energy to help me with my dissertation. I remember first emailing him two summers ago after I read an article he wrote pertaining to teachers who meditate. Within hours, he emailed me back from Japan offering me more suggestions for readings in my area of study. Since then, he has been exceedingly generous and open to helping me and agreeing to serve on my committee. Dr. Miller is a professor at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. He has literally written *the* book on my topic. I could not imagine finding a more qualified, more distinguished, more knowledgeable committee member. Even with his busy schedule and the geographical distance between Pittsburgh and Toronto, he has willingly and effectively worked with me and the other committee members—even making the journey to Pittsburgh. I hope that my research proves worthy of his endeavors. I thank Dr. Miller for joining me on my journey at just the right time.

For the past fourteen years, I have been blessed to have the support and energy of my meditation group. Over the years, they have taught me about natural remedies for physical healing, about how to be more environmentally friendly, and how the power of synergistic prayer can be transformative. Never have I had the privilege of being in the company of such a magnanimous, peaceful, loving, welcoming group of people. I am honored to be part of their collective energy. I thank them collectively, and individually, for providing me with the encouragement, love and energy to complete this dissertation. More specifically, this research on meditation would not have occurred without the guidance and wisdom of my meditation teacher. I cannot possibly thank her enough. She has taught me lessons that transcend the knowledge level. Because of my teacher, I

have a greater awareness of wisdom, of compassion, of understanding, of abundance and of bliss. I have learned to serpentine. I have learned to be more accepting. I have learned to be in the flow. I have learned to be a better teacher myself because of all that she has taught me. Thank you my dear teacher for all of the grace you have bestowed upon me.

I must also thank the three participants who took part in this study. Without their candor and their generosity, this would be a flat, lifeless piece of research. Instead, this study brings to life the experiences, the feelings and the outcomes of teachers who practice meditation. I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know each of these amazing teachers. They all share a special talent for awakening the full potential in their students.

My past, present and future students must be acknowledged. Without them, all of my studies would be meaningless. They have enabled, and in many cases forced, me to test my knowledge and wisdom—they have created my proving ground. I consider each of them to truly be *my* teacher. I have learned an incredible amount from the most intelligent to the most troubled student over the years. My students have helped to shape me into the person I am today.

From the time I was born, my family has perceived me to be a marvel. I suppose all families view their children as special, but my family was so convincing that I wholeheartedly believed it. My parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and brother all have provided me with endless encouragement and have elevated my self-esteem to levels that I certainly do not deserve, yet looking back, I have grown to appreciate with the realization that their unconditional love is what has ultimately given me the ability to overcome all obstacles in life. My parents in particular have showered me with such an abundance of love and support that even when I have failed at something, I never felt

defeated. They also instilled in me the value of hard work. My father has made me tough and persevering, while my mother has made me kind and accepting. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for all of your love. I hope that I become as wise, caring and nurturing of a parent as you are.

The greatest love of my life is my husband, Jason. To him I owe more than words can communicate. We have been married for over ten years, and in that time, he has provided me with the perfect balance of affection and freedom. I cannot recall a time when I expressed interest in going away to study or teach abroad or when I wanted to start a new program of study that he has ever been anything other than supportive. He is the most wonderful life partner a person could hope to have. We are truly best friends. There is not another person that I would rather spend my time with or with whom I would journey along this path. Jason is the embodiment of endless talent and creative energy. I feel honored and humbled that he has chosen me as his partner. I have been in awe of his magnificence since we started dating over fifteen years ago. I look forward to taking part in all of the magic and the music that is in his destiny to create in the coming years. Our first child, a son, is due in June, and I know that Jason will be the very best father. Together, we welcome our son and know that he will bring an abundance of light into this world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Three: Methodology   **99**

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

By examining the social evolution of the world, one can ascertain that over the past one hundred years, there have been more changes and more inventions than probably any other time in history. Society continues to evolve at a faster and faster rate. Every day the world seems to become smaller, more accessible. Isolation no longer remains an option for countries or for individuals. In essence, we are entering a new era—a new realm of existence. This new realm offers opportunities for the individual, and ultimately, for the collective whole of the world. Myss (1996) believes that "At the macrocosmic level, the threat of global disasters is forcing us to create a politics of unity…Our interconnected 'information age' is the symbol of a global consciousness" (p. 285). Earley (2002) defines consciousness as "the inner life of the individual, including thoughts, attitudes, emotions, motivations, and spiritual experience" (p. 107).

According to Earley (2002), the world is entering a new stage of social consciousness. The transition from the current stage of social existence to this new stage is creating a crisis, which leads to high levels of stress and anxiety. This stress and fear permeate every level of existence—from the individual to the institution. Earley (2002) further explains:

In the consciousness realm, our society has devalued participation and privileged understanding based on empirical data and logic, leading to deadness and detachment. By losing the sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves, many of us have lives bereft of meaning. A large number of people feel separate

from nature, isolated from community, out of touch with the emotional and creative, or disconnected from the artistic and spiritual. Many people dedicate their lives to money, security, power, and appearances. In our detachment we are forced to rely on that which can be objectively counted, and our lives have become barren and sterile. (p. 121)

Abram (2006) sees this current crisis as stemming from society's disconnect from the natural world. This dissolve of the human relationship with nature impacts human relationships; one expects his human relationships to fill the void created from his detachment from nature, which results in stress and discontent (Abram, 2006). On a macrocosmic level, one can vividly witness the impact of this disconnect not only within man's psychological state, but also through the dire state of the earth's environment. By living with the sense of duality between man and the natural world, it has become grotesquely acceptable and even justifiable to ignore human impact upon the environment.

Carson (1990) warns of the dangers of man's attempt to control and overcome natural laws. Carson (1990) further points out that "It took hundreds of millions of years to produce the life that now inhabits the earth—eons of time in which that developing and evolving and diversifying life reached a state of adjustment and balance with its surroundings" (p. 6). Within less than a century, man is altering the ecological balance of the planet at a speed unable to be kept in check by the natural systems of the world. Modern society being interdependent with all species of nature has not only been a cause of the current environmental crisis, it also experiences the symptoms of its actions both at a microcosmic level of disease and at the macrocosmic level of ecological unbalance.

Yogananda (1999) offers a spiritual perspective of the current crisis of the natural world:

When we desecrate the world, the environment undergoes a violent change…don't think that man's actions have no effect on the operation of His cosmic laws. Everything that has happened throughout the ages is recorded in the ether. The vibrations of evil that mankind leaves in the ether upset the normal harmonious balance of the earth. When the earth becomes very heavy with disease and evil, these etheric disturbances cause the world to give way to earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters. (p. 5-6)

Whether approaching the current situation of the world from an ecological, philosophical, psychological or social/political perspective, one thing remains evident: the world is in a constant state of flux, a state that has become more rapid and recognizable within recent times. As these current conditions come forging together, stress and anxiety escalate. The reverberations of these changes emanate through and from all levels of life.

Not only do mankind's actions have macrocosmic effects, at the microcosmic level, each person's thoughts, actions, deeds affect his immediate surroundings. On a subtler level, each organization within the larger world experiences the positive and negative aspects that coincide with the vast and varied changes now shaping society. Along with this new era, people now experience a new sense of stress, of turmoil and of profound fear.

One of the institutions most immediately affected by this new era of change is education. Students face fears and stress factors that are unlike past generations.

Teachers must deal with these issues as they also cope with their own personal stress. Teaching within the parameters of this new era, how can one rise above the inevitable stresses and the increasing challenges? If a teacher cannot externally eliminate the multitudinous challenges of the teaching environment or of the students he/she must encounter, then how can he/she remain motivated, focused and positive? How can teachers learn to better handle the stressful situations that they must face on a daily basis? How can teachers continue to employ enthusiasm and creativity into their lessons when they are saddled with endless professional demands?

One possible answer to these concerns may be discovered by examining the teacher himself. How can the individual teacher be better equipped emotionally and psychologically to handle the pressures of teaching? The purpose of this study is to determine if the practice of daily meditation can impact teacher motivation, response to stress and conflict, and self-actualizing tendencies.

Nature of the Problem

The effects of stress can permeate every aspect of one's life. Physically and mentally, one can feel the reverberations of stress, anxiety, and depression. Naturally, these problems can interfere with interactions with others and with work. On the one hand, work may be the cause of stress and anxiety, and on the other, the stress in one's life can cause problems in one's work. It becomes cyclical—the more stressed a person becomes at work, the more his stress can affect his work. As a teacher, this cyclical pattern of stress can have profound outcomes. Hiam Ginnot (1972) declares:

I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized. (p. 15)

A teacher wields tremendous capability in determining the atmosphere and the energy of a classroom. If the teacher is experiencing high levels of stress and tension, then the students will undoubtedly feel the reverberations of this either through the overall dynamics of the class or through personal interactions with the teacher. By dwelling on something with a negative perspective, we create more negative qualities in that person or object—that is we begin to project our negative expectations onto that the person or object, and then that is what becomes manifested for us (Dalai Lama, 2001). Students who are feared or disliked can easily fall into this framework of the teacher's projections.

Students do notice teacher stress and are in tune with the energetic state of their teachers. In a study of 297 Israeli secondary school students who were given open-ended questionnaires regarding their perceptions of teacher burnout, results indicated that burned out teachers "are characterized by, in descending order, their feelings of personal lack of accomplishment, physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, and professional lack of accomplishment" (Tatar & Yahav, 1999, p. 460). Psychological and physical exhaustion were indicated as being central to burnout. Indication of burnout stemmed

from such student observations as teacher's classroom management practices, interaction with students, and levels of energy, patience, and enthusiasm (Tatar & Yahav, 1999). The study discusses how students, teachers and the principals could work to alleviate teacher burnout. For instance, according to students, they themselves could behave more appropriately, and principals could deal with issues of teacher burnout by firing teachers, improving working conditions or providing teachers with support and training for coping with stress (Tatar & Yahav, 1999).

Ultimately, however, dealing with one's own stress is a personal problem. Teachers must find ways to deal with the variety of stress-producing issues themselves. According to Tatar & Yahav (1999), some students suggested that teachers find ways to calm down and be more positive in order to deal with burnout. Teacher burnout seems to be on the rise, and according to Renshaw (1997), the symptoms include "stress, irritability, fatigue, unfounded dread of work and a decrease in level of performance" (p. 57).

Those in the service professions are especially susceptible to burnout, and "There are times when the pressure to put your best face forward for students, while enduring other sources of stress, is enough to crumble the most dedicated educator's resolve" (Crute, 2007, p. 46). One of the factors leading to teacher stress is overload, in which the teacher takes on more tasks than time permits for the tasks to be accomplished (Reglin & Reitzammer, 1998). Maharishi (1963) offers an explanation for why the average man (people) tends to get stressed:

> He plunges into whatever activity lies ahead and works hard for things; to be
> creative in any aspect of life is what man is here for. But when the activity

increases, a man often finds himself unable to cope with the increased pressure.

His efficiency declines, or he does not find energy enough to cope with the

increased activity. This is why tensions and strain develop. (p. 66)

People usually enter the field of teaching with great enthusiasm, but as the

responsibilities and workload keep mounting, this enthusiasm is displaced by burden and

overwhelming stress.

Conley & Woosley (2000) believe that schools may increase their chances of

retaining teachers if they can minimize their stress. In their study of K-12 regular

educators, exceptional student education educators and alternative educators, Reglin &

Reitzammer (1998) found that all groups were susceptible to stress. According to Reglin

& Reitzammer (1998), teachers need a support system for coping with stress because

"One-third of today's teachers would choose another career if they could start over again.

Four out of ten will leave teaching before retirement. The number of teachers with 20 or

more years of experience has dropped by nearly half in fifteen years" (p. 593).

Other factors leading to teacher burnout include outside pressures and external

perceptions of teachers. The public opinion of teachers has steadily declined. Teachers

at one time represented the "intellectually elite in the United States and other

economically advanced countries" however, with the increase in parents holding higher

degrees, there is now an attitude of teachers being inferior to other professions (Dworkin,

2001, p. 71). In addition to receiving less respect from society at large, on a daily basis,

teachers in today's society are more likely to encounter disrespect and even physical

abuse from students (Dworkin, 2001). Along with the potential difficulties of interacting

with students and parents, teachers are now faced with stringent reform policies.

According to Dworkin (2001), there were three main waves of reform policies since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983; "…the first wave saw teachers as the problem, the second saw teachers as the solution, and the third saw all participants in schooling as problematic. Clearly each of the waves had effects on the morale of teachers; each wave altered the character of teacher burnout" (p. 73). Stress and burnout lead to higher levels of attrition and absenteeism in teachers; there is "a significant positive correlation between teacher stress and the total number of days that teachers are away from school" (Brown & Uehara, 1999, p. 4).

Teaching is certainly not the only profession to experience stress and burnout; however, as research indicates, the profession of education does indeed contain a decent amount of stress. Within the framework of a potentially highly stressful career, the teacher must never lose sight of the true meaning behind the work. The teacher must always remember that the students are the reason for fulfilling a career in education. Even with high-stakes testing and focus on the core areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science, it is abundantly clear that teachers must teach to the whole child. The learning of the core subjects may be hindered by students' inadequate feelings of worth, safety and acceptance.

By teaching to the whole child, teachers can be part of the consciousness movement described by Earley (2002) as people who are experiencing a "reconnection with nature, and engagement in artistic and creative endeavors. They are developing their empathy and compassion, their experience of belonging, and their deeper sense of purpose" (p. 125). This deeper sense of purpose is crucial. Part of being self-actualized—of having self-actualized qualities—involves the belief that one's work has

deep meaning and purpose.   Along with feeling a sense of purpose, comes a sense of

working for and being part of something larger than oneself.   How this can be achieved

is at the heart of this study.

Theoretical Framework

The teacher cannot remove all stress and conflict from his/her classroom. There

are classroom management techniques that can be employed to minimize disruptions and

help students better assimilate to the school atmosphere; however, in the end, problems

always have the possibility to be present on some level. In public education, one cannot

simply remove a student who causes trouble in class. The problems are real, they are

there, and often times, the problems are so deeply ingrained into the structure of the

society, that reacting to them in the classroom setting is likened to bandaging a severe

wound. The Dalai Lama advises that "…if you can't change the work environment or the

wider forces that contribute to the work environment, then you may need to change or

adjust your outlook. Otherwise, you will remain unhappy at work and in your

life…There will always be problems in life. It is just not possible to go through life

without encountering problems" (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003, p. 33).

One cannot eliminate all stress and conflict; however, one can control the way in

which he/she responds to it. If educators are to be able to survive personally and

professionally in an increasingly challenging environment, they are going to have to first

begin with developing themselves into stronger psychological beings. Crute (2007)

indicates that the most challenging issues leading to teacher burnout are associated with

the psychological side of the profession, and says, "it's time to take a new look at managing the psychological trials of school life" (p. 46).

In order to best meet the needs of their students, teachers should work on fulfilling their own needs. Many teachers have studied Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in order to determine if their students' basic needs are being met. Teachers are taught that students will have a difficult time learning if their basic needs of food, shelter, and safety are not complete. Similarly, teachers need to examine their own lives in order to ascertain where their own deficiencies of needs exist.

At the apex of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, dwells the esoteric echelon of self-actualization. Because only a small percentage of people have ever attained this level of existence, it often comes under scrutiny. However, by allowing one's gestalt to change, one may understand the need to explore this new dimension. Maslow (1987) himself admits that his theory cannot be scientifically proven in a traditional research sense with conventional methods, but states that he feels this to be such an important area of study that even though quantitatively it may not be possible to offer evidence, probing into these ideas of human growth is essential for psychological advancements.

Defining Self-Actualization

The basic definition of self-actualization can be described as "the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, and the like" (Maslow, 1987, p. 126). Extending beyond this basic description, self-actualization encompasses key characteristics. One of the qualities of self-actualized individuals is their perception of reality. They are almost always able to detect a disingenuous or a dishonest person

(Maslow, 1987). Because they do not allow fear, anxiety, desire to cloud their innate intuition, they are also able to accurately predict future events (Maslow, 1987). Other qualities include acceptance of themselves and others, spontaneity, solitude, autonomy, and lack of anxiety or fear. Being able to see the "bigger picture," rather than being overwhelmed by petty and trivial issues of life, enables them to move away from being ego-centered in order to become part of the collective whole of existence.

One of the most remarkable traits of self-actualized individuals is their ability to be "problem-centered rather than ego-centered" (Maslow, 1987). Even in their daily routines, they are able to handle problems and adjust to all sorts of situations without taking things personally. They truly feel that they have a mission in life, which they must fulfill. This mission is not for personal gain and glory or for material wealth; rather, it is for the good of humanity (Maslow, 1987).

Another quality that separates the self-actualized person from the average person is his/her ability to experience even the most mundane experiences, objects, or situations with a "fresh appreciation" again and again. According to Maslow (1987), "For such people, even the casual workaday, moment-to-moment business of living can be thrilling, exciting, and ecstatic. These intense feelings do not come all the time; they come occasionally rather than usually, but at the most unexpected times" (p. 136). For example, looking at a painting, listening to a piece of music or taking in the beauty of a tree can become more intense each time. Rather than becoming desensitized to the person or to the experience that is being encountered, the self-actualized person appreciates the person or the object's beauty and its value even more. There exists for the self-actualizer a "richness of detail and a many-sided awareness of the object from

this kind of absorbed, fascinated, fully attended cognition. This contrasts…the casual observation which gives…an object only some of its aspects in a selective way and from a point of view of 'important' and 'unimportant'" (Maslow, 1968, p. 76).

The ultimate trait of the self-actualized individual occurs within the moments of "peak experiences." During the time of peak experiences, these individuals feel fully unified with the world. They transcend the ego and become one with their love, work, nature, an artwork, etc. The person senses all of his powers at this time and feels that he is "in the flow." There occurs a suspension of time and space. A complete harmony and fusion between oneself and others takes place. The person becomes more integrated into what is happening at the moment. This ego-less, selfless experience allows one to become completely absorbed in the other person, i.e. the conversation/interaction with the other. At this time, everything looks perfect (perfectly orchestrated); he/she knows exactly what to do and exactly when and how to do it. In *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Maslow (1968) explains that "One sees….as if they knew exactly what they were doing, and were doing it wholeheartedly, without doubts, equivocations, hesitations or partial withdrawal" (p. 106).

How Can Self-Actualization be Attained?

Only a small percentage of people have reached the state of self-actualization. Most people do not even strive to attain this level of existence. If self-actualization were easily attained with a clear list of procedures needed, there would certainly be more self-actualized people among us. Unfortunately, the movement into this higher state of being continues to be elusive. An educated perspective might allow one to consider ways to

train the mind and to focus the mind in order to tap into higher levels such as self-actualization. With this notion, one may consider that practices such as meditation could provide a substantial link to self-actualization.

Meditation Introduction

Meditation is a means to achieve something beyond one's current state. This achievement could deal with the physical, the mental, or the spiritual. Meditation is not a way of brainwashing the mind; rather, it trains the mind to be more flexible, more open in order to maximize its potential and achieve mastery of self (Rinpoche, 1993). Meditation has been known to have positive effects on physical and mental health. A review of the literature on meditation research will demonstrate how one can improve physical and mental health through the practice of meditation. There are multitudinous forms of meditation ranging from walking meditations to simply sitting still and trying to clear the mind. Other forms require focusing on an object or on one's breathing.

The form of meditation that this study will focus on is mantra meditation. With this technique, the practitioner sits still for a certain period of time (usually between twenty to thirty minutes) twice a day and focuses on a specific mantra (word or phrase). The practitioner attempts to clear the mind from any other thoughts or external noises. The technique, though requiring a skilled meditation teacher, is simplistic and can be performed anywhere, at any time. Many cultures and religions such as Tibetan Buddhism, Sufism, Orthodox Christianity, and Hinduism have utilized a mantra for meditation (Rinpoche, 1993). Rinpoche (1993) defines a mantra as " 'that which protects the mind.' That which protects the mind from negativity, or that which protects you from

your own mind…" (p. 71). Other spiritual leaders such as Muktananda (1999) claim that "By means of the mantra, the intellect becomes subtle, sharp, and rational, and one's understanding and way of thinking acquires new depth" (p. 61). Rinpoche (1993) further explains:

> When you are nervous, disoriented, or emotionally fragile, chanting or reciting a mantra inspiringly can change the state of your mind completely, by transforming its energy and atmosphere. How is this possible? Mantra is the essence of sound, and the embodiment of the truth in the form of sound. Each syllable is impregnated with spiritual power, condenses a spiritual truth, and vibrates with the blessings of the speech of buddhas…So when you chant a mantra, you are charging your breath and energy with the energy of the mantra, and so working directly on your mind and subtle body. (p. 71)

Mantra meditation is taught in an oral tradition, therefore the specific steps and mantras will not be discussed within this study. If a reader is interested in learning this form of meditation, he/she will need to contact a meditation teacher who specializes in silent mantra meditation.

A substantial hurdle for practices such as meditation exists with a misleading mindset held by the average person that meditation has to be linked with a religion. Meditation is, on the basic level, a stress-relieving, mind-sharpening practice. During meditation, the body's metabolic rate drops significantly more than during normal sleep. This allows for a profound release of stress. Meditation reduces the risk of heart related diseases (Cysarz & Büssing, 2005; Tacon et al., 2003; Peng et al., 2004; Walton et al., 2002). Meditation enhances brain function (Aftanas & Golocheikine, 2001; Davidson et

al., 2003; Murata et al., 2004; Solber et al., 2004). On a more esoteric level, meditation can be practiced as a *spiritual* endeavor helping one to move closer to universal truth, but it does not involve a religious attachment unless the practitioner chooses that path.

Cognitive Effects of Meditation

Meditation allows one to have greater focus and clarity. Some practitioners have compared the mind to a pool of water. When the mind is turbulent with anxieties, fears and everyday problems, it is likened to the water in the pool being disturbed. Just as the bottom of the pool cannot clearly be seen at these times, the answers/solutions/insights contained within the brain cannot be revealed. Meditation allows for the mind to be calm so that the innate wisdom contained within can be accessed.

People who meditate regularly claim to experience increased creativity, problem solving skills, inner-peace, clarity, energy, and physical health benefits. For example, Brown & Gerbarg (2005) posit that Sudarshan Kriya Yoga (a breathing technique which often combines yogic postures and meditation) is beneficial for the treatment of stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and rehabilitation of prisoners. Ramel et al. (2004) has found evidence linking mindfulness meditation (MM) to a decrease in ruminative tendencies (dwelling on depression or other negative states), depression, anxiety and dysfunctional thoughts. "One of the goals of MM is to learn how to become aware of, observe and react less habitually to sensations, thoughts, and feelings. MM involves training in deployment of attention to maintain awareness on a designated object, such as the breath or physical sensations in the body, without ignoring other aspects of internal or external stimuli" (Ramel et at., 2004, p. 435). The external stimuli might not always be

pleasant; however, meditation trains the mind to encounter negative experiences without reacting negatively to them and enables one to perceive a unpleasant situation more objectively rather than reacting with immediate anger or anxiety (Epstein, 1995).

Meditation goes beyond making people feel and behave differently. Studies have actually shown that meditation is capable of physically changing the brain. Meditation has been linked with increased cortical thickness (Lazar et al, 2005; Cullen, 2006; Brink, 2005). Not only is there evidence to demonstrate that meditation increases cortical thickness, research has also indicated that meditation affects dopamine levels in the brain (Kjaer et al., 2002).

Science is now beginning to understand that mental practices such as meditation are capable of altering the brain (Brink, 2005). Meditation's benefits for mental and physical health are being noticed in the workforce also. For example:

A growing number of corporations—including Deutsche Bank, Google and Hughes Aircraft—offer meditation classes to their workers. Jeffrey Abramson, CEO of Tower Co., a Washington-based development firm, says 75% of his staff attends free classes in transcendental meditation. Making employees sharper is only one benefit; studies say meditation also improves productivity, in large part by preventing stress-related illness and reducing absenteeism. (Cullen, 2006, p. 93)

Employers also notice that meditation seems to help people interact with each other better (Cullen, 2006). People such as Bill Ford (head of Ford Motors), Al Gore, David Lynch (Hollywood director), and a former chief of England's MI-5 agency practice meditation (Stein, 2003). David Lynch has even established a foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace, which promotes the benefits of Transcendental Meditation

and will work to educate college students about the effects of TM on physical and mental health (Hoover, 2005). As the awareness of the benefits of meditation increases, Western society is beginning to view it in a new light—one that is less religious and Eastern and more secular and practical. More and more people are understanding its value in decreasing stress and improving physical and mental health.

However, not everyone is convinced that meditation has the power to alter cognitive functions. Canter & Ernst (2003) question certain research that boasts the impact of meditation. Specifically, they scrutinize research conducted on Transcendental Meditation (TM). In a review article investigating 107 articles, which reported the effects of TM (Transcendental Meditation) on cognitive function, strict criteria for acceptable research articles was applied. The authors narrowed the 107 bank of articles down to ten acceptable, peer-reviewed research articles. The outcome of their critique of these ten studies resulted in their estimation that TM does not have a significant effect on cognitive function (Canter & Ernst, 2003).

In order to determine if TM research is reliable, Wenk-Sormaz (2005) begins by scrutinizing TM research and uses this scrutiny as a rationale for conducting a secular study of meditation's effect on cognitive functions. Two studies were conducted in order to test the hypothesis that meditation leads to reduced levels of habitual responding or deautomatization. (These studies will be further discussed in the review of literature.)

Wenk-Sormaz (2005) concludes that "meditation does not lead to a simple increase in atypical or non-habitual behavior but does influence one's ability to produce atypical responses under conditions where those responses are desirable" (p. 53). Wenk-Sormaz (2005) further explains that sometimes a habitual response such as slamming on one's

brakes when needing to make a sudden stop on the highway is beneficial, whereas, the habitual response of yelling at a child out of "anger or frustration" might be able to be replaced with a new response that is more optimal for that given situation. Clearly, this would be a beneficial ability for teachers to be able to respond non-habitually when dealing with frustrating situations in the classroom.

People typically only focus on controlling the world around them without ever looking within themselves (Epstein, 1995). The goal of meditation is to look within. Meditation also enables one to respond more appropriately to the external world. According to Goleman (1988):

> People who are chronically anxious or who have a psychosomatic disorder share a specific pattern of reaction to stress; their bodies mobilize to meet the challenge, then fail to stop reacting when the problem is over…The anxious person meets life's normal events as though they were crises. Each minor happening increases his tension, and his tension in turn magnifies the next ordinary event—a deadline, an interview, a doctor's appointment—into a threat. (p. 164-165)

Meditation provides a solution to this cyclical pattern of response. Meditation allows one to take a step back from the problem and to gain control over the way in which he/she responds to it. "A meditator handles stress in a way that breaks up the threat-arousal-threat spiral. The meditator relaxes after a challenge passes more often than the nonmeditator. This makes him unlikely to see innocent occurrences as harmful. He perceives threat more accurately, and reacts with arousal only when necessary" (Goleman, 1988, p. 165). These are skills that teachers need to develop when working within the classroom. A teacher's typical day is never actually typical. With a myriad of

personalities and backgrounds all coming together in one room, anything is bound to happen. Having the ability to accurately read and respond to each situation, to each personality is critical. Being psychologically healthy enough to not only handle a variety of circumstances, but ultimately to create an environment which enables all students to become more fully realized themselves is the essence of teaching.

Meditation and Education

Meditation creates calm of body and mind and fosters renewed energy both mentally and physically. In part, this occurs due to an increase in endorphins that are generated through meditative practices (Bloom, 2001). The endorphin level of a person affects his mood and determines his personality at that moment, and as a teacher, it is crucial to emit a positive, genuinely caring attitude, which can be fostered by creating endorphins (Bloom, 2001). With all of the stress and possible conflicts that exist for a teacher in and out of the classroom, meditation seems to be the logical solutions for maintaining one's peace of mind and for staying mentally and physically healthy.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) refers to feelings such as anger, fear, anxiety as "psychic entropy;" when a person experiences these states, he is not as effective, not at his best—the opposite of this disordered state is "optimal experience." Teachers who are inundated with such emotions are not able to work at their best, and consequently may not be able to provide the optimal learning environment for students. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) further states that there are essentially two ways to improve one's life: externals can be altered to meet one's desires, or one can change how he interacts with, perceives the externals. Even when faced with troubled students, school pressures, high-stakes testing

and less-than-perfect teaching resources, educators have the power to overcome on an emotional and psychological level the strife of their surroundings.

Although the research linking meditation with the field of education is modest, a few key studies have shown the benefits of meditation for teachers and students. Holland (2004) taught a class on contemplative techniques at the University of Arkansas, specifically geared for college students with disabilities, which resulted in students being better able to cope with the stress of their disability and even led to health improvement in some cases. Orr (2002) discovered that meditation helps to thwart oppressive pedagogies such as sexism and racism. Gates (2005) posits that Buddhist philosophies and the practice of meditation can achieve a more compassionate school environment.

Encouraging students (and teachers) to develop contemplative techniques is crucial because according to Hart (2004):

> …the demands for constant activity, the habit of electronic stimulation, and the production orientation of modern society make it very difficult to keep the contemplative alive, leaving children (and teachers) unbalanced in their ways of knowing and often losing touch with the inner landscape. Contemplative techniques offer both a portal to our inner world and an internal technology— a kind of mindscience—enabling us to use more of the mind rather than be driven by habitual responses or emotional impulsivity. (p. 43)

Anderson et al. (1999) used various stress and burnout scales to evaluate the benefits of meditation on teacher perceived stress and burnout. Findings suggest that Standardized Meditation significantly reduced teachers' perception of stress, lowered their state and trait anxiety and lessened feelings of burnout (Anderson et al. 1999).

Miller (1994) published a pioneering book entitled *The Contemplative Practitioner* in which he describes the outcomes of having students in a graduate education program learn various meditative techniques. The results indicated that these education students developed a greater level of acceptance of themselves and others, became better listeners, felt more compassionate, had a greater sense of interconnectedness with others, and learned to listen to the needs of their bodies (Miller, 1994). In a follow-up study, Miller and Nozawa (2002) conducted interviews with twenty-one teachers from elementary to post-secondary settings who have been meditating an average of four years. The results of this follow-up study indicated an overall positive effect of meditation in the lives of the participants. Positive results included: thirteen (62%) of participants said that meditation made them calmer and more relaxed; five participants said that it made them more gentle; five indicated that it helped them with their personal relationships; most said that it made them calmer at work and that they are not as reactive; and four discussed infusing meditation in with their own teaching of students (Miller & Nozawa, 2002).

Although studies have been conducted supporting the connection between meditation and self-actualization, and other studies have been conducted linking meditation to a decrease in teacher stress and burnout, none of the studies looked at the effects of meditation on self-actualization in regard to teacher's psychological development. The current study aims to determine if there is a connection between these three entities: meditation, self-actualizing qualities, and teacher stress.

Purpose of the Study

This study endeavors to qualitatively determine if the practice of meditation—specifically mantra meditation—enables the practitioner to develop qualities usually associated with self-actualization. The study also aims to discover if the practice of mantra meditation alters the way in which a teacher responds to stress or conflict in the classroom and if the practicing of mantra meditation has had an effect on the teacher's interactions with students. The study will examine teachers who have taught in elementary through high school settings, and who have also been practitioners of mantra meditation while being a teacher.

Research Questions

- Does the practice of mantra meditation create self-actualizing *qualities* in teachers?

- How do teachers who practice mantra meditation perceive their response to stress and conflict in the classroom?

- What perceptions do teachers who practice mantra meditation have of the effects of meditation on their professional and personal lives?

Definition of Terms

Burnout—the feeling of being depleted and devoid of excitement, energy and feeling of

worth and/or purpose in a given job; simply going through the motions in order to

complete tasks

Chakras—energetic centers of the body, ranging from the tribal/societal energy center of

the groin region to energy centers that extend above and beyond the crown of the

head and are associated with higher consciousness

Cosmic Consciousness—the next level of human evolution to follow the current

evolution level of self consciousness. At this level of existence, one moves

from simply relying on the conceptual mind (comprised of percepts, recepts and

concepts) to now functioning on an intuitive mind (Bucke, 1923).

Dharma—one's life's work; purpose in life; teachings of the Buddha

Guru—teacher who instructs one in the pursuit of highest attainment of one's

possibilities—in this case, a meditation guru—who guides one on the path of

fulfilling his/her highest state of being

Meditation—concentration on a single object, word, thought; the clearing of one's mind;

the act of quieting the mind; silencing the mind in order to evoke focus and clarity

Mantra—"Sacred words or divine sounds invested with the power to protect, purify, and

transform the individual who repeats them" (Muktananda, 1999, p. 157).

Mantra Meditation—the utterance (usually to oneself, silently) of a mantra (a word or

phrase)—sometimes said in Sanskrit

Sanskrit—ancient Indian language; Sanskrit words carry the same vibrations as the

objects themselves

Stress—the feeling (psychological and/or physical) of exhaustion, anxiety, depression

and feeling of being overwhelmed with fear, negativity; burdened by sense of

feeling out of control in a given situation; perception of outside forces placing

unrealistic demands of time, place and ability on an individual. "Any

environmental demand that creates a state of tension or threat and requires change

or adaptation" (Morris, 1996, p. 486).

Self-Actualization—the peak of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs; "The full use and

exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, and the like" (Maslow, 1987, p.

126). *The following definitions are all part of being self-actualized*:

Acceptance—having "a relative lack of overriding guilt, of crippling shame, and

of extreme or severe anxiety" (Maslow, 1987, p. 130); acceptance of oneself;

self-satisified

Spontaneity—"behavior marked by lack of artificiality or straining for

effect…code of ethics that are relatively autonomous and individual rather than

conventional" (Maslow, 1987, p. 132).

Problem Centering—rather than being ego centered, self-actualized individuals

focus on the greater good of their work, their sense of duty rather than on

themselves (Maslow, 1987)

Solitude—self-actualized individuals typically enjoy solitude more than the

average person; they are able to remain calm and collected in times of chaos and

misfortune; they possess a great ability to concentrate and be untouched by

external forces (ex. Their sleep patterns, appetite, and general disposition

are unscathed by external problems/concerns) (Maslow, 1987).

Autonomy—"relative independence of the physical and social environment"; self-actualized people are not reliant on external gratifications or motivations (Maslow, 1987)

Fresh Appreciation—"Self-actualizing people have the wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy, however stale these experiences may have become to others" (Maslow, 1987, p. 136).

Peak Experience—not all self-actualized people will experience this phenomena of transcending the self and becoming intensely problem centered or having "intense concentration, intense sensuous experience, or self-forgetful and intense enjoyment of music or art" (Maslow, 1987, p. 138).

Human Kinship—feelings of "identification, sympathy, and affection for human beings in general…have a genuine desire to help the human race" (Maslow, 1987, p. 138).

Humility and Respect—shows kindness and equality to all people regardless of race, religion, culture, socio-economic status, etc. These types of differences are not even noticed (Maslow, 1987).

Interpersonal Relationships—shows great compassion for all, tends to have fewer friends; however, these few friends are profoundly close and tend to be closer to the realm of self-actualization themselves

Ethics—Self-actualized people "are strongly ethical, they have definite moral standards, they do right and do not do wrong. Although their notions of right and

wrong and of good and evil are often not the conventional ones" (Maslow, 1987, p. 141).

Means and Ends—Self-actualized people appreciate and enjoy the means as well as the ends; they enjoy and find pleasure in the doing of the activity as well as the completion of the activity—however routine it may be (Maslow, 1987)

Humor—Self-actualized people have a different sense of humor than the average person; they don't find jokes that hurt or make fun of somebody to be funny. They tend to laugh more at the universal folly of humans such as people who try to impose their superiority on the world (Maslow, 1987).

Creativity—There is no exception to this characteristic—all self-actualized people are creative, original in any field of work (Maslow, 1987).

Resistance to Enculturation— Self-actualized people although they may get along with the culture in which they exist, they embody a level of detachment from the culture around them (Maslow, 1987).

Assumptions

Based on historical readings and on current research, the researcher holds certain assumptions regarding this study. The following list entails these assumptions regarding teachers who practice silent mantra meditation:

- Meditating teachers will show indications of self-actualizing qualities.
- They will respond to stress and conflict within the classroom in a calmer fashion.
- Classroom negativity will be minimalized.

- Meditating teachers will be able to handle stress and conflict within the classroom without reacting in a personalized, victimized sense (egoless).

- They will respond to individual students with greater understanding, compassion.

- Teachers who meditate will embody dispositions, which focus on creativity, passion and enthusiasm for their work.

- These teachers will view teaching as their duty, mission, life's work.

- They will view each student as a being who contains limitless potential and individualized abilities.

- They will respond through love/compassion, not fear, to all students and circumstances.

Limitations and Delimitations

Possible limitations for this study include:

- Accuracy of participants' responses

- Small sample size

Delimitations of this study:

- There are many types and varieties of meditation; however, this study will only focus on participants who practice mantra meditation.

- This study does not attempt to test, verify or determine the value or validity of self-actualization. Rather, the researcher accepts the value of self-actualization based upon findings presented in the literature.

- This study does not attempt to determine or to declare any participant as being a fully self-actualized individual. Rather, this study endeavors to determine if meditation aids teachers in developing the *qualities* of a self-actualized individual.

Summary

Many studies have been conducted regarding the effects of various forms of meditation on physical and mental health. Also, self-actualization is widely accepted as being an ideal state of human development. Research indicates that the profession of teaching has become increasingly more stressful and that there is a high burnout rate among teachers. The problems faced within the classroom and with individual students are often times cyclical and deeply rooted within the society. There are no simple solutions for eliminating the causes of stress and conflict within the classroom. The teacher is viewed as the experienced, educated professional who must make the most out of the setting, resources, community, and students with which he/she is given. With an understanding of the characteristics of a self-actualized individual, a logical conclusion can be drawn that a teacher who embodies self-actualized qualities would have a positive influence in a classroom setting. Combining the research on meditation with Maslow's self-actualization theory, can a connection be made linking meditation to the qualities of self-actualization and to teacher perceived reactions within the classroom? Ultimately, this study strives to discover 1) if meditation leads one to develop self-actualizing qualities, thereby making the individual psychologically healthier and 2) if meditation enables one to react in a more positive, productive way to stress and conflict in the classroom. A review of the literature will shed further light on the history, types, and effects of meditation, while providing a foundation linking meditation to self-actualization and to classroom practices.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The History of Meditation

The notion that meditation is a "New Age" phenomenon practiced by nonconformists of traditional thinking, religions, philosophies or even health care techniques proves to be incorrect and shortsighted. The fact that meditation is both cutting edge and at the same time ancient creates an interesting paradox. The practice of meditation began thousands of years ago, and one form or another can be linked to nearly all cultures throughout history. There are various forms of meditation, and different cultures have established their own way to practice and view meditation. Most frequently, it is seen as an Eastern tradition; however, even Western culture has touched upon the exercise of silencing the mind to connect with a higher power. For instance, in the Christian classic, *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas á Kempis (1380-1471) describes the purpose of meditation as allowing the practitioner to enter into union with Christ and to overcome external obstacles and burdens. Meditation enables one to move inward. Kempis states that "a truly interior man who is free from uncontrolled affections, can turn to God at will and rise above himself to enjoy spiritual peace" (2004, p. 36). Kempis further explains that "to live the interior life and to take little account of outward things…a spiritual man quickly recollects himself because he has never wasted his attention upon externals…He adjusts himself to things as they happen" (2004, p. 36).

These beliefs are echoed in the Eastern practices of meditation which also strive to remain detached from external forces and remain still, calm, and focused on internal

powers. Just as the Christian form of contemplation seeks to commune with Christ, the

Eastern form of meditation seeks to commune with a higher power. When viewing

meditation from a secular perspective, the goal of practicing meditation resides in tapping

into one's own creativity and internal power.

In order to better understand the interweaving of meditation between various

cultures throughout history and to dismantle any misconceptions regarding meditation as

being a "New Age" philosophy or relegated to only Eastern belief systems, a brief

overview of several Western traditions will be included here. First, the practice of

meditation as it is connected with the Jewish faith will be explored. Linking meditation

to Christianity will follow. These two systems will then be compared to Eastern belief

systems, which will be the primary focus of this study. The focus on Eastern practices

does not imply a preference to Eastern beliefs over Western, but rather will occur simply

because Eastern practices of meditation have remained more prevalent over time than

Western meditation practices in the daily lives of their respective participants.

Jewish Meditation

Judaism has its own form of traditional meditation. Kaplan (1982) defines such

meditation as "primarily a means of attaining spiritual liberation. Its various methods are

designated to loosen the bond of the physical, allowing the individual to ascend to the

transcendental, spiritual realm" (p. 11).

Found within the teachings of Kabbalah is an ancient belief system of Judaism, which

emerged in Europe in the Middle Ages. It revolves around a hierarchical arrangement.

Metatron, the chief archangel, holds the apex position as he teaches humans. Each level

of the hierarchy contains a different level of consciousness. The majority of humans exist on the lower levels of the hierarchical system, with only a small percentage of humans attaining the higher planes. (Immediately, the concept of a hierarchical system can be compared with the hierarchical system presented by Maslow, and later compared with other religious traditions.)

Kabbalah holds certain beliefs including the idea that most people try to avoid pain and gain pleasure, and most have no desire to rise to higher levels of consciousness. The goal of Kabbalah is to awaken humans to achieve higher levels of consciousness (Goleman, 1988). Kabbalah strives to free people from the bonds of the body and of worldly games/illusions. In order to achieve this, one has to free oneself from the Yesod (the mind/ego). By reaching the state of Tiferet (higher state of awareness), one can become more aware and transcend the ego. "The Kabbalists call the highest level of transcendence Ayin, literally 'Nothingness'" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 12).

The ultimate goal for Kabbalists is to permanently be in the higher state of Tiferet and to move into even higher levels of existence (Goleman, 1988). Kabbalists believe that meditation can bring one to higher states of consciousness. "When a person is in a state of expanded of consciousness, he is enlightened in all walks of life. He has realized the vanity of the mundane world and all the greatness of the spiritual. Everything that he does is with a different awareness, whether it is eating and drinking, worship or study" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 279).

According to Kaplan (1982), Kabbalah meditation remains elusive as a result of an accurate understanding being lost in the translation from Hebrew. However, the history of Jewish meditation is far reaching. The earliest mention of meditation derived

from the early Talmudic period of the first century in which meditation techniques "consisted of divine names, as well as intense concentration on the transcendental spheres" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 7). Much of the earlier meditation methods were overshadowed by the publication of the Zohar in the 1290s, which consequentially led to the neglect of meditation practices for more than two hundred years until The Safed School, under the teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Ari) (1534-1572), demonstrated how "various letter combinations found within the Zohar were actually meant to be used as meditative devices" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 8).

According to Goleman (1988), like other forms of meditation, the student must find a teacher, in this case called a Maggid, to help him unlock the mysteries of these transcendental levels. Linked with the practice of meditation, a detailed numerology system is used. For example, one's name has particular meaning based on its numerology reading. This can even be found within sacred names: "Elohim, for instance, one of the most sacred names of God in the Hebrew Bible, could be shown to have the same numerical value as the Hebrew word for nature, hateva—evidence of the hidden unity of God and nature" (Abram, 1996, p. 246).

Within Kabbalah, dwells the Tree of Life, which is a map of the hierarchical planes of the world and of man. The ten sefirot, which comprise The Tree of Life, describe the ten qualities of Divine nature. Three of these ten qualities are paired with another three, thus creating seven levels of the Tree of Life (Myss, 1996). The ten Divine qualities which are shared with humans "are spiritual powers that we are mandated to develop and refine in our life journey" (Myss, 1996, p. 72).

In order to attain the highest state of consciousness, an aspirant learns about numerology and attempts to fulfill all of the stages of the Tree of Life. This requires the aspirant to expand his spiritual nature. This is accomplished through meditation. The Hebrew word Hitbodedut means meditation; "It refers to a state of internal isolation, where the individual mentally secludes his essence from his thoughts;…Hitbodedut therefore primarily is used to denote the isolation of the soul or ego from external and internal stimuli" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 15-16).

Similar to many teachings of mantra meditation, meditation in Kabbalah is taught in an oral tradition straight from the mouth of the Maggid (the teacher). Focus may be on a word, a phrase, or on part of the Tree of Life (Goleman, 1988). The utilization of a mantra serves as one of the best-known methods of meditation wherein the practitioner focuses on the mantra in order to achieve spiritual growth. In the Kabbalah, an example of this type of meditation is evident in the Hekhalot, in which the beginner aspirant repeats Divine Names 112 times (Kaplan, 1982). Jewish mysticism "is centered around the conviction that each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew aleph-beth is a magic gateway or guide into an entire sphere of existence" (Abram, 1996, p. 133).

The process of the repetition of the word/phrase allows the practitioner to shift his attention from the Yesod (the mind/ego) to the Tiferet (higher state of awareness)—thereby transcending the ego. If the aspirant goes beyond the Tiferet, he will be in a higher state called Daat, and will become one with God. If the aspirant is able to sustain this higher state, he will move into devekut, no longer dwelling as an ordinary man, but now as a Zaddik, or saint (Goleman, 1988). Similar to the self-actualized individual, Zaddiks are "indifferent to praise or blame" (Goleman, 1988, p. 52).

This elevated level can be accomplished by meditating upon certain letters or words, which in turn will "reveal new secrets; through the process of tzeruf, the magical permutation of the letters, the Jewish scribe could bring himself into successively greater states of ecstatic union with the divine" (Abram, 1996, p. 133).

Christian Meditation

Similar to many contemporary Jewish practices, many contemporary Christian practices focus on rituals and doctrines that do not concern themselves with a meditative perspective. However, just like Kabbalah, Christianity had its own sect of spiritualists who employed meditative techniques in order to grow closer to God. Thomas á Kempis, as stated earlier, believed in the importance of turning inward to find truth. Even considering the teachings of Christ, a connection can be made with the ideologies of meditation. According to Campbell (1989), when the disciples inquired about the coming of the Kingdom of God, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of the Father is spread over the earth and men do not see it" (p. 57). Campbell (1989) clarifies:

In other words, bring it about in your hearts. And that is precisely the sense of Nirvanic realization. This is it. All you have to do is see it. And the function of meditation leading to that is to dissociate you from your commitment to this body, which is afraid to die, so that you realize the eternal dimension is right here, now, everywhere. And suffering and joy, good and evil are functions of the apparitional situation as things seem, but the ultimate is transcendence. (p. 57)

Here Campbell speaks of the practice of meditation enabling the practitioner to fulfill Christ's message of developing the awareness of the omnipotence of God. The belief

that God surrounds and infuses mankind and that one becomes fully realized when he reaches the level of awareness of his union with God is similar to Maslow's theory of self-actualization and parallels the levels of The Tree of Life and the seven charkras; the purpose of practices such as meditation is to enable one to reach the zenith of his/her potential, awareness, fulfillment.

Christian mystics such as Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross, also utilized forms of meditation to grow closer to God and each created a hierarchal construct to illustrate the expansion and growth of one's spirit. "For Teresa, exploration of the self will reveal that likeness within the soul's own depths, enticing it into deeper relationship with the divine potential embedded within it" (Ahlgren, 2005, p. 21-22).

Saint Teresa wrote about the stages of one's spiritual development being broken into seven levels. These seven levels, or mansions as she describes them, are explored in her spiritual text entitled *Interior Castle*. Within this text, she describes each stage/mansion as "representing a further stage of development in the realization and integration of the fullness of the human being" (Ahlgren, 2005, p. 21). Here again, a connection can be made to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

According to Saint Teresa, prayer and meditation are necessary for entrance into this Interior Castle and for movement through each level of the mansions. "As far as I can understand, the door of entry into this castle is prayer and meditation: I do not say mental prayer rather than vocal, for, if it is prayer at all, it must be accompanied by meditation" (Avila, 2004, p. 7). She cautions against simply reciting prayers in a form of rote repetition. Saint Teresa emphasizes the importance of developing self-awareness. Meditation allows one to cultivate his self-awareness, and accordingly, "However high a

state the soul may have attained, self-knowledge is incumbent upon it, and this it will never be able to neglect even should it so desire" (Avila, 2004, p. 13).

While Saint Teresa likens the stages of one's spiritual development to seven different mansions, Saint John of the Cross applies a metaphor of a secret ladder—a ten step process to achieving spiritual union with God. Wilkinson (2005) explains:

The Carmelite Doctors of the Church, Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross, teach that this [divine transformation] is best achieved through the regular habit of contemplative prayer. The profound silence of the contemplative state is more than merely an absence of noise. It is a shift of the spirit into a different level of consciousness, which involves entering into God's domain. (p. 159)

Other saints such as Saint Francis of Assisi demonstrated an understanding of spirituality that transcends the level of what today is considered basic religious doctrines. Throughout "The Canticle of the Creatures," Saint Francis acknowledges man's interconnectedness with all of nature and humbly praises the inner beauty and God energy within all creation.

Earlier proof linking meditation with Christianity can be found within the desert monks, who lived around the fourth century and searched for solitude in order to connect intimately with God (Goleman, 1988). These early Christian monks practiced meditation and "bear strong similarity to those of their Hindu and Buddhist renunciate brethren several kingdoms to the east. While Jesus and his teachings were their inspiration, the meditative techniques they adopted for finding their God suggest either a borrowing from the East or a spontaneous rediscovery" (Goleman, 1988, p. 53). Mirroring the meditative techniques used in Kabbalah and in forms of Eastern mantra

meditation, the desert Monks meditated on the repetition of a phrase from the Scriptures (Goleman, 1988).

Even in contemporary times, the idea of meditation being part of Christianity can be found. For example, in 1989, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church) in a letter to Catholic bishops, addressed the concept of Christian meditation. Ratzinger acknowledged the growing interest in meditative practices for Christians to escape from their increasingly hectic lifestyles and to fortify their communion with God. Referring to Christian mediation as deep prayer, or contemplation, he advises that one may pray in any way one deems fit; however, when praying or meditating, a Christian must always remember that the importance of meditating is contemplating Jesus Christ. Simply clearing one's mind is not the goal for the Christian meditator; rather, humbly contemplating Christ and his teachings is the goal and will enable one "to put aside everything that is worldly, sense-perceptible or conceptually limited. It is thus an attempt to ascend to or immerse oneself in the sphere of the divine, which as such is neither terrestrial, sense-perceptible nor capable of conceptualization" (Ratzinger, 1989, p. 127).

Both Judaism and Christianity show evidence of the necessity of the aspirant to move into higher levels of existence through a hierarchical arrangement. Similar to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, these religious systems indicate that at his current state, the average man is yet unfulfilled, unrealized in his potential.

Eastern Meditation

Acknowledging that most cultures have their own form, practice and purpose of meditative practices, this study will be looking specifically at the Eastern tradition of meditation. Believed to have originated in India approximately twenty-five hundred years ago with Siddhartha Gautama who became a Buddha, the art of meditation then spread to China and then to Japan. The story of Siddhartha has been told many times by many different people. Siddhartha was a wealthy Brahman prince who had everything one could ever imagine wanting. His father tried to protect him from the sadness and pain of the real world as he created a dreamlike world inside of the palace walls for Siddhartha. His father prevented him from seeing illness, old age or death. Even though he had everything a man could ask for, he sensed that there was more. One day on the streets surrounding the palace, Siddhartha saw images of poverty, old age, and decay. His charioteer explained to him that old age happens to all and death is inevitable. Longing to know more, longing to find truth, Siddhartha renounced his palace, position and wealth and set out to discover truth, happiness, and a way to escape the cycle of birth and death. He convinced a charioteer to take him out beyond the palace gates that night so that he may set off to find the truth of existence.

This is the beginning of the story of how Siddhartha, the Brahman prince, became a Buddha—Gautam Buddha. He is considered the first, but there have been many buddhas. Buddha's message eventually migrated from India to China then to Japan. Different spiritual masters with different spiritual approaches blossomed in each culture. The Buddha even physically looks different in each culture. The Indian Buddha is depicted as having a well-proportioned body, serenely meditating. Whereas, the Chinese

and Japanese Buddha has a big belly, is laughing—the big belly allows for the laughter, which is connected to the first transfer of Buddha's energy (Osho, 2004).

In Japan, the practice of meditation is viewed through the lens of Zen. It started with the Buddha who was the source, and then it was passed onto Mahakashyap, the first Zen master (Osho, 2004). To understand the origin of Zen is difficult. To try to explain Zen is nearly impossible. The difficulty of explaining Zen lies within the concept that Zen is not of scriptures, words, or the intellect; Osho (2004) recalls the parable of Zen:

> A man [Buddha] once took a flower and, without a word, held it up before the
> men seated in a circle about him. Each man in his turn looked at the flower, and
> then explained its meaning, its significance, all that it symbolized. The last man,
> however, seeing the flower, said nothing, only smiled. The man in the center
> [Buddha] then also smiled, and without a word handed him the flower. This is the
> origin of Zen. (p. 18)

This tale conveys the crucial element of Zen. It cannot be understood or approached through logic or through the mind. According to Osho, "The key to all teachings, not only for a Buddha but for all masters—Jesus, Mahavira, Lao Tzu—cannot be given through verbal communication. The key cannot be delivered through the mind" (2004, p. 18).

Zen is complicated in that it cannot be rationalized or explained. It just is. How can something that cannot be explained be taught? How can somebody acquire the state of Zen if he cannot speak what it is he seeks? Those practicing Zen should not have a closed mind, but rather an "empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything…If you discriminate too much, you

limit yourself…When your mind is compassionate, it is boundless…There is no need to have a deep understanding of Zen" (Suzuki, 2001, p. 21-22).

Zen itself is not defined as a meditation. Zen is a state of being. When discussing the practice of meditation, Zen provides a foundation for many varieties of meditation. According to Osho (2004), "Zen is not a religion, not a dogma, not a creed. Zen is not even a quest, an inquiry; it is non-philosophical. The fundamental of the Zen approach is that all is as it should be, nothing is missing. This very moment everything is perfect" (p. 126).

Contemporary Eastern Spiritual Teachings

The ideologies discussed within this section are by no means contemporary; however, the teachers who will be cited within this section are either currently living or have passed away within the past century. As a general starting point, a brief delineation of Buddhist principles is provided. The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-fold Path guide the Buddhist to higher realms of spiritual existence.

The Four Noble Truths:
1. Life is suffering.
2. Suffering is caused by desire.
3. Suffering can be overcome by letting go of desire.
4. The Eight-fold path is the key to freedom from desire and suffering.

The Noble Eight-fold Path unfolds through:
1. Right understanding
2. Right intention
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness/awareness
8. Right concentration/meditation

Buddhists strive to follow moral and ethical codes in order to avoid nonvirtuous behavior. They endeavor to practice right thoughts, right speech and right actions. Buddhists find support in the Three Jewels of Refuge—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The Buddha provides the follower with the model of the qualities present in an enlightened being, the Dharma is the doctrine—the application of the spiritual practice, and the Sangha is the spiritual community—both past and present—who uphold the Buddhist teachings (Dalai Lama, 2001).

Buddhists apply the practice of meditation as a vehicle for spiritual progress. Rinpoche (1993) asserts that the most expedient way to free oneself from the bonds of suffering caused by external conditions is through the practice of meditation; "It is meditation that slowly purifies the ordinary mind, unmasking and exhausting its habits and illusions, so that we can, at the right moment, recognize who we really are" (p. 55). Buddhists break suffering into three categories: suffering of a physical ailment or caused by a death, suffering associated with experiencing great wealth and fame (because these pleasures will inevitably end—in this lifetime or the next—and suffering will ensue due to the loss), and the final type of suffering involves those under the influence of negative thoughts and feelings (Dalai Lama, 2001).

To the Buddhist, the purpose of meditation enables the practitioner to achieve control over thoughts, words and actions that may lead him astray from the Eight-fold Path. Straying from the righteous path will lead one to suffering; therefore, the Dalai Lama (2001) states, "In our practice of the Dharma, we seek to transcend the situation in which we all find ourselves: victims of our mental afflictions, the enemies of our peace and serenity. These afflictions—such as attachment, hatred, pride, greed, and so forth—

are mental states that cause us to behave in ways that bring about all our unhappiness and suffering" (p. 78). In providing a spiritual release from suffering, meditation also "conforms to the requirements of science; that is, it consists of actions that can be performed by anyone in any "laboratory" in the world, and the identical result will always obtain…The appeal of Yoga [meditation] is that it works for everyone, limited only by the individual's desire to change, expressed in his or her own efforts at meditation" (Mitrananda, 1999, p. 233).

The release of suffering entails an awakening to one's true potential, to one's unlimited access to boundless energy. The teachings of ancient India found within the Upanishads and the Vedas teach of understanding the God energy contained within all beings. Not only is the God energy inherently found within all beings, it permeates and surrounds all—while Atman is the term for God within, Brahman is the term for this outer reality of the God energy; "Christian terminology employs two phrases—God immanent and God transcendent…again and again in Hindu and Christian literature, we find this great paradox restated—that God is both within and without, instantly present and infinitely elsewhere, the dweller in the atom and the abode of all things" (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1953, p. 23). By considering this philosophy, one is better able to dismantle the power of the ego and the falsehood of duality. All beings are of the same energy; God is within all. As such, "The law of life is designed to teach us how to live in harmony with objective Nature and with our true, inner nature…And if you treat others unkindly, you will receive unkindness in return, both from others and from life. Thus does Nature warn people that by unkindness they do violence to their attunement with the inner Self" (Yogananda, 1990, p. 45).

This same way of thinking applies to judging others as well; "Whenever you see wrong in others, and are distressed by it, remember, it's wrong with you. When you are right inwardly, all things are right, for you see everything as part of God. You then accept all things as they are, without judgment, and look with kindness and sympathy on everyone, no matter how foolish" (Yogananda, 1990, p. 184). The Dalai Lama also advises against discriminating and judging others, and rather stresses the importance of treating all with equanimity (2001). He further teaches that "When we have developed our sense of compassion to the point where we feel responsible for all beings, we are motivated to perfect our ability to serve them" (2001, p. 119).

According to the Eastern belief system, one should take care in the treatment of others because life revolves around the law of karma. In essence, the law of karma dictates that there are consequences for all actions. Karmic outcomes can be linked to the individual and seen as an accumulation of past deeds from both this lifetime and from previous lifetimes. Karma can also impact societies or the world in a broader sense; "And it is because the combined actions of all people all over the world affect the planet on which we live. There is no question about that. The good and bad karmic conditions created by man determine and influence the climate; they affect the wind and the ocean, even the very structure of the earth…" (Yogananda, 1999, p. 6). In accordance with the law of karma, the Dalai Lama (2001) explains, "There is a certain irrationality in responding to injustice or harm with hostility. Our hatred has no physical effect on our enemies; it does not harm them. Rather, it is we who suffer the ill consequences of such overwhelming bitterness…This is how we come to see that our true enemy is actually within us. It is our selfishness, our attachment, and our anger that harm us" (p. 111). The

belief in karma essentially posits that one's actions—both good and bad—will have ramifications.

Just as Christianity offers absolution for its sinners through confession, so the law of karma yields mercy through one's personal effort and awareness of one's thoughts, words and actions. "An important factor in overcoming karma is meditation. Every time you meditate, your karma decreases, for at that time your energy is focused in the brain and burns up the old brain cells. After every deep meditation, you will find yourself becoming freer inside" (Yogananda, 1990, p. 93). Through the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali counsels to overcome karma by "unlearning this desire to exist on the phenomenal level and realizing the Atman, our eternal nature" (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1953, p. 146). Further clarifying the root of karma and the potential freedom from it, Patanjali explains that "ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and the desire to cling to life…the effects of these causes are rebirth, a long or a short life, and the experiences of pleasure and of pain. Basically, karma is rooted in ignorance of the Atman. Remove this ignorance, and you destroy karma" (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1953, p. 147).

Eastern Teachings Against Fear

Fear exists as a crippling force that leads one to behave sometimes in less-than-perfect ways. To the Buddhist, there are two paths: the path of love or the path of fear. Each action, response, thought, word is a result of one of these two forces. Fear may not initially seem to be the antithesis of love, but there are many forms of fear ranging from fear of failure to fear of death. When one is motivated by fear rather than by love, the motivation is usually selfish and ego based.

Khan (1982) advises that "Purifying the mind from fear is of great importance, and this can be best done by analyzing what causes one fear. Fear is an outcome of long-collected, unsolved problems...Fear comes from weaknesses in facing the consequences of one's condition, attitude, and deeds" (p. 15). Reacting with and through fear frequently requires less effort; it comes more naturally. It is easier to develop hatred, fear and frustration with others and with one's surroundings when one has a mindset of duality. However, when one understands his/her oneness with the world and with others and does not become entangled in doubts and desires, then one's mind will find peace (Muktananda, 1978).

Fear entraps; it ensnares; it conceals one's true nature. Fear prevents one from understanding that "Man possesses a tremendous power hidden in his heart, a power that waits constantly to become manifest. This power is hidden by fear. The day when fear disappears, this latent power manifests to view" (Khan, 1982, p. 16). One of the most debilitating forms of fear exists in the fear of failure. Often people do not even attempt to try something because of their overwhelming fear of not succeeding. Khan (1982) insists that "Failure does not matter in life. To a progressive person even a thousand failures do not matter: he has before his view success, and success is his, even after a thousand failures" (p. 17).

The importance of dismantling one's fears in order to gain insight into the boundless potential contained within is not a recent Eastern discovery. Ancient Indian texts such as the Bhagavad Gita emphasize the importance of releasing one's fears. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna instructs Arjuna to:

 Be fearless and pure; never waver in your determination or your dedication to the

spiritual life. Give freely. Be self-controlled, sincere, truthful, loving, and full of

the desire to serve. Realize the truth of the scriptures; learn to be detached and to

take joy in renunciation. Do not get angry or harm any living creature, but be

compassionate and gentle; show good will to all. Cultivate vigor, patience, will,

purity; avoid malice and pride. Then, Arjuna, you will achieve your divine

destiny. (16:1-3)

Overcoming fear poses an elusive challenge. Krishnamurti (1954) indicates that

"To resist, to dominate, to do battle with a problem or to build a defense against it is only

to create further conflict, whereas if we can understand fear, go into it fully step by step,

explore the whole content of it, then fear will never return in any form" (p. 186). To give

a problem energy, attention, only increases the problem. Reacting with force against

what one fears, only produces a stronger force of fear; "Therefore, fear can never be

overcome through any form of discipline, through any form of resistance…There is

freedom from fear only when the mind is capable of looking at the fact without

translating it, without giving it a name, a label" (Krishnamurti, 1954, p. 187-188).

Understanding and overcoming fear is critical because it can lead to other negative

outcomes such as anger and greed. Certain influences disturb the mind and render it

unhealthy, "Such things are worry, anxiety, fear, sorrow, or any sort of disturbance that

takes away the tranquility of the mind, preventing it from experiencing that joy and peace

for which it longs and in which alone is its satisfaction" (Khan, 1982, p. 14). There are

numerous negative emotions that can afflict one, but the most severe, the most damaging

are anger and hatred because these completely ruin one's peace of mind (Dalai Lama &

Cutler, 1998). One way to break the habituated reactions of anger or hatred is to train oneself to react in the opposite way with "patience and tolerance" (Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998, p. 249).

In Tibet, they define two kinds of minds; the usual mind called "sem" and the higher mind referred to as "Rigpa." Tibetan belief holds that:

> Sem is the mind that thinks, plots, desires, manipulates, that flares up in anger, that creates and indulges in waves of negative emotions and thoughts, that has to go on and on asserting, validating, and confirming its 'existence' by fragmenting, conceptualizing, and solidifying experience. The ordinary mind is the ceaselessly shifting and shiftless prey of external influences, habitual tendencies, and conditioning: The masters liken sem to a candle flame in an open doorway, vulnerable to all the winds of circumstance. (Rinpoche, 1993, p. 46)

In order to develop more virtuous thoughts and actions, one must first identify "opposing factors" of virtue and then work to "weaken and undermine" them—thoughts and actions of greed need to be replaced by generosity; thoughts and actions of anger need to be replaced by compassion (Dalai Lama, 2001). Eastern spiritual teachers emphatically stress the importance of resisting fear and anger because "The mind bears fruit according to your thoughts" (Muktananda, 1978, p. 49). If one's thoughts are positive, peaceful, productive, those will be the external results. However, if one's thoughts are negative, warped, unhealthy, those will be the manifested reality. "We must recall in detail how, when angry, we lose our peace of mind, how we are unable to concentrate on our work, and how unpleasant we become to those around us. It is by thinking long and hard in this manner that we eventually become able to refrain

from anger" (Dalai Lama, 2001, p. 62). One's thoughts, words and actions have the power to transform one's environment either in a positive or a negative way.

For instance, one's outlook is essential for creating a better work environment. The Dalai Lama believes that "When we cultivate compassion, the primary beneficiary is really ourselves…So, at work, if you have a warm heart, human affection, your mind will be calmer and more peaceful, which will give you a certain strength and also allow your mental faculties to function better, your judgment and decision-making abilities and so on" (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003, p. 38).

Ultimately, with every situation, a person has a choice. The person can think a positive thought, speak a positive word, perform a positive action; or the person can think a negative thought, speak a negative word, perform a negative action. One can go down the path of love, which includes the positive elements of peace, compassion, understanding, harmony; or he can go down the path of fear, which includes the negative elements of anger, greed, hatred. The path of love leads to wisdom and bliss. The path of fear leads to ignorance and suffering. "There are four different ways in which a person reacts: in deed, in speech, in thought, and in feeling. A deed produces a definite result, speech produces effect, thought produces atmosphere, and feeling produces conditions. Therefore no way in which a person reacts will be without effect" (Khan, 1982, p. 119). Regardless of the situation, the person himself, though he may not have control over the actual situation, has control over the way he chooses to react to it. This choice is the reason why the Eastern spiritual teachers emphasize that each individual has the power to create his own happiness or his own suffering.

Making the Connection

Forms of meditation exist in most spiritual traditions—both Eastern and Western. A connection between the traditional teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Eastern belief systems such as Buddhism and Hinduism becomes prevalent after learning about each system's conviction that man—for the most part—has not yet reached his full potential. Each system provides its practitioner with instruction for moving into the higher levels of being. Evidence of this is illustrated by Myss (1996), who asserts that the seven levels of the Judaic Tree of Life, the seven sacraments of Christianity and the seven chakras of the Eastern belief system are almost exactly identical in their meaning.

Along with Myss, Ken Wilber is considered to be one of the key philosophers who have succeeded in connecting not only Eastern and Western belief systems, but also extending that connection to various psychological movements. One such psychological connection is made with self-actualization. Like Maslow, Wilber (1996) believes that all beings have the innate drive to reach their full developmental level. Also, similar to Maslow and to various Eastern and Western belief systems, Wilber presents the development of the individual in terms of a hierarchical system. With movement to each successive level, the previous levels are not destroyed, but rather transcended (Wilber, 1996). He describes this system through a life cycle which begins in the womb, moves through lower levels of subconsciousness to middle levels of self-consciousness (the outward arc) to higher levels of superconsciousness (the inward arc) (Wilber, 1996).

Please note the following chart. The first three columns are from Myss (1996). The fourth column provides a glance at how Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs may connect with these belief systems, and the final column represents Wilber's hierarchical system of

development. Also, the final level of each hierarchy that appears in the chart, does not

necessarily signify that level to be the absolute final/highest level of development. For

instance, according to Maslow, there is the level of transcendence that is possible beyond

self-actualization. Wilber (1996) speaks of being in Unity/Consciousness. And there

may be chakra levels that exist above the crown chakra. The chart focuses on self-

actualization being at the top due to the purpose of this study.

Tree of Life-10 Sefirot	7 Christian Sacraments	7 Chakras according to Eastern Tradition	Maslow's Hierachary of Needs	Approximate Mode of Self Sense
Keter	Extreme Unction	Crown Chakra—sense of oneness with all of creation, spiritual connection, oneness with God	Self-Actualization (This level being the gateway to the transcendental level)	Centaur/existential (This level being the gateway to higher levels of development and ultimately leading to one's potential of Unity and Consciousness)
Binah and Hokhmah	Ordination	Sixth Chakra; Wisdom	Aesthetic and Cognitive Needs	No direct correlation here
Gevurah and Hesed	Confession	Fifth Chakra: Will	Esteem Needs	Early egoic/personic Middle egoic/personic Late egoic/personic Mature Ego Biosocial Bands
Tif'eret	Marriage	Fourth Chakra: Love	Belongingness and Love Needs	Membership-cognition Early egoic/personic
Hod and Nezah	Confirmation	Third Chakra: Self	Safety Needs	Membership-cognition
Yesod	Communion	Second Chakra: Power	Safety Needs/Physiological Needs	Axial-body Pranic-body Image-body
Shekhinah	Baptism	First Chakra: Tribal Connection	Physiological Needs	Pleromatic Uroboric-alimentary

**Note: The information from the first three columns comes from Myss, Caroline. (1996). *The Anatomy of the Spirit*. NY: Three Rivers Press.
**The second-to-last column regarding the connection of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a connection made by the researcher.
**The last column (Approximate mode of self sense) is from Wilber, Ken. (1996) *The Atman Project: A Transpersonal View of Human Development*. Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books. (p. 210).
**The 7 levels of each column are presented in descending order.

The hierarchical "Approximate Mode of Self Sense" comes from Wilber's (1996) book entitled *The Atman Project: A Transpersonal View of Human Development*. In defining the Atman Project, Wilber explains that as one desires to evolve to higher levels and to eventually evolve to the highest levels of Consciousness under conditions that actually work to inhibit such growth (such as ego gratification), that person is experiencing the Atman Project. The Atman Project provides substitute forms of gratification, which necessarily leave the person unfulfilled. Only in reaching the true Atman (Consciousness) can there be an end to desire and can ultimate bliss be attained.

The concept of an ultimate state of awareness can be found within most cultures and belief systems; "Christians and Jews call it 'God'; Hindus call it 'the Self,' 'Shiva,' 'Braham,' and 'Vishnu'; Sufi mystics name it 'the Hidden Essence'; and Buddhists call it 'Buddha nature.' At the heart of all religions is the certainty that there is a fundamental truth, and that this life is a sacred opportunity to evolve and realize it" (Rinpoche, 1993, p. 47). Muktananda (1978) encourages all to meditate—regardless of background, religious/political affiliations, profession; "O unconscious man, wake up, meditate; not just for liberation, not just out of religious duty, not just for the laurels of yoga, not just to become praiseworthy, but at least, meditate to satisfy your desire for worldly objects" (p. 8).

Although meditation allows one to delve within himself and to find peace within, even worldly pursuits will be more easily attained through meditation, and "it will chase away your indifference, your apathy, the worries of the mind, and the disease of erratic thinking" (Muktananda, 1978, p. 11). "It [meditation] is being increasingly accepted as a practice that cuts through and soars above cultural and religious barriers, and enables

those who pursue it to establish a direct contact with the truth of their being" (Rinpoche, 1993, p. 57).

By examining most religions and the psychologies found within the Humanistic Psychology movement including Maslow's theory on Self-Actualization, it becomes profoundly evident that whatever the means, the goal is to improve one's life. The goal is to go beyond one's current state, whatever that state may be. Even if one's life feels complete, there is always something more. A higher level of awareness can always be reached. "All spiritual teachers of humanity have told us the same thing, that the purpose of life on earth is to achieve union with our fundamental, enlightened nature" (Rinpoche, 1993, p. 127). One's purpose is to be completely fulfilled, completely aware. This begins with becoming Self-Actualized.

Wilber (1996) compares the level of self-actualization to what he terms the "centaur" level. At this level the mind and body become one in which the lower chakras are beginning to become transcended. "Self-actualization is intimately related to the centaur level, and is not directly available to the ego or persona levels" (Wilber, 1996, p. 55). This comparison with the centaur level of development and with the level of self-actualization is further evidenced by Wilber's explanation that "A higher-order unity, a higher-order integration: transverbal, transmembership, but not transpersonal—this mature centaur is the point, I believe, that higher energies begin to rush into the organism, even transfiguring it physiologically. This whole level—which is a total bodymind—marks the highest potential that can be reached in the existential or gross realm" (1996, p. 71).

Just as the Centaur level Wilber speaks about is the gateway to higher energies, Maslow's self-actualization is the gateway to higher levels of existence. Maslow (1971) refers to the level of Transcendence. Only some self-actualizers make it to the next level of Transcendence. Maslow allows for multiple meanings of transcendence. His definition of possible descriptions of transcendence starts with the explanation that "Transcendence in the sense of loss of self-consciousness, of self-awareness…meditation or concentration on something outside one's self-consciousness, and in this particular sense of transcendence of the ego or of the conscious self" provides the foundation for his theory that extends beyond self-actualization (1971, p. 259). This definition suits the comparison being made here to examples such as Wilber's (1996) Consciousness and to Bucke's (1901) Cosmic Consciousness.

To further provide evidence of the link between different belief systems, a connection can also be made more specifically to the concept of a mantra, or a vibrational quality, found within various cultures. According to Yogananda (1990):

The cosmic vibration is called Aum. It is the Amen in the Book of Revelation in the Bible. It is the Word in the Gospel of St. John. It is the 'music of the spheres' of the ancient Greeks. It is the Amin of the Muslims, the Ahunavar of the Zoroastrians. Out of that great vibration everything that is came into being. (p. 19)

The idea of finding the commonality between Christianity and Hinduism and the importance of vibrational tones of certain words is extended by Yukteswar (1990), who explains, "The Word, Amen (Aum), is the beginning of the Creation" (p. 23). In the Judaic tradition, Kabbalists understand the importance of the vibrational tone carried in

words. Abram (1996) explains that "By meditating, when reading, not upon the written phrases, or even upon the words, but upon the individual letters that gaze out at him from the surface of the page, the Jewish mystic could enter into direct contact with the divine energies" (p. 245). Through focusing on certain letter combinations, "…the Kabbalist was able to bring himself into increasingly exalted states of consciousness, awakening creative powers that previously lay dormant within his body" (Abram, 1996, p. 245).

The Sanskrit language is also believed to carry the vibrational energy of the object it identifies. For instance, the Sanskrit word for a rose would carry the same vibrational energy as the rose itself. This is why mantras are often given in Sanskrit. Muktananda (1978) instructs on mantra meditation by explaining, "You should sit in solitude and repeat the Name [mantra] with a pure mind. When you contemplate bad thoughts and bad impressions, your mind experiences corresponding states…Keep on repeating the mantra, and through this you will attain the state of meditation" (p. 35).

The practice of meditation, particularly mantra meditation helps to awaken the higher chakra, energy centers, of the body. Most people already have fully functioning/awakened lower chakras, such as the tribal and sex centers; however, the goal for the spiritual aspirant is to awaken the higher energy centers beginning with the fourth (heart) chakra. The heart chakra, consisting of love and compassion, is often times seen as the first chakra to the higher levels (Consider the connection to the Tiferet in the Judaic Tree of Life—at this stage, one can transcend the ego and be open to the higher states of awareness.). According to Myss (1996), "As a person masters each chakra, he gains power and self-knowledge that become integrated into his spirit, advancing him along the path toward spiritual consciousness in the classic hero's journey" (p. 68). Sri

Chinmoy, who had served as the head of the United Nations Meditation Group at the

U.N. in New York City, explains, "It is inside the human that the divine exists. We do

not have to live in the Himalayan caves to prove our inner divinity; this divinity we can

bring forward in our normal day-to-day life" (1988, p. 498). Myss (1996) refers to this

notion of attaining higher levels of being while carrying out normal everyday tasks and

living a regular life as "monks without monasteries." Everyone regardless of profession,

socio-economic status, or background can awaken the unlimited potential contained

within.

Eastern Teachings Linked with Ideologies of Self-Actualization

"A description of the nature of mind leads naturally into a complete instruction on

meditation, for meditation is the only way we can repeatedly uncover and gradually

realize and stabilize that nature of mind" (Rinpoche, 1993, p. 12). When considering

what meditation actually is, Krishnamurti (1954) asserts:

> Concentration is not meditation, because where there is interest it is
>
> comparatively easy to concentrate on something. A general who is planning war,
>
> butchery, is very concentrated. A businessman making money is very
>
> concentrated—he may even be ruthless, putting aside every other feeling and
>
> concentrating completely on what he wants. A man who is interested in anything
>
> is naturally, spontaneously concentrated. Such concentration is not meditation, it
>
> is merely exclusion. (p. 218)

Rather, meditation develops one's understanding of "right significance, right valuation, to

all things…Therefore self-knowledge is the beginning of meditation…Meditation is the

beginning of self-knowledge and without self-knowledge there is no meditation"

(Krishamurti, 1954, p. 219). This statement has significant connections with the concept of self-actualization. The interrelatedness between meditation and self-actualization is the core of this study.

Eastern philosophies and practices of meditation demonstrate direct alignment with the basic principles of self-actualization. After investigating the history and teachings of Eastern philosophies, the comparison between Maslow's psychology and the goals of Eastern meditation are beyond apparent. Most notably, the overarching purpose of both systems revolves around man's inherent potential that far exceeds the average person's current state of awareness/existence. Eastern belief systems offer practices such as meditation to attain these higher states of consciousness.

In describing the purpose of meditation, Wilber (1996) suggests that "Meditation is, if anything, a sustained instrumental path of transcendence…It is the natural and orderly unfolding of successive higher-order unities, until there is only Unity, until all potential is actual, until all the ground-unconscious is unfolded as Consciousness" (p. 109). If, according to Wilber, meditation can lead to higher levels of existence and to attaining one's full potential, then it appears logical that meditation should, therefore, lead to self-actualization. Wilber (1996) continues in saying that "It [meditation] is what an individual, at the present stage of human evolution, has to do in order to develop beyond this present stage of human evolution, and advance towards that only God which is the goal of all creation" (p. 109).

Ultimately, the question posed here is: will meditation help the practitioner from the secular arena of education to develop self-actualizing tendencies in much the same way as it has enabled spiritual practitioners to reach higher states of being? Before

attempting to answer this question, a further examination of the parallels between Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization and Eastern meditation is necessary.

Transcending the ego stands at the center point of those classified as self-actualized. Along with all spiritual teachers, Muktananda (1999) also expresses the importance of freeing oneself from the ego. This coincides with one of the facets of being self-actualized: becoming egoless. Self-actualized people "…are ordinarily concerned with basic issues and eternal questions of the type that we have learned to call philosophical or ethical. Such people live customarily in the widest possible frame of reference" (Maslow, 1987, p. 134). This larger "frame of reference" allows the self-actualized person to see beyond "triviality and pettiness" (Maslow, 1987, p. 134). This ability enables the self-actualized person to rise above many of the causes of pain and suffering that unnecessarily affects the average person.

Eastern philosophy offers a spiritual perspective to this phenomenon. Atman is the Sanskrit word for the real Self, and all beings share the Atman contained within themselves (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1953). Pain and suffering result from association with one's ego rather than with the Atman. By allowing one's perceptions of reality to filter through the ego, the ego will categorize a given experience/encounter as desirable or undesirable. In explaining Patanjali's Yoga Aphorism "Yoga is the control of thought-waves in the mind," Prabhavananda & Isherwood clarify:

> This false identification is the cause of all our misery—for even the ego's temporary sensation of happiness brings anxiety, a desire to cling to the object of pleasure, and this prepares future possibilities of becoming unhappy. The real Self, the Atman, remains forever outside the power of thought-waves, it is

eternally pure, enlightened and free—the only true, unchanging happiness. It

follows, therefore, that man can never know his real Self as long as the thought-

waves and the ego-sense are being identified. (p. 13)

This concept can be applied to any real-life setting. For instance, upon

encountering a negative experience with a co-worker, the initial reaction is usually

through one's ego. Why is this person doing this to *me*? The inclination to personalize a

situation or problem is human nature. Unfortunately, this often leads to more negativity,

more problems. According to Maslow, if one is self-actualized, he is "problem-centered"

not "ego-centered." One must attempt to not take everything personally; an upset

coworker might need to be viewed with a more open-minded perspective—there may

likely be other reasons for this person's words or actions (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003).

On a spiritual level, "To live irresponsibly is to live for the ego, not for God. The

greater a person's emphasis on ego-fulfillment, the less his awareness of true joy"

(Yogananda, 1990, p. 44). The ego must ultimately be transcended for attainment of

higher spiritual realms. Khan (1982) explains that there are four stages of the ego that

one passes through in order to bring an end to it's power: the first stage consists of

complete lack of concern for others, the second stage sees the person as being kind and

considerate so long as his own personal needs are fulfilled, the third stage the person

shows greater concern for others than for himself, and finally in the fourth stage the

person only works for the good of others. This final stage represents yet another key

characteristic of the self-actualized individual—serving others and working for the

greater good of humanity.

The self-actualized person views work as pleasure, and is therefore, able to work tirelessly and with greater results. Rather than perceiving work to be a mandatory act of drudgery and simply a means to acquire money to do what one *really* wants to do in his free time, to the self-actualizer, "duty is pleasure, one's 'work' is loved, and there is no difference between working and vacationing" (Maslow, 1987, p. 60). For those on the spiritual path of enlightenment, this also holds true.

Ancient Indian scripture instructs on the importance of working for selfless aims. According to the Bhagavad Gita, "Work performed to fulfill one's obligations, without thought of personal reward or of whether the job is pleasant or unpleasant, is sattvic [harmony, purity, goodness]…A sattvic worker is free from egotism and selfish attachments, full of enthusiasm and fortitude in success and failure alike" (18:23-24; 26-27). Sri Krishna instructs Arjuna in the art of selfless service through these wise words, "The ignorant work for their own profit, Arjuna; the wise work for the welfare of the world, without thought for themselves…Perform all work carefully, guided by compassion" (Gita, 3:25-26). The message in the Bhagavad Gita to "Strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world; by devotion to selfless work one attains the supreme goal of life. Do your work with the welfare of others always in mind" parallels the Self-Actualized person's gratification in working for a higher purpose (3:19-20).

The Dalai Lama asserts that "…if you view your work as something that is really worthwhile—if, for instance, there is a higher purpose to your work—then of course, even if the work is very hard there may be a greater willingness to undergo that hardship" (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003, p. 20). Self-Actualized and Eastern spiritual behavior tends to be more intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated. Instead of viewing

one's income as the definition of power, The Dalai Lama believes, "Real power has to do with one's ability to influence the hearts and minds of others" (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003, p. 53).

In explaining the struggle and purpose of life, Khan (1982) describes Chinese mystics symbolically holding a branch bearing fruit which "means that the purpose of life is to arrive at that stage where every moment becomes fruitful. And what does fruitful mean? Does it mean fruits for oneself? No, trees do not bear fruit for themselves, but for others" (p. 60-61).

One of the higher goals of meditation is to bring peace and love to the world. In order to be truly beneficial for those around us, we must first help ourselves because "only when we have removed the harm in ourselves do we become truly useful to others" (Rinpoche, 1993, p. 61). This is why moving into higher states of being is so important. This is why developing qualities of self-actualization is essential for educators. By becoming more fulfilled personally, by achieving more harmony and peace within oneself, one becomes better able to positively benefit others. In order to feel a sense of fulfillment in one's work, it is imperative that one's attitude be positive (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003).

According to Eastern belief, meditation provides one way of attaining this profound level of living. Meditation enables one to achieve internal peace, and "When the aspirant arrives at that place, the aspirant forgets all pain and suffering; he becomes whole, he forgets the nightmares of his frustration and inadequacies" (Muktananda, 1978, p. 36). Krishnamurti (1954) advises that if the world at large is to be changed, is to be altered in a positive way, each person must begin with himself. Too often the

answers/solutions are looked for in the externals, in other people, but "if we can transform ourselves, bring about a radically different point of view in our daily existence, then perhaps we shall affect the world at large…" (Krishnamurti, 1954, p. 43).

Not only is the self-actualized person less driven by his ego and more concerned with the higher purpose of his work, the individual dwelling at this level also maintains a more open acceptance of himself and others. Maslow (1987) explains that "As children look out upon the world with wide, uncritical, undemanding, innocent eyes, simply noting and observing what is the case, without either arguing the matter or demanding that it be otherwise, so do self-actualizing people tend to look upon human nature in themselves and others" (p. 131). This echoes the Eastern spiritualists' belief in remaining open, nonjudgmental when encountering any given situation. Muktananda (1999) advises to:

> Stop rejecting universal brotherhood. For a few moments, discard tension, restlessness, and jealousy, and quiet your mind. Turn within just for a while, and make friends with the Self. Then watch how quickly you will be transformed. You will become simple and straightforward. Everyone will be yours, and you will belong to everyone. You will be able to do your work efficiently and with great freshness and ecstasy. (p. 47)

The self-actualized person embodies this feeling of fresh appreciation and ecstasy described by Muktananda. "Self-actualizing people have the wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy, however stale these experiences may have become to others" (Maslow, 1987, p. 136).

The Bhagavad Gita expresses the importance of nonattachment and nonjudgement: "The supreme Reality stands revealed in the consciousness of those who have conquered themselves. They live in peace, alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, praise and blame" (6:7). The Dalai Lama (2001) explains this type of discrimination as "reification"-- "Reification simply means that we give such objects a reality they don't have" (p. 102). In order to demonstrate love for oneself and for others, one must not judge. "Genuine compassion must be unconditional. We must cultivate equanimity in order to transcend any feelings of discrimination and partiality" (Dalai Lama, 2001, p. 110). Buddhism counsels that a day spent judging is a painful day. Suffering comes from the sense of duality. We are all one (Muktananda, 1999). By remembering this, one develops peace.

According to The Dalai Lama, "We need to fight against injustice outwardly, but at the same time we have to find ways to cope inwardly, ways to train our minds to remain calm and not develop frustration, hatred, or despair" (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003, p. 24). The Dalai Lama further explains, "You begin by realizing that no situation is one hundred percent good or one hundred percent bad. Sometimes, particularly in the West, I've noticed a tendency to think in black-or-white terms. But in reality everything in life is relative" (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003, p. 26).

Beyond the connection that Eastern literature makes between meditation and higher states of consciousness and the connection of Eastern spiritual ideologies and self-actualization, there is a link between the practice of meditation and the movement towards self-actualization. Huynh (2004) studied 169 Vietnamese American Buddhists in order to ascertain whether or not the practice of mantra meditation led to self-

actualizing qualities. The following scales were used: the Religious Orientation Scale, the Brief Symptom Inventory, the Personal Orientation Inventory, and the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identification Scale along with meditation and demographic questionnaires. All of the scales were completed in either English or Vietnamese (selected by the practitioner) and were administered only once. Fifty-three participants had no experience with mantra meditation, twenty participants had less than twelve months experience with mantra meditation, and ninety-six participants had practiced mantra meditation for twelve months or longer (Huynh, 2004). Reduced distress and movement towards self-actualization were depicted in certain respondent characteristics; however, being proreligious was inversely related to distress, but directly related to self-actualization (Huynh, 2004). Also, twelve or more months of mantra meditation, though inversely related to distress, was directly related to self-actualization (Huynh, 2004). Because this study utilized a cross-sectional sample of meditators and nonmeditators and levels of practices were not consistent, Huynh recommends that further studies need to be conducted in order to focus more on long-term, consistent mantra meditation practices to more accurately determine the link between mantra meditation and movement towards self-actualization.

Peak Experiences and Cosmic Consciousness

Some believe that there lies beyond the level of self-actualization an even higher domain. Maslow refers to this level as Transcendence. Others call it by different names. For instance, Bucke (1901) refers to this higher level as Cosmic Consciousness. Only one in many millions has attained this level known as Cosmic Consciousness. Richard

M. Bucke in his book, *Cosmic Consciousness*, delineates the qualities of those rare individuals who have attained this state along with the known cases of people in Cosmic Consciousness up until the time of the book's publication in 1901. Bucke begins by summarizing the pysychogenesis of the human race. He outlines the mental evolution of man from simple consciousness to self-consciousness to cosmic consciousness (here connections can be drawn to other theories such as Wilber's (1996) hierarchical structure of human development). He discusses when the sense of color, music, and fragrance came to man after man reached the level of self-consciousness (these did not occur immediately or simultaneously). For instance, he explains that Aristotle spoke only of a tricolored rainbow. Bucke claims that the human race is now beginning to embark on the next level of existence—known only to a few currently, but it will become known to more and more as time continues.

To attempt to describe or to understand the description of Cosmic Consciousness is almost impossible for somebody who has not experienced it first hand. In most simple and humble terms, it might be described as a transfiguration, similar, yet far more profound than that of becoming self-actualized. Cases of such mystic individuals include Socrates, Christ, Guatama (Buddha), Mohammed, Dante, Francis Bacon, Walt Whitman, William Blake and Pascal (Bucke, 1901). In *Energy Anatomy*, Myss (1996) echoes this concept when she speaks of Homo Noeticus—a new species of humans who are multi-sensory beings operating well above and beyond the typical five sensory receptors. "Man's highly developed nervous system provides him with the ability to experience subtler states of thought, to transcend the subtlest thought and to arrive at the

transcendental state of pure consciousness, the state of absolute Being" (Maharishi, 1963, p. 68-69).

Wilber (1996) agrees that there are higher states of consciousness and that humankind will eventually evolve past the current level of self-consciousness. He asserts that the cycle of life and death will continue until the person fulfills the ultimate state of Unity. Each being's innate goal is to achieve fulfillment, and this fulfillment follows a specific pattern:

> Thus, at each point in psychological growth, we find: 1) a higher-order structure emerges in consciousness (with the help of symbolic forms); 2) the self identifies its being with that higher structure; 3) the next higher-order structure eventually emerges; 4) the self disidentifies with the lower structure and shifts its essential identity to the higher structure; 5) consciousness thereby transcends the lower structure; 6) and becomes capable of operating on that lower structure from the higher-order level; 7) such that all preceding levels can then be integrated in consciousness, and ultimately as Consciousness. (Wilber, 1996, p. 94)

In comparison, through Maslow's studies of self-actualized people, he has discovered a phenomenon he refers to as "peak experiences." Though, not all self-actualized people have peak experiences, many have at one point experienced this state, which mirrors some of the qualities of Cosmic Consciousness. An understanding of specifications of peak experiences will benefit the comparison.

In several of his books, Maslow discusses the concept of self-actualized people who have these moments that even transcend the self-actualized state. These moments are not continuously occurring, but they come upon the person at the most sudden

occasions and are extremely intense. Maslow identifies this state that goes beyond self-actualization as Transcendence. These episodes are always pleasant and are always viewed as positive (Maslow, 1964, 1968, 1971,1987). In theological terms, this would be considered a "mystical experience…in which there is a loss of self or transcendence of it, such as problem-centering, intense concentration, intense sensuous experience, or self-forgetful and intense enjoyment of music or art" (Maslow, 1987). During peak experiences, the sense of time and space tends to disappear; everything appears unified, fully integrated; an impartial detachment, yet fully attentive concentration occurs; the sense of ego/self disappears; all is perceived objectively, without judgment; no sense of duality exists; negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, depression cease to exist; an overwhelming sense of love, peace, unity, harmony fills the person and everything seems perfect—the person feels abundantly blessed and connected with a higher power (Maslow, 1964).

For a better understanding of the qualities experienced during a peak experience, Maslow (1964, 1968) delineates the following heightened sensations: "wholeness, perfection, completion, justice, aliveness, richness, simplicity, beauty, goodness, uniqueness, effortlessness, playfulness, truth, self-sufficiency." He refers to these qualities as "B-values" (B is for Being), which are possessed by the self-actualized person and are heightened during peak experiences.

Maslow posits that transcendence can include all of the following: time, culture, one's past, ego, selfishness, pain, sickness, evil, basic needs, other people's perceptions, personal weaknesses and dependency, one's present situation, space, and fear (1971). The level of transcendence also incorporates a more mystical aspect. According to Maslow,

"Transcendence also means to become divine or godlike, to go beyond the merely human…I am thinking of using the word "metahuman" or "B-human" in order to stress that this becoming very high or divine or godlike is part of human nature even though it is not often seen in fact. It is still potentiality of human nature" (1971, p. 264). He continues by making reference to Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness: "This is a special phenomenological state in which the person somehow perceives the whole cosmos or at least the unity and integration of it and of everything in it, including his Self" (1971, p. 267). Maslow explains that this is a particular type of peak experience in which "comes from narrowing down consciousness and zeroing in on an intense and total absorption and fascination…I have called this the narrowing-down kind of peak experience and B-cognition" (1971, p. 267).

To teachers of Eastern spiritual beliefs, the experience of Cosmic Consciousness is sometimes referred to as Realization. Paramahansa Yogananda, the founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, refers to it as Self-realization. Elucidating this state, he says, "Those who attain Self-realization on earth live a similar twofold existence. Conscientiously performing their work in the world, they are yet immersed in an inward beatitude" (Yogananda, 1999, p.168).

Sometimes this state of being is referred to as Samadhi. Mutananda (1999) defines Samadhi as "the state of meditative union with the Absolute" (p. 159). The Bhagavad Gita expounds, "When your mind has overcome the confusion of duality, you will attain the state of holy indifference to things you hear and things you have heard. When you are unmoved by the confusion of ideas and your mind is completely united in deep Samadhi, you will attain the state of perfect yoga" (2:52-53).

There are two kinds of self-actualizers according to Maslow—those who are "nonpeaking" and those who are "peaking." "Nonpeaking self-actualizers seem likely to be the social world improvers, the politicians, the workers in society, the reformers, the crusaders, whereas the transcending peakers are more apt to write the poetry, the music, the philosophies, and the religions" (Maslow, 1987, p. 138). It seems fitting, therefore, to explore this esoteric phenomenon through the art of poetry. After his experience of entering into Cosmic Consciousness, Paramahansa Yogananda wrote the following poem in an attempt to verbalize the experience of this esoteric state of being:

> Vanished the veils of light and shade,
> Lifted every vapor of sorrow,
> Sailed away all dawns of fleeting joy,
> Gone the dim sensory mirage,
> Love, hate, health, disease, life, death:
> Perished these false shadows on the screen of duality,
> The storm of maya stilled
> By magic wand of intuition deep.
> Present, past, future, no more for me,
> But ever-present, all-flowing I, I, everywhere.
> Planets, stars, stardust, earth,
> Volcanic bursts of doomsday cataclysms,
> Creation's molding furnace,
> Glaciers of silent X-rays, burning electron floods,
> Thoughts of all men, past, present, to come,
> Every blade of grass, myself, mankind,
> Each particle of universal dust,
> Anger, greed, good, bad, salvation, lust,
> I swallowed, transmuted all
> Into a vast ocean of blood of my own one Being.
> Smoldering joy, oft-puffed by meditation
> Blinding my tearful eyes,
> Burst into immortal flames of bliss,
> Consumed my tears, my frame, my all.
> Thou art I, I am Thou,
> Knowing, Knower, Known, as One!
> Tranquilled, unbroken thrill, eternally living, ever-new
>   peace.
> Enjoyable beyond imagination of expectancy, *samadhi*
>   bliss!

Not an unconscious state
Or mental chloroform without willful return,
Samadhi but extends my conscious realm
Beyond limits of the mortal frame
To farthest boundary of eternity
Where I, the Cosmic Sea,
Watch the little ego floating in Me.
Mobile murmurs of atoms are heard,
The dark earth, mountains, vales, lo! molten liquid!
Flowing seas change into vapors of nebulae!
Aum blows upon vapors, opening wondrously their veils,
Oceans stand revealed, shining electrons,
Till, at the last sound of the cosmic drum,
Vanish the grosser lights into eternal rays
Of all-pervading bliss.
From joy I came, for joy I live, in sacred joy I melt.
Ocean of mind, I drink all creation's waves.
Four veils of solid, liquid, vapor, light,
Lift aright.
I, in everything, enter the Great Myself.
Gone forever: fitful, flickering shadows of mortal
        memory;
Spotless is my mental sky—below, ahead, and high above;
Eternity and I, one united ray.
A tiny bubble of laughter, I
Am become the Sea of Mirth Itself.

                    --Paramahansa Yogananda, 1999, p. 170-171

Other Psychology Connections

Flow Theory

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi set out to determine how people felt when they were at their highest positive emotional states. Beginning with people who clearly had creative, highly specialized fields of work and then spreading to a vast population of people from various cultures, ages and careers, he gathered data by means of interviews, questionnaires and a randomized method which utilized the technology of pagers to

literally page the participants at eight randomized times throughout the day. Each time a participant was paged, he was to right down what he was doing at that time and how he felt. This was the methodology employed to develop "Flow" theory. Flow Theory has some similarities to Maslow's Self-Actualization Theory, and many facets of meditation are evident in the principles of Flow.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), "'Flow is the way people describe their state of mind when consciousness is harmoniously ordered, and they want to pursue whatever they are doing for its own sake" (p. 6). Aristotle surmised that happiness was the root of all that mankind desired, and according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), happiness is not a random, luck-based occurrence. Rather, happiness is created based on people's ability to control their inner drive, their inner focus, their inner perception of a given situation or task. "Contrary to what we usually believe, moments like these [optimal experiences], the best moments in our lives, are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times…The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we *make* happen" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 3).

Most Eastern spiritualists agree that the individual person is responsible for his own happiness. If somebody focuses on being unhappy, nobody will be able to make him happy; however, if he chooses to be happy, then nobody can make him unhappy (Yogananda, 1990). Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1963), the founder of the Transcendental Meditation movement, declares that increasing one's happiness is the purpose of life. He even extends beyond the limited self, encompassing the entire universe by saying:

The purpose of individual life is also the purpose of the life of the entire cosmos. The purpose of creation is expansion of happiness, which is fulfilled through the process of cosmic evolution…If one is not happy, one has lost the very purpose of life. If one is not constantly developing his intelligence, power, creativity, peace, and happiness, then he has lost the very purpose of life. (Maharishi, 1963, p. 64)

It seems obvious. Everyone should be happy. Why then are so many people so unhappy? Not considering people who may have terrible tragedies they are dealing with, but just looking at the average person, or even the seemingly successful, wealthy person, there is a prolific amount of unhappy—even miserable—people. Through our negative thoughts and habituated tendencies of perceiving our surroundings, we actually manifest our own unhappiness (Dalai Lama, 2001). Cutler, a psychiatrist and diplomat for the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, discusses his experience as a therapist:

When it comes down to it, many of us resist giving up our misery—a vexing and baffling feature of human behavior I often observed in the past when treating psychotherapy patients. As miserable as some people might be, for many there is a kind of perverse pleasure in the self-righteous indignation one feels when one is treated unfairly. We hold on to our pain, wear it like a badge, it becomes part of us and we are reluctant to give it up. (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 2003, p. 30)

Work exists as one of the key areas in life most affected by, and in turn affecting, one's happiness. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) describes the paradox of work: it takes up a third or more of one's time; it usually is the source of the most rewarding, proud moments, and yet most people complain about it and look forward to not having to do it. There is great irony here, and the development of these attitudes towards work and the

actuality of feeling fulfilled are ingrained in people from childhood. In his studies of

teenagers and their "flow" experiences, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) discovered that their

self-esteem was lowest during idle time and highest during working or studying. Overall,

people of all ages, had higher self-esteem and were more likely to experience "flow"

when they were actively engaged (mentally or physically). People in the "flow"

experience are considered to be "autotelic…from two Greek words, auto meaning self,

and telos meaning goal" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 67). He describes the causes and

feelings of "Flow":

> The moments when a person is in a high-challenge, high-skill situation,
>
> accompanied by feelings of concentration, creativity, and satisfaction, were
>
> reported more often at work than at home…When spending time at home with the
>
> family or alone, people often lack a clear purpose, do not know how well they are
>
> doing, are distracted, feel that their skills are underutilized, and as a result feel
>
> bored or—more rarely—anxious. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 59)

The development of these optimal experiences can even start to be fostered in

childhood. Children's ability to become autotelic beings who are open to "flow"

experiences will be increased if their upbringing includes five key elements: clarity of

rules and expectations, centering (that their parents are truly interested in their child's

present pursuits), choice of options/possibilities, commitment (child feels safe and able to

pursue his interests without fear or anxiety) and challenge (children need to experience

challenging activities) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Not only can these strategies be useful

for parents to foster optimal experiences for their children, but teachers can also apply

these strategies to engage their students in "flow" situations. Csikszentmihalyi (1996)

asserts that teachers can profoundly influence the creativity and development of optimal experiences in students.

Reminiscent of part of the goal of self-actualization, "Autotelic persons are not necessarily happier, but they are involved in more complex activities, and they feel better about themselves as a result. It is not enough to be happy to have an excellent life. The point is to be happy while doing things that stretch our skills, that help us grow and fulfill our potential" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 122).

Human Potential Movement

Carl Rogers, one of the founders of Humanistic Psychology, developed his own views on human potential and created the concept of client-centered therapy. Like Maslow, Rogers believes that humans have an unlimited potential that needs to be discovered in order for fulfillment to be achieved. Rogers (1989) asserts that it is "…man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities…the directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life—the urge to expand, develop, mature—the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism or the self" (p. 351). By reaching his full potential, man is able to make use of all external entities and internal functions and respond to externals more objectively (Rogers, 1989). Like the self-actualized person, the fully functioning person lives completely in the moment.

As a person becomes more fully functioning, he moves into a healthier psychological state. Within this healthier state, the person is better able to respond to different experiences, and as he "…moves toward being able to accept his own

experience, he also moves toward the acceptance of the experience of others. He values and appreciates both his own experience and that of others for what it *is*" (Rogers, 1989, p. 174). This is the rationale for why teachers who are more fully functioning and accepting of their own conditions will be better able to accept and cultivate acceptance in their students.

Rogers (1989) expresses the importance of reaching a point psychologically where one is able to encounter another person with the perspective that the person is still in the process of "becoming." For instance, when considering working with a student, he explains, "If, in my encounter with him, I am dealing with him as an immature child, an ignorant student, a neurotic personality, or a psychopath, each of these concepts of mine limits what he can be in the relationship" (Rogers, 1989, p. 55). If a particular student is perceived in a negative manner as being a set, fixed entity, and the teacher loses sight of the growth potential contained within the student, the interactions between that teacher and that student are not going to be positive or beneficial. Whereas, "If I accept him as a process of becoming, then I am doing what I can to confirm or make real his potentialities" (Rogers, 1989, p. 55).

Later in his career, Rogers became open to higher levels of consciousness. Similar to the esoteric states described by Bucke's (1901) Cosmic Consciousness, Maslow's (1964, 1968, 1987) Peak Experiences and Yogananda's Self-Realization (1990), Rogers (1980) acknowledges that there are levels of consciousness that transcend the current level experienced by mankind. He admits to being more skeptical of these type of concepts such as psychic abilities in his earlier years; however, at the end of his career, he admits, "Human beings have potentially available a tremendous range of

intuitive powers. We are indeed wiser than our intellects" (Rogers, 1980, p. 83). Rogers (1980) even finds the use of practices such as meditation to be useful for attaining these higher levels of consciousness. Elucidating, he states, "It is very clear that when a person is receiving an absolute minimum of external stimuli, he or she is opened to a flood of experiencing at a level far beyond that of everyday living" (Rogers, 1980, p. 123). The practice of meditation enables the mind to relax at such a deep level that the practitioner is open to these higher forms of awareness. To Rogers (1980):

> There is a convergence of theoretical physics and mysticism, especially Eastern mysticism—a recognition that the whole universe, including ourselves, is 'a cosmic dance.' In this view, matter, time, and space disappear as meaningful concepts; there exist only oscillations. This change in our conceptual world view is revolutionary. (p. 345)

Health Benefits

Effects of Meditation on the Body

As it becomes more mainstreamed, more people begin to gravitate to meditation as a way to improve their health. By now, most medical professionals understand the impact that stress has on the physical body. Stress is linked with numerous health problems, and as an obvious conclusion, if stress can be reduced, then the body will be healthier and better able to restore itself. Heart disease is a major cause of death in the Western world, and stress has a negative effect on overall cardiovascular health. Therefore, researchers have demonstrated that exercises such as meditation that help to alleviate stress will have a positive effect on cardiovascular related health issues.

Tacon et al. (2003) studied women between the ages of 48-74 years of age who had a history of heart disease in order to determine if the practice of mindfulness meditation as created by Kabat-Zinn would 1) reduce levels of anxiety 2) decrease negative emotions 3) develop positive coping strategies for responding to stress, and 4) perceive the health locus of control as more internal rather than external. Through an eight-week training program involving mindfulness meditation, hatha yoga and objectively focusing on the body, the participants completed a series of inventory scales before and after the training program. In all areas except for health locus of control, the participants in the experiment group showed significant improvement over the control group in the areas of decreasing anxiety and negative responding and being better able to cope with stress (Tacon et al., 2003). By examining Qigong meditation and its effects on personality, Leung & Singhal (2004) also found that the practice of this form of meditation which combines physical and mental exercises involving components such as visualization, sitting meditation, and deep breathing helps to reduce neuroticism.

Other studies, including Walton et al. (2002), find that Transcendental Meditation reduces the risks of cardiovascular disease along with providing the ability to reverse the progression of cardiovascular illness. Murata et al. (2004) analyzed heart rate variability while participants practiced Zen meditation. These results were paired with the results from a trait anxiety test (Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory) given to participants prior to meditation. Using electrocardiography (EEG) and breath rate measured by electrodes, the researchers tested twenty-two males in their twenties who had never before meditated. Their findings suggest that "the lower trait anxiety more readily induces meditation with a predominance of internalized attention, while higher

trait anxiety more readily induces meditation with a predominance of relaxation" (Murata et al., 2004, p. 189). This study indicates that regardless of the level of stress and anxiety a person inherently has, meditation will have some level of effect on the practitioner ranging from simple relaxation to enhanced focusing abilities.

Investigating heart rate along with breathing patterns further allows researchers to assess the effects of meditation on the overall cardiorespiratory system. Cysarz & Büssing (2005) studied four different breathing exercises ranging from normal breathing, two types of Zen meditation, and breathing during a mental activity in order to determine if breathing during meditation synchronized with the heartbeat. The results indicated that during both types of Zen meditation, cardiorespiratory sychronization occurred. Also, during both meditations, the respiratory rate was significantly decreased (Zazen meditation=8.4 breaths/minute and Kinhin meditation=6.1 breaths/minute) (Cysarz & Bussing, 2005, p.91). Similarly, Peng et al. (2004) performed a study investigating three different forms of meditation (relaxation, breath of fire and segmented breathing) in order to determine heart rate dynamics during each type of meditation compared to a baseline rate. With a sample of eleven experienced meditators, the researchers found that each form of meditation had a different effect on heart rate and on the synchronization of heart rate and respiratory rate. Overall, the relaxation method and segmented breathing produced similar results in relation to heart rate dynamics and respiratory synchronization, while the breath of fire technique produced an increase in heart rate and a decrease in heart rate/respiratory synchronization (Peng et al., 2004). Based on these studies, research indicates that meditation has positive effects on heart rate,

cardiorespiratory synchronization, levels of state and trait anxiety, and cardiovascular

disease.

Effects of Meditation on the Brain

Studies seeking to evaluate the effects of meditation on the brain as it relates to

mental and physical health have also provided evidence that various forms of meditation

can enhance brain chemistry and functions. Melatonin and serotonin levels are believed

to be linked with certain psychological states. Low levels of melatonin and serotonin are

possibly associated with sleep difficulties, depression, and other mood disorders. Solberg

et al. (2004) compared long-time meditators and a control group of non-meditators in

order to assess differences in melatonin and serotonin in both groups. The meditators

practiced a form of silent mantra meditation called ACEM Meditation, which is popular

in Scandinavia. All participants were males who had practiced silent mantra meditation

for at least five years. Based on blood samples drawn at before and after intervals from

the meditation group and from the control group who were instructed to sit and relax

silently, Solberg et al. (2004) concluded that their findings are in alignment with the

belief that meditation affects neurotransmitters.

Utilizing a type of mindfulness meditation, Davidson et al. (2003) studied a sample of

forty-eight non-meditators who were randomly divided into a control group and a group

who was trained in Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness meditation technique over an eight-week

period. Through blood work, EEGs and the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory,

the researchers conducted various measurements before, during and after the training on

both groups. They endeavored to ascertain if meditation decreased anxiety, increased

positive tendencies (seen in level of activity in left-side regions of the brain) and ultimately increased immune function. In order to determine immune system enhancement, both groups were given an influenza vaccine after the eight-week program so that antibody titers could be compared. Based on their findings, Davidson et al. (2003) concluded that meditation has the ability to alter brain and immune system functions, and that "…meditation can produce increases in relative left-sided anterior activation that are associated with reductions in anxiety and negative affect and increases in positive affect" (p. 569).

Providing evidence that the longer one practices meditation, the more profound the results will be, Aftanas & Golocheikine (2001) studied two groups of meditators—one consisting of short-term meditators (less than a half year of practice) and a group of long-term meditators (having practiced three to seven years). Using EEG frequency bands to determine the brain regions involved in the meditative process and levels of internalized attention and positive "blissful" feelings, which were followed up with questions regarding how the meditators felt during the meditation phase, the researchers found that long-term meditators showed greater feelings of bliss and lower thought appearance rates, whereas the short-term meditators presented higher levels of "uneasiness and restlessness" (Aftanas & Golocheikine, 2001, p. 58).

Lazar et al. (2005) conducted a study of twenty participants who were long-term practitioners of Insight (mindfulness) meditation and were compared to a control group of fifteen participants who had no experience with meditation. Participants in the meditation group were not monks, but rather held regular jobs and simply worked meditation into their daily lives. These participants had meditated an average of seven to

nine years and practiced meditation an average of four to six hours per week.

Researchers measured cortical thickness with two magnetization prepared rapid gradient

echo (MPRAGE) images for each participant. Results indicated that although mean

cortical thickness did not differ significantly between the two groups—an indication that

meditators' cortexes were not "nonspecifically thicker everywhere," there was a

significant difference in "the pattern of relative thickness across each

hemisphere…between groups" (Lazar, 2005, p. 1894). Specifically, "a large region of the

right anterior insula and right middle superior frontal sulci…were significantly thicker in

meditators than in controls. The left superior temporal gyrus (auditory cortex…) and a

small region in the fundus of the central sulcus…showed trends towards a significantly

thicker cortex in meditation participants than in controls" (Lazar et al. 2005, p. 1894).

Also, by analyzing the right frontal subregion, the meditation participants did not

show the usual age-related decreases in cortical thickness (Lazar et al. 2005).

Researchers concluded "meditation may be associated with structural changes in areas of

the brain that are important for sensory, cognitive and emotional processing. The data

further suggest that meditation may impact age-related declines in cortical structure"

(Lazar et al. 2005, p. 1896).

Kjaer et al (2002) completed a study consisting of eight experienced male

meditation teachers from the Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School. Each of the

meditators had C-raclopride PET scans twice on different days. One scan took place

while performing Yoga Nidra relaxation meditation and one scan occurred during rest;

these two tests occurred in random order. During the altered consciousness state of

meditation, the researchers have discovered an increase of dopaminergic tone in the ventral striatum part of the brain (Kjaer, 2002).

The results of this study indicate that during meditation there is a rise of extracellular dopamine release of approximately 65% in the ventral striatum (Kjaer, 2002). "The fact that the ventral striatum was the only region in which the decrease in dopamine receptor availability reached statistical significance is of interest. Two of the three frontal-subcortical circuits regulating behavior include structures in the ventral striatum" (Kjaer, 2002, p. 257). Furthermore, "The results of the present study have shown increased dopamine release in the ventral striatum during relaxation meditation, as evidenced by reduced 11C-raclopride binding. This increase in dopaminergic tone, therefore, seems to be associated with the observed reduction in readiness for action during meditation" (Kjaer, 2002, p. 259). All participants showed a "significant decrease in readiness for action (P<0.05) along with a significantly heightened sensory imagery (P<0.05) during active meditation…" (Kjaer, 2002, p. 256-257).

Wenk-Sormaz (2005) begins by scrutinizing TM research and uses this scrutiny as a rationale for conducting a secular study of meditation's effect on cognitive functions. Two studies were conducted in order to test the hypothesis that meditation leads to reduced levels of habitual responding or deautomatization.

In the first study, three groups of undergraduate students from Yale University were randomly separated into three groups: meditation group, learning group and rest group. Each group participated in three sessions. During the first two sessions, the participants received instruction and practiced their given technique. The meditation group was taught a form of Zen meditation, while the learning group was instructed on a

task requiring them to have concentrated attention as they generated specific thoughts, while the rest group was instructed to simply sit, rest and allow their minds to wander for twenty minutes (Wenk-Sormaz, 2005). During the third session, participants completed the experiment task (either the Stroop task or the Word Production task) before and after completing either a session in meditation, learning, or rest. Arousal measurements also took place by means of monitoring skin conductance. Participants in the meditation group demonstrated reduced levels of arousal in both tasks compared with the other two groups (Wenk-Sormaz, 2005).

Results of this first study were mixed and indicated that on the Stroop task, the meditators showed less habitual responding; however, on the Word Production task, there were no significant differences between the groups. An explanation for this might revolve around the idea that sometimes habitual responding is the better choice and that participants were giving the optimal response for that situation.

In order to determine why the meditators did not respond habitually on one task, but did respond habitually on another task, a second study was conducted. The objective of this second study was to determine if meditation led to non-habitual responding only when participants understood that an atypical response was optimal. The participants in this second study were either told to specifically provide typical responses or to provide atypical responses to these tasks. Otherwise, basically the same conditions as the first study took place. The results of Wenk-Sormaz's (2005) second study indicated that when participants were specifically instructed to respond atypically, the meditation group was most successful at responding atypically.

Wenk-Sormaz surmises that "meditation does not lead to a simple increase in atypical or non-habitual behavior but does influence one's ability to produce atypical responses under conditions where those responses are desirable" (2005, p. 53). "Most importantly, this investigation shows that traditional accounts of the cognitive consequences of meditation can be demonstrated in experimental studies with randomly assigned participants, a secular form of meditation, and a short period of meditation" (Wenk-Sormaz, 2005, p. 53).

Connecting Self-Actualization with Meditation and Education

People from around the world find reason to complain about the educational system of their country; they almost always are able to find some fault with it. This is due to the inability to create a system that is fully functioning for the purpose of enabling students to reach their full potential (Maharishi, 1963). How can a system that serves the primary function of educating students to become better citizens be improved so that students receive a more complete education? Educational researchers, spiritual leaders and psychologists suggest a need for a more holistic approach—an approach that takes the entire person into consideration, not just the cognitive structures.

Maslow (1964) complains that American education is unclear about its goals at best, and at worst, it has abandoned higher goals altogether and merely focuses on a "…purely technical training for the acquisition of skills which come close to being value-free or amoral (in this sense of being useful either for good or evil, and also in the sense of failing to enlarge the personality)" (p. 48). Ginnot (1972, p. 317) further warns about an education that is value-free citing a letter one principal addressed to teachers:

Dear Teacher:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:

Gas chambers built by *learned* engineers.

Children poisoned by *educated* physicians.

Infants killed by *trained* nurses.

Women and babies shot and burned by *high school* and *college* graduates.

So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane.

This letter brings to light the need for an education that seeks to create fully-functioning human beings; people who not only acquire knowledge, but who also embody wisdom. Not everyone agrees with an educational system that focuses on the whole child. Some fear that this kind of education might lead to an intermingling of church and state. Others believe that schools should simply focus on the core subjects and leave the non-cognitive aspects to the parents. Acknowledging that some people might feel that helping students to be fully-functioning beings is not the job of the education system, this section will continue to provide evidence to the contrary.

Maharishi (1963), the founder of the Transcendental Meditation Movement, which now has elementary through university level schools where meditation is practiced by all students and faculty daily, explains, "Education should necessarily enable man to

make use of his full potential in the field of his body, mind, and spirit. But it should also develop in him the ability to make the best use of his personality, surroundings, and circumstances so that he may accomplish the maximum in life for himself and for all others" (p. 208). Maslow (1964) agrees with this mindset and expresses the notion of a democratic education in which the purpose is "…helping every single person (not only an elite) toward his fullest humanness, then, in principle, education is properly a universal, ubiquitous, and life-long proposition. It implies education for all the human capacities, not only the cognitive ones" (p. 50). More fundamentally, Maharishi (1963) believes:

> Present systems of education in the various countries of the world only give the students informatory knowledge. There is nothing precise in the field of education today which will really develop the inner values of mind, body and spirit. Therefore, whatever education is received by the people is just on the surface level of information. (p. 210)

Maharishi and Maslow are not alone in their advocacy for developing an education system geared to tapping into higher levels of being. Current research in the field of education further illustrates the impact that practices such as meditation and teaching to the whole person have on both the teacher and the student.

A logical starting point for creating an open, compassionate environment where all students can be encouraged to reach full potential, is the teacher himself. As stated previously, teachers encounter a tremendous amount of stress. Acknowledging that there are two primary ways to decrease stress in the work place—improve/change the work environment or improve the individual employee's coping mechanisms, Shimazu et al. (2003) conducted a study of twenty-four Japanese public education teachers ranging from

elementary to high school. After dividing the teachers into an intervention group and a control group, the researchers administered base-line surveys to both groups and then led the intervention group through a series of workshops pertaining to learning how to deal with difficult students and how to avoid unnecessary stress. The workshops were broken into five sessions and included training in Progressive Muscle Relaxation (tensing and then releasing muscle groups), lectures on reasons for students' misbehavior and psychology of the school environment, small-group discussions, and role playing. The questionnaire, utilizing scales to measure stress response, social support, control and coping skills, was re-administered to both groups after the intervention program. The results were somewhat disappointing in that essentially there were no effects on stress level or coping ability in the intervention group; however, there was a significant effect on social support seen in the intervention group (Shimazu et al. 2003). The researchers provide several reasons for this finding including participants joining the study under advisement from their superiors, scheduling conflicts, small sample size, and time limitations. This indicates that a stress reduction program cannot be forced upon teachers and that time is an essential part of the equation for a successful program.

Anderson et al. (1999) studied the effects of meditation on teacher-perceived stress, anxiety and burnout by administering pretests, posttests and follow-up tests of stress and anxiety scales to an experiment and wait-list control group of suburban teachers. The researchers applied the following scales to determine stress, anxiety and burnout: The Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI; Fimian, 1988), The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults (STAIA, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; 2nd Edition—Educators Survey Version; Maslach & Jackson, 1993)

(Anderson et al., 1999). The experiment group consisting of forty-five teachers (thirty-nine females and six males) were taught a form of mantra meditation called Standardized Meditation. This form of meditation combines uttering a mantra while performing muscle relaxation in a supine position. Teachers from the American Meditation Society taught the experimental group in a five-week program. Participants were instructed to practice this form of meditation twice daily for twenty minutes each time.

The results of this study indicate that Standardized Meditation significantly reduced teachers' perception of stress, lowered their state and trait anxiety and lessened feelings of burnout (Anderson et al. 1999). In posttest results of state anxiety, the experimental group scored a mean score of 30.3 while the control group scored a mean score of 43.5; later follow-up test scores showed the experimental group holding at 30. 8 while the control group score increased to 44.5 (Anderson et al., 1999). Posttests for trait anxiety yielded similar results: the experimental group scored a mean of 37.6 while the control group scored a mean of 43.9; follow-up tests showed the experimental group at 37.1 and the control group at 44.4 (Anderson et al., 1999). The posttests and follow-up tests for the teacher stress inventory demonstrated a smaller margin of improvement with the experimental group scoring a mean of 2.5 on the posttest and a 2.3 on the follow-up test, the control group scoring a mean of 2.7 and a mean of 2.8 respectively (Anderson et al., 1999). The depersonalization scale did not reveal a significant difference between the two groups until the follow-up test, and Professional Accomplishment was not totally influenced by meditation. Anderson et al. (1999) suggest that although teachers feel stressed, they still believe that they are positively interacting with students and satisfactorily performing their job.

Ultimately, Anderson et al. (1999) found that meditation does positively impact teacher stress, anxiety and burnout; however, the researchers also point out that the sample of teachers who participated in the experiment group overall did not follow the instructions to meditate twice a day for twenty minutes each time. In fact, only 60% meditated six times per week. When trying to gain an accurate sense of the true impact of meditation, the prescribed program should be adhered to as closely as possible.

Not only can teachers learn to develop ways to be calm and reflective through practices such as contemplation and meditation, students can also benefit from quieting their minds for short periods of time. Hart (2004) suggests activities such as breathing exercises, deep listening, pondering and visualization are useful exercises for helping students to focus and develop wisdom. "The contemplative mind is opened and activated through a wide range of approaches—from pondering to poetry to meditation—that are designed to quiet and shift the habitual chatter of the mind to cultivate a capacity for deepened awareness, concentration, and insight" (Hart, 2004, p. 29).

For those opposed to contemplative practices used in public schools, Hart (2004) posits:

Inviting the contemplative simply includes the natural human capacity for knowing through silence, looking inward, pondering deeply, beholding, witnessing the contents of our consciousness, and so forth. These approaches cultivate an inner technology of knowing and thereby a technology of learning and pedagogy without any imposition of religious doctrine whatsoever. (p. 30)

By examining Eastern philosophy presented by Dogen, a 13th Century Zen master, and Nagarjuna, a second-century Buddhist philosopher, Orr (2002) holds that today's

Western education can be enhanced by the mindfulness techniques these Eastern

philosophers advocate. According to Orr, these non-cognitive experiences of

mindfulness meditation can lead to dismantling the dichotomous perspective held in

society—in this case focusing on the education arena. These concepts of duality help to

create and foster oppressive pedagogies such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and class

discrimination (Orr, 2002). The rationale behind Orr's argument emanates from the

duality of mind/body in Western education; this bleeds into the larger societal structure

where "In each social category the privileged group has been identified with mind and the

intellectual activities of cultural production and administration, while the subordinated

group has been affiliated with the body, emotion, and physical and reproductive labor"

(Orr, 2002, p. 479). Orr concludes that by creating an education environment that is

more holistic and open to non-cognitive ways of learning and growing (i.e. yoga and

mindfulness meditation), that the oppressive pedagogies instilled in the "hidden

curriculum" of the Western education system will be decreased. Students will be better

equipped to make decisions pertaining to oppression and discrimination. "Thus, through

the use of mindfulness techniques, a male student grappling with masculine ideology may

become aware of the subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle, manifestations of sexist ideas

in his life and relationships and so be able to change them" (Orr, 2002, p. 493).

Mindfulness yoga and meditation increases one's overall awareness through a simple,

low-cost program, which can be practice anywhere by anyone.

　　　Gates (2005) further addresses the various reform movements seen in education today

including the need to develop a sense of strong school community. He suggests that all

of this focus on the problems of schools (student misbehavior, teacher burnout, lack of

parental involvement) and poor school community is actually just further manifesting the problems. Rather, through developing "bare attention" through practices such as meditation, the teacher is able to develop greater trust and compassion, which will ultimately lead to a transcendence of the ego and fear (Gates, 2005). "Meditation is the vehicle of change and its transformation hinges on the cultivation of mindfulness. Meditation is a transformative practice without the purpose of being transforming" (Gates, 2005, p. 165). This may seem paradoxical, yet in keeping with the Buddhist principles of non-aggression and acceptance, this makes perfect sense. Instead of imposing rigid reform acts that focus on the problems of education and fail to acquire complete buy-in from educators and students, "Buddhist teachings will be concerned with paying attention, being compassionate, experiencing freedom, and living together with others rather than some hoped for but never achieved vision of success" (Gates, 2005, p. 170).

Perhaps the best place to begin to introduce pedagogical practices that employ mindfulness techniques such as meditation is at the collegiate level. Holland (2004) created a course at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock entitled "Contemplative Practice, Health Promotion, and Disability: An Experiential Seminar," which incorporated mindfulness meditation and somatic education. Mindfulness, or Vipassana, meditation entails becoming aware of being in the present moment and accepting the thoughts and feelings that come to the mind and body with nonjudgment. Typically, focus is on the breath. Somatic education embodies some of the same purposes of Vipassana, or Mindfulness meditation, except somatics "…is facilitated through exercises, movements, and focused attention led by a teacher" (Holland, 2004, p. 471).

Somatics enhances posture, muscle relaxation and overall body movement, sometimes for the purpose of dissipating pain (Holland, 2004).

Holland's course capped at twenty-five students, and twenty-five students registered and completed the semester-long course that met twice a week. Because of the growing number of college students with disabilities or chronic illness, Holland wanted specifically to invite these students to join the course in order to gain the benefits that this kind of program can offer them. By meeting with the Disability Support Services on campus, he was able to encourage students with disabilities to enroll. In order to provide a wide array of experiences for students, Holland taught a variety of relaxation and meditation techniques ranging from sitting meditations, to walking meditations, to guided body scans, to somatics. Poetry, documentaries, and discussions helped to create a more unifying focus to the course. Tests and papers were not part of the course; rather, evaluation centered around attendance, participation and journaling. The journaling could be written, illustrated or tape recorded. This freedom of expression was particularly beneficial for the students with disabilities in the course (Holland, 2004).

Based on the journals and student feedback, the students with disabilities were better able to cope with the daily stresses of their disabilities or chronic illness, and in some cases, the students experienced an improvement in their health conditions (Holland, 2004). The course was so successful that it is now a regular course offered every year on campus.

In a groundbreaking book, *The Contemplative Practitioner: Meditation in Education and the Professions*, John P. Miller (1994) provides a history of meditation; explains different forms and techniques of meditation; and profiles a few well-known

contemplatives such as Buddha, Thomas Merton, and Gandhi. Miller then delineates how he has taught meditation to college students in various courses at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada. He explains the outcomes of these classes accompanied by student personal reflections regarding how meditation has affected them personally and professionally. Student responses included having greater acceptance of themselves and others, developing a more intense listening ability, having a clearer understanding of the needs of their body, and being able to carry out their daily tasks in a relaxed, focused manner.

Miller (1994) further stresses the importance of contemplation because it "allows the individual to gradually overcome his or her sense of separateness. Our society reinforces the personal ego, which spends most of the day planning, striving, competing" (p. 121). It is absolutely essential for an educator to move past his ego. Teachers must not take everything that happens in the classroom personally. If a teacher is controlled by his ego, then situations, relationships, conflicts become askew. "If teaching is ego based, it can become a frustrating series of mini-battles with students. The classroom becomes focused around the issue of control. If we teach from our Self, teaching becomes a fulfilling and enriching experience" (Miller, 1994, p. 121). Approaching all students and all situations from an interconnected, fully integrated perspective fosters greater compassion and understanding. Conflicts are reduced. There is no need to escalate a problem. If the teacher chooses not to escalate the problem, then the student most likely will not escalate it either.

Beyond helping the practitioner to transcend the ego, meditation acts as a conduit for self-discovery, which leads to one being in tune with his innate intuitive abilities. Miller

(1994) suggests that contemplative practices help to develop trust in one's intuition. The belief that meditation can enhance one's intuitive powers relates to the self-actualized person. The self-actualized person can usually detect a dishonest person or perceive a situation in its true reality. This is especially true of self-actualizers during peak experiences. More recently, McNaughton (2003) studied business executives and other leaders who meditate in order to determine if meditation led to an increase in their intuitive faculties. McNaughton utilizes Yogananda's (1982) definition of intuition as:

One of the three sources of knowledge (intuition, thought/intellect, senses) that can be accessed only from higher states of consciousness during those instants when one's mind is calm. Soul guidance. Through intuition one can know the world beyond senses and thoughts. When the human mind is calm and free from disturbances, one can receive intuition freely. To differentiate between intuition and thought, intuition comes from within, thought from without. (2003, p. 8)

Based on a survey of one hundred executives who meditate, McNaughton (2003) discovered from his sample, that when faced with a major decision, 82% of the executives said that they meditate in order to access their intuition; 94% of the executives said that they use meditation as the technique to help develop their intuitive abilities; forty participants said that they use their intuition 76-99% of the time; and ten participants indicated that they use intuitive decision making 100% of the time. McNaughton's research provides evidence of how meditation is becoming more and more mainstreamed into various levels of society. His investigation of people in leadership positions from the business and nonprofit sectors helps to undermine the

argument that meditation is an endeavor relegated to purely religious or "new age" factions.

Meditation is just beginning to make strides in areas such as education. Consequently, eight years after the publication of *The Contemplative Practitioner*, Miller and fellow researcher, Nozawa, (2002) conducted interviews with twenty-one teachers from elementary to post-secondary settings who have been meditating an average of four years. This was a follow-up study from when the participants (who at the time were preservice teachers) were introduced to meditation by Miller in one of several courses offered at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada. The courses entitled, "The Holistic Curriculum," "The Teacher as Contemplative Practitioner," and "Spirituality in Education" were part of the university's Holistic and Aesthetic Education program, coordinated by Miller. In these courses, Miller exposes students to six different types of meditation: breathing meditation, loving kindness, mantra, movement, visualization, and contemplation on poetry or sacred texts.

During the course, students are expected to meditate in some form each day for six weeks and to keep a journal documenting their experiences and feelings regarding meditation. After reviewing the journals, Miller (2002) discovered common themes including: "students giving themselves permission to be alone and enjoy their own company; increased listening capacities; feeling increased energy; being less reactive to situations, and generally experiencing greater calm and clarity" (p. 182). In the follow-up study of twenty-one practicing teachers and school administrators who maintained their practice of meditation since completing the course with Miller, similar findings presented

themselves. Based on the following questions, the junior researcher (Nozawa) conducted interviews ranging between thirty to ninety minutes (Miller & Nozawa, 2002, p. 184):

- o What is the nature of your meditation practice? (e.g. type and frequency)

- o Have you engaged in any meditation instruction since the class?

- o What have been the effects of your practice on your personal and professional life?

- o Have you experienced any difficulties or problems with the practice?

The interview data was triangulated with the participants' journals from the earlier courses, with the summary reflections from the courses and with the interviewer's perceptions of the interviews. The results indicated an overall positive effect of meditation in the lives of the participants. Positive results included: Thirteen (62%) participants said that meditation made them calmer and more relaxed; five participants said that it made them more gentle; five indicated that it helped them with their personal relationships; most said that it made them calmer at work and that they are not as reactive; and four discussed using meditation in their own teaching of students (Miller & Nozawa, 2002).

Miller & Nozawa (2002) conclude that based on their findings, the implementation of meditation in an education program can have profound and lasting benefits for both personal and professional levels, and meditation provides a way for balancing a more holistic approach with an education system that tends to be largely intellectually focused.

Focus of This Research

This research study is valuable in that it helps provide a more open-ended, qualitative component to the research that has heavily relied upon measurement scales to evaluate the effectiveness of meditation on self-actualization and teacher-perceived stress. Janowiak (1993) delineates several scales including Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory that have been employed to determine one's movement toward self-actualization. Though these scales have been useful in evaluating movement toward self-actualization, Janowiak (1993) suggests that more phenomenological studies of meditators' experiences and perceptions are needed to gain further insights that might not be provided by measurement scales. Janowiak (1993) also suggests that studies not relegated to short-term, brief intervention designs need to be conducted because:

> In a Western culture that places great emphasis on activity, performance, tangible and material success, there may be a social stigma associated with just sitting around rather than doing something constructive and economically viable, and these elements together may form limitations within meditation research and outcome studies. (p. 14)

By analyzing teachers who have meditated at least three years while teaching, this study fulfills the need to look beyond short-term research and to gain a more complete understanding of the longitudinal impact of meditation on teachers. Due to the participants having already been meditators for at least several years prior to this study, the risks of participants not taking meditation seriously, feeling awkward/uncomfortable, or not being able to adjust their schedules to fit in the learning and practice of daily meditation will be drastically reduced, if not eliminated. These are some of the common

problems discovered when attempting meditation research with first-time meditators (Anderson et al., 1999; Shimazu et al., 2003).

Several studies have analyzed pre-service teachers learning to meditate for the first time; however, in this novice state, the participants are in a transitional period between being a student and beginning to enter into the teaching realm. While at this point in their lives, they might not already have an established sense of self as a professional, and therefore, might not emotionally or intellectually be best suited to provide the most accurate account of how meditation impacts their classroom practices. By no means should these studies of preservice teachers be negated; they are certainly useful for allowing education instructors to discover ways to help those entering the field of education to be more mindful and fully realized. However, this study provides the next phase of the research where experienced teachers can offer insight in a qualitative way as to whether or not the practice of meditation has enabled them to become better at handling classroom stress and conflict. Also, according to Maslow (1987), it would be rare to find college-age individuals who are self-actualized.

Additionally, there have been studies linking meditation to self-actualization, and there have been studies linking meditation to teacher perceived stress; however, to the researcher's knowledge, there has not yet been a qualitative study conducted in which all three of these areas have been linked. This study intends to discover if teachers who meditate develop qualities associated with self-actualization, and if they react to stress and conflict in a positive manner.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study endeavors to determine how teachers who meditate perceive their reaction to stress and conflict and to ascertain if teachers who meditate perceive themselves as having characteristics of self-actualization. In order to best address these questions, the methodology of portraiture will be utilized. Portraiture posits that the researcher's personal perspective is crucial to the development of the study. Accordingly, "The identity, character, and history of the researcher are obviously critical to the manner of listening, selecting, interpreting, and composing the story. Portraiture admits the central and creative role of the *self* of the portraitist" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 13). Therefore, prior to describing the participants, methods of data collection and the data analysis, a brief explanation of the researcher's personal background and perspective will be provided.

Personal Background and Perspective

As a high school English teacher who has taught various grade and ability levels and serves as department chair, I know first hand the daily stresses and conflicts the average high school teacher must face. Every day, I come home from school and meditate in order to clear my mind and feel relaxed. I started meditating fourteen years ago; I practice a form of mantra meditation, which I try to perform twice daily for twenty minutes each time.

Along with working with high school students, I am also a part-time instructor at a local university. This is the fifth year that I have been teaching the English methods course to undergraduate and graduate students during the spring and fall semesters. Each semester, students inundate me with questions regarding classroom management and discipline issues. When I ask them what they hope to learn in this course, nearly all students indicate that they are terrified of having to cope with disruptive students and behavioral problems.

From my own teaching experiences, I have found that when I regularly meditate, I am better able to remain calm in stressful situations in the classrooms. I tend to not react and loose my temper as easily. However, when I go longer periods without meditating, I tend to be less patient, less forgiving on minor classrooms infractions. Meditating also seems to allow me to have greater focus, clarity and creativity when designing and implementing lessons. I want to see if other teachers who practice mantra meditation have had similar experiences.

Participants

For this study, teachers (practicing and retired) from elementary through high school settings, who practiced mantra meditation while being a teacher, were utilized. Participants had to be practitioners of mantra meditation for a minimum of three years while concurrently teaching. Gender, race, and age did not factor into the selection criteria. Three teachers participated in this study (one elementary school teacher, one former middle school teacher and one high school teacher). Two of the participants are female and one is a male. In order to protect the rights of the participants, all

participants' identities remain unknown through the use of alias names. Also, each participant has signed a consent form so that he/she is fully aware of the purpose and use of this study (see Appendix B).

Sampling

This is a purposeful sampling. Teachers were selected based on a referral from known meditation practitioners. This kind of reputational-case selection strategy was applied to gather the sample of teachers who are involved in mantra meditation practices. Each prospective participant received a letter of invitation to be part of the study (see Appendix A). The letter indicates that the researcher is conducting a study in order to determine the effects, if any, of mantra meditation on teachers' self-actualizing qualities and perceptions of stress and conflict in the classroom. The willing participants were asked to compose a brief personal narrative along with taking part in two separate interviews. The participants were interviewed by the researcher, face-to-face—except for the elementary school participant because of logistical reasons (she was interviewed over the phone). Interviews were conducted whenever and wherever was most convenient for the participant. Email correspondence also took place between the researcher and the participants in order to make arrangements for the interviews and for clarification when necessary.

Data Collection

This study qualitatively explores the perspectives of teachers (elementary through high school) who are practitioners of meditation. In order to capture the uniqueness of

each participant's experience and to allow each participant's story to unveil itself with as

little constraint and force as possible, the technique of portraiture is applied to this study.

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, a sociologist and professor of education at Harvard University,

is considered to be the founder of this research methodology. She describes portraiture as

"a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism

in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and

organizational life" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). Shank (2006) notes how

their method of portraiture branches out from the methodology of case study to intertwine

art with science. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot, "I wanted the subjects to feel

seen…fully attended to, recognized, appreciated, respected, and scrutinized" (Lawrence-

Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 5). Words such as "fully attended to, appreciated" seem to

mirror the parts of the definition of self-actualization. It is the researcher's belief that the

research areas of meditation and self-actualization are perhaps too esoteric, or too

abstract for a more traditional methodological form to fully capture and illuminate.

Portraiture allows for an unfiltered perspective of the participants' experiences, thoughts,

and feelings to manifest.

The portraiture of each participant was completed through two different means of

data collection. First, participants were asked to write a personal narrative describing

what they feel meditation means to them, including describing examples of any

experiences they can recollect where they felt that meditation might have played a part in

their personal and/or professional lives.

Personal narratives have the ability to shed light on areas that the researcher may

have never previously considered. For example, every year, I have my high school

students write a personal narrative essay. I learn more about my students, about what makes them "tick," about their homes, their upbringing, their fears and hopes, their past accomplishments and failures than any and all of the other methods of inquiry combined. I can read their transcripts, talk to their previous teachers, meet with their guidance counselors, review their standardized test scores, look in their student files, and all of these forms of information still cannot tell me who a student really *is*. I value reading their personal narratives because I feel more of a connection, more of an understanding with my students. Also, I believe that people are sometimes more comfortable, more open when it comes to *writing* about themselves and their experiences than they are *telling* somebody about themselves and their feelings.

For these reasons, I wanted each participant to write his/her own personal narrative for me. I did not want to force a length requirement on them. I simply suggested that they begin the narrative around the time they started to meditate, but how far back they chose to go was their decision. I did not want to put restrictions on them. Please see Appendix C for the personal narrative prompt that was given to each participant. The prompt asks each participant to write, in his/her own words, what meditation means to them and how, if at all, meditation has had any affect on their personal and/or professional lives. They were asked to describe specific examples or experiences in order to provide anecdotal accounts of meditation's affect upon their lives.

Qualitative researchers understand the value in narratives for gaining a more profound sense of a participant's experiences, thoughts, feelings and nuances. "Life histories and narrative inquiry are methods that gather, analyze, and interpret the stories people tell about their lives. They assume that people live 'storied' lives and that telling

and retelling one's story helps one understand and create a sense of self" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 115). The use of narratives, therefore, helps to create a participant's portraiture. Merriam & Associates (2002) indicate that "the story is a basic communicative and meaning-making device pervasive in human experience; it is no wonder that stories have moved center stage as a source of understanding the human condition" (p. 286). The personal narrative along with the two separate interviews will create triangulation for this study.

After reading their personal narratives and looking for emergent themes, metaphors, and symbols (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), I conducted the first interview with each participant. I have listed a series of questions to cover with each participant; however, some questions were formulated, combined, or eliminated based on the discoveries from their personal narratives. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) discuss the importance of shaping the research as it unfolds, and

> Unlike quantitative inquiry, where the researcher comes with specific hypotheses to be tested, discrete propositions to be proved or disproved, detailed interview questions, predetermined observational schedules, and a well-defined research plan, the portraitist enters the field with a clear intellectual framework and guiding research questions, but fully expects (and welcomes) the adaptations of both her intellectual agenda and her methods to fit the context and the people she is studying. (p. 186)

While the interviews were somewhat open-ended, allowing for individuals to express their experiences, insights and perspectives without restriction, there were guiding questions regarding the qualities of self-actualization, meditation and teaching

practices. Interviews took place wherever and whenever the participants felt most comfortable. These were face-to-face interviews (except, as noted earlier, the elementary participant's interviews were conducted over the phone). All of the conversations were tape recorded and later transcribed and analyzed. The researcher also took brief notes (utilizing a form of shorthand) during the interview in order to note participant expressions and to be able to serve as a comparison, verification, and clarification of the transcribed interview. Each interview lasted approximately one and a half hours. This was dependent on the willingness, the availability, and the desire of each participant. The researcher was flexible and accommodating to the needs and to the wishes of each participant. For example, the middle school participant requested that her interviews be conducted in one longer session. This interview lasted approximately three hours.

There was a standard set of questions that were posed to each participant regarding their experiences and what they have gleaned from them. The interviews also included a more natural flow allowing the participants to go beyond the prescribed questions. This allowed for personal insights that the researcher may not have considered previously. The first interview typically covered any questions/segues from the personal narrative along with basic background questions, meditation questions and questions pertaining to self-actualizing qualities (please refer to the questions that follow in the next section). The second interview started by reviewing the previous interview and then focused on the questions concerning stress/conflict and interactions with students (please refer to the questions that follow in the next section).

Immediately following each interview, the researcher wrote out her reflections of the interview and reviewed the notes. This was later compared to the transcribed material

in order to verify/clarify concepts that might not have been clear from the transcripts. Each participant was emailed a copy of his/her portrait to review. They were asked to read over their portrait and make any additions, deletions or offer any suggestions regarding the wording or descriptions contained within the portrait. These comments were then applied to the final portrait.

Research Questions

Ultimately, the researcher is attempting to answer the following overarching questions for this study:

- Does the practice of mantra meditation create self-actualizing *qualities* in teachers?

- How do teachers who practice mantra meditation perceive their response to stress and conflict in the classroom?

- What perceptions do teachers who practice mantra meditation have of the effects of meditation on their professional and personal lives?

Interview Questions

During the interview, the following questions will serve as a guide:

<u>Background Questions</u>

- How long have you practiced meditation?

- How long have you taught?

- How long have you taught while practicing meditation?

- What do you (did you) teach?

- How would you describe your educational setting?

Meditation Questions

- Describe the type of meditation you practice.

- How often do you meditate and for what duration each time?

- How did you learn about meditation?

- Why do you practice meditation?

- Have you noticed any effects on your physical health due to practicing meditation?

- Have you noticed any effects on your mental health due to practicing meditations?

Questions Pertaining to Self-Actualization Qualities

- From your experience, has meditation enabled you to…

  o Better identify dishonest/phony people and/or to more accurately judge people? (Maslow, 1987) (Perception of Reality)

  o Alleviate fear of the unknown? (Perception of Reality)

  o Accept yourself for who you are? (Acceptance)

  o Accept others for who they are? (Acceptance)

  o Develop a spontaneous nature? (Spontaneity)

  o Develop an individual code of ethics? (Spontaneity)

  o Feel more comfortable going against conventional thought and/or behavior? (Spontaneity)

o Become more intrinsically motivated? More motivated for self-growth? (Spontaneity)

o Develop a sense of purpose/duty in life? (Problem Centering)

- Can you describe a time when you have felt tremendously happy, ecstatic, rapturous? Try to explain how you felt in one of these moments. How did you feel differently than you normally do? Did you perceive your surroundings or what you were doing differently? (This question is based on the question that Maslow (1968, p. 71) posed to participants in his study of self-actualization.)

Questions pertaining to how stress/conflict is handled in the classroom

- Typically how do you (did you) respond to a student who was misbehaving in class?

- In general, how do you handle a stressful situation in the classroom?

- If you feel stressed or overwhelmed while teaching, what are some solutions that you might employ to ease the stress?

- From your experience, has meditation enabled you to handle stressful classroom situations in a more positive way? If so, can you please explain?

- If you did not practice meditation when your teaching career first began, can you describe any differences in the way you handled stress and conflict within the classroom before you started meditating compared to after starting meditating?

Questions pertaining to how the participant interacts with students

- How do you view each of your students?

- Describe the kind of rapport you have with your students.

- How might your students describe you?

- What are your expectations for all of your students? How did you convey your expectations to your students?

- From your experience, has meditation enabled you to interact with and/or view your students differently? If so, can you please elaborate?

- If you did not practice meditation when your teaching career first began, can you describe any differences in the way you interacted/perceived students before you started meditating compared to after you started meditating?

Validity

Possible threats to internal validity could involve subject effects in which the participants do not feel as if they can be completely candid in their responses. In order to alleviate this, they were assured of confidentiality (names of participants were changed) through both verbal and written communication. In order to further enhance the internal validity of the information, verbatim accounts (tape recorded) were used. Prior to beginning the study, all interview questions were given to several experts in the field so that they could review them and make any necessary suggestions.

Data Storage and Security

All data and consent forms are securely locked in the researcher's office and will be destroyed five years after the completion of this study. Any and all identifiers pertaining to the participant, any locations, and anyone or any place that may be referred

to by the participant will be deleted or disguised in order to ensure complete

confidentiality.

Data Analysis

In keeping with Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis' (1997) portraiture design, all data

was analyzed through the technique of searching for emergent themes, metaphors and

symbols. Triangulation of data was achieved through comparing the observational

notes, interview transcripts and personal narratives. Shank (2006) defines triangulation

as "the process of converging upon a particular finding by using different sorts of data

and data-gathering strategies" (p. 113). Flick (2006) suggests that it is more meaningful

to use a small sample and several methods of inquiry rather than using a large sample

with only one method of data collection.

Starting with the personal narrative, key words/phrases/themes/patterns were

noted. The observational notes and transcripts from each interview also underwent this

same type of analysis. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997), the researcher

uncovers emergent themes by listening for repetition of thoughts, looking for metaphoric

or symbolic expressions, discovering institutional or organizational rituals, utilizing

triangulation, and possibly uncovering themes created by contrasting views held by

participants.

The definition of self-actualization as explained in the introduction and review of

literature served partly as the basis for the thematic framework when searching for the

emergent themes, metaphors and symbols pertaining to questions related to self-

actualizing qualities. However, the coding for other aspects of the study including

teacher perceived stress and teacher perceived interactions with students was devised as the research unfolded. Shank (2006) clarifies this formula in stating that:

> Quantitative researchers tend to use predetermined coding categories, and coding in this case is the application of those categories to the proper data. Though this is sometimes the case in qualitative research as well, more often than not we are building our coding categories as we go along. We let important and intriguing items within our data lead us to crafting and creating those evolving codes. As these codes take more determinate shape and form, we often call them *themes*. (p. 147-148)

The very nature of portraiture requires that the researcher have fluidity to his/her collection and analysis of the data. The development of each portrait becomes like a dance between the researcher and the participant. The portrait continuously evolves during the interview process. This eventually leads to further evolution on the part of the reader. Davis (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) explains that "In portraiture, the researcher—the artist—interprets the subject of the portrait internally by searching for coherence in what she observes and discovers…The reader—the perceiver—makes sense of the subject that is portrayed through his or her active interpretation of the portrait. This new interpretation…can be thought of as a kind of reinterpretation" (p. 30).

CHAPTER FOUR

PORTRAITS

The portraits of three remarkable educators—one elementary teacher, one middle school teacher, and one high school teacher—are presented in this chapter. These portraits are the result of interviews and written personal narratives from the three educators. Two of the three teachers were met face-to-face for the interviews. However, one of the teachers lives in California; therefore, for logistical purposes, those interviews were conducted over the phone and communication was a mixture of phone calls and emails.

Each teacher was first asked to compose a personal narrative about his/her experiences with meditation (please refer to Appendix C). After reading through the narratives, I started to conduct the interviews. The narratives allowed me to gain prior insight into their experiences with meditation before the interviews. Each teacher was asked the same basic questions including background questions, meditation questions, questions pertaining to self-actualization qualities, questions pertaining to how stress/conflict is handled in the classroom and questions pertaining to how the participant interacts with students (for a complete list of these questions, please refer to Chapter 3). Although these questions served as a basic foundation for each of the interviews, they were only used as a guideline. Where and when necessary and natural, the conversations may have included follow-up questions or anecdotal accounts given by the participants. This allowed for a more natural feel, so that the participants did not feel restricted by the questions.

The elementary school teacher and the high school teacher both had two separate interviews. This prevented the participants from feeling overloaded with questions, and it allowed me to review the material from one interview before conducting the second interview. Therefore, in the second interview, I was able to clear up anything that might have been confusing. Each of the individual interviews lasted between one hour and one hour and a half. The middle school teacher preferred to have the entire interview conducted in one session. We met about three hours. This worked out well because we were also able to communicate via email and telephone when I needed further clarification.

Each personal narrative and interview was analyzed for key words/phrases, themes and patterns that emerged. Chapter Four will present the findings of the analyzed data.

Portrait of Deb

Deb is the only participant with whom I was unable to meet face-to-face. She lives across the country in California, and logistically it just was not possible to meet in person. Several people who know her from being in a meditation group with her recommended her to me for this study. I was grateful that I was able to communicate effectively through email and the telephone with Deb in order to include her. Deb was generously forthcoming with her insights and teaching experiences during the interviews. Though never seeing her, I could tell by her emails and by her voice that she is extremely kind, good-natured and energetic. Her warm laughter throughout our conversations also indicated to me that she has a good sense of humor.

When I first told her about the personal narrative part of this project, she exclaimed, "I already know what to write!" She was enthusiastic about participating in this study from the very beginning. Her narrative speaks volumes of her journey as a practitioner of meditation and as a teacher:

I was born into a teaching family. My grandmother and my aunt taught sixth grade for thirty or more years each. My uncle is still a university professor, probably emeritus by now. My mother taught seventh and eighth graders physical education and health. One sister home schooled both of her kids and another sister is a music teacher at the middle school level. Even my husband changed careers and became a high school math teacher about seven years ago.

My mom taught me much about teaching, both the good and the bad. She was a marvelous teacher who cared deeply about her students and their young adolescent challenges, but she was also plagued with alcoholism. She taught me

how to care about my students. She also taught me that teaching was horribly stressful- even life threatening. She could not balance her life. Somehow I knew that balance was everything in life.

My father used to say over and over again, "Don't ever become a teacher. It'll make you crazy!!!"

While my children were young, I found that I was very good at teaching, especially at instilling the love of reading and writing. How to teach reading to little children fascinated me, so a teacher I eventually became.

I found a meditation teacher and began meditating in 1983. My children were very young then, and the energizing and refreshing effects of meditation helped me through young motherhood. I believe it helped me avoid depression and develop my spirituality in the midst of kid noise, chaos and a daycare business.

In 1993 after ten years of meditation, I began teaching and experienced a separation in my marriage. Meditation and friends from my meditation group helped keep me from falling apart. It helped to keep me balanced as I raised two teenaged daughters alone for six years. I hung onto my quiet twenty minutes every morning and evening like a lifeline. Sometimes I would only meditate once in the day, but I could always feel the difference. With consistent meditation, everything seemed like it was going to be okay. I didn't know how exactly, but I knew that things would work out.

My husband and I reconciled in 1999; daughters were grown, one had left home. We found that the three of us had meditation in common and there was harmony at home.

Professionally, I have found meditation to be extremely helpful. It has allowed me to balance my life much more effectively than my mother ever did. When a kid's behavior threatens to "make me crazy," I know it's time to fall back, meditate and let go; to remember that I don't have to get so emotionally agitated. I'm able to maintain my cool and still regard a child with respect and kindness, but also with firmness. I am able to see the cup half full instead of the cup half empty. Most importantly, I am able to inspire people every day. I teach my students to value caring, kindness and thoughtfulness as well as academic achievement.

A few years ago I became a meditation teacher. I always remember my teacher's voice saying, "If there is only one thing you can give a person, give them the ability to meditate. It's the most valuable gift you could <u>ever</u> give!"

Clearly, meditation has benefited Deb both personally and professionally. She has been practicing silent mantra meditation for twenty-four years. She learned how to meditate and became part of a meditation group initially because her husband introduced her to it. She quickly saw the benefits of meditation as she was raising her two daughters. Ten years into practicing meditation, she became an elementary school teacher. She has now been teaching for fifteen years. During that time, she has taught kindergarten through third grade. For the past six years, she has been teaching third grade. Deb loves teaching

third graders; she describes them as being mature enough, yet still little kids who get excited about things like homework.

Deb and her husband, Mike, have a great partnership. Not only do they meditate together, but because they are both teachers, they understand the trials and tribulations of the education profession. Mike is a dedicated math teacher who even finds time to join Deb's class a few times a week so that he can help tutor students who are struggling in math. Deb describes the demographics of her school as being the "extreme of the extreme." They have a 98% poverty, free/reduced lunch rate. The majority of students are of Latino background and English Language Learners. For instance, in a class of twenty students, nineteen are Spanish speakers, and only one is a native English speaker. She has a bilingual certification, which enables her to work within this educational setting. With this scenario, she utilized her skills in speaking Spanish to deliver lessons in a bilingual fashion; however, the school district decided that they wanted all students to speak English, and instruction then was to also be only in English. Deb describes this as being a difficult transition for students. She questions the fact that according to state and national legislation, all of her students must be perfect and pass all of the standardized tests with complete proficiency even if they are not used to the language. Even though she can no longer deliver bilingual lessons, her Spanish skills still help her to better be able to communicate with her students and with their parents. For instance, when she sees that students are lost, she is able to switch to Spanish to clarify the material for them.

With all of the demands placed upon Deb to teach students the English language as she's teaching them all of the other subjects, there certainly are numerous occasions

for stress and frustration. Even after teaching in this environment for fifteen years, she does not show any signs of burnout. She attributes her ability to remain fresh, enthusiastic, and positive to the practice of silent mantra meditation. Deb is fifty-six years old, and she has practiced meditation for over twenty-four years. Each day she meditates twice for approximately twenty minutes each time.

Along with helping her to remain passionate about teaching, meditation has benefited her both physically and mentally. She explains that meditation has kept her from "falling apart" and that she has been able to remain balanced and sane due to meditation. Reflecting back upon her personal narrative, she says:

> Like I wrote in my thing [personal narrative], I always wondered why my father always said, "Don't you become a teacher because it will make you crazy." I mean, I think he just genuinely believed that teaching made my mother crazy. She, um… she was an alcoholic. She was depressed much of the time; she uh… had a real difficult time dealing with life. She was very stubborn. (*Laughs)* And so, having to write this narrative that you asked me to write, boy did that bring things into perspective from a longer point of view in years. My mother couldn't balance. She just couldn't do it. And I think that when things get hard, it makes meditation harder. And you feel like you're not getting deep at all. But, you're still meditating.

That is Deb's secret. No matter how tired she is, no matter how busy she is, she still makes time to meditate. She believes so powerfully in the benefits of meditation upon her mental status that she makes meditation a priority. Unlike her mother who became an

alcoholic and "crazy" according to her father from teaching, Deb has found a way to escape the chains of stress and burn out that are so frequently benchmarks for teachers.

When I called Deb for the second interview, I thanked her for all of her insights from the first interview and recapped some of the key points that we discussed. Then I began to ask her questions pertaining to self-actualizing qualities. I started by asking her if she thought that meditation has helped her to identify dishonest people and/or to more accurately judge people. She replied that meditation, in conjunction with the study of human nature helps her in this area:

> Not meditation alone. The other techniques that go along with it help me to…
> And the answer's yes, it's much easier to spot someone who is being superficial,
> and not really giving you an honest answer. So, I'm not sure how much
> meditation fills in that answer and where the other study of human nature that I've
> done over the years-how much more of that fills it in.

I asked to clarify her other studies of human nature, and she indicated the study of Maslow's works. For instance:

> …the Hierarchy of Needs… With students who at first I thought, you know,
> "Why can't they appreciate how pretty this is?" Then I started thinking, "Oh wait
> a minute, they haven't had their other needs met." You know, they're not feeling
> safe, or they're not feeling well cared for. And they really do need to have that
> stuff before they can look at it and say, "Wow, that really is beautiful."

Other books that she believes have helped her to develop a better understanding of human nature include *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Toole, *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne and other books on eastern philosophy.

Deb absolutely believes that meditation has also enabled her to alleviate fears of the unknown and has definitely helped her to develop a greater sense of acceptance of herself and others. Along with alleviating fears and accepting herself and others for who they are, Deb attributes meditation to helping her become more spontaneous. Meditation has, according to Deb, helped her to develop an individual code of ethics and has given her the strength to go against conventional thought and behavior. She said that she loved the question regarding if meditation has helped her go against conventional thought and behavior and expands by saying:

> I think the bottom line is yes, but in your… in a person's own spiritual development, you have to be ready to, to fight, to be able to not pay attention to what the tribe is doing. (*Laughs*)… I started doing that-my father helped me do that when I was young. My mother wanted us to go to church, and he was out in the garden, and he said, "I don't need to go to church to find God, he's right here." So that and all my other studying, I started thinking um, you know, this was when I was in high school. There's, there isn't any conflict between science and God. How come there can't be both at the same time? (*laughs*) Einstein definitely saw it. And there isn't… when you rise above it, there isn't conflict between religions. It's all the same God. We may be climbing the same mountain, just on another side of it.

According to Deb, many people get into meditation for physical reasons such as reducing stress.   She, however, has moved past just meditating to relieve stress; she also meditates for spiritual growth. This is her explanation as to whether or not meditation has helped

her to become more self-motivated, more interested in self-growth. She emphatically agrees that meditation has benefited her in this area and concludes that:

> You start seeing exactly where you need to go, and it's such a wonderful feeling to know--I think philosophically, the biggest question that people ask themselves is "Why am I here?" And when you're meditating, and you get to that place spiritually, you know why, and it's a great relief to know why. And it's also a great relief to let go of control, so that whatever happens is good.

This provides the perfect segue into discovering whether or not meditation has led Deb to determine if she has a purpose/duty in life. She says that it has and that purpose/duty involves:

> Teaching children now and probably teaching adults meditation later on. People over and over have told me that I have this natural ability to just know where the kids are, what they need, and how to interject methods they need to fill in the gap between where they are and where they're supposed to be—according to the people who write the tests. (*Laughs*)   And just where they're supposed to be with reading and understanding and all that.

The ultimate gauge in determining one's self-actualizing movement deals with one's experience of feeling happy, ecstatic, rapturous. In explaining a time when she has felt this way, Deb recalls when she first learned how to meditate. She describes the feeling of transcending as her "mind opened up." She has a difficult time describing it, but she said that she knew after the experience that she had discovered something wonderful.

We move onto questions pertaining to stress and conflict in the classroom. Deb describes her method of handling classroom disruptions and behavioral problems as

systematic. There is a set routine in place to correct a situation where students are not on task or are misbehaving. There's nothing personal brought into the equation. Her way of dealing with issues is objective and does not put blame upon the student. For instance, Deb gives an example of how she would deal with a student who is off task and being disruptive:

> I don't get mad and say, "You're talking, that's why you're here [at a separate desk]." I tell them, "You need to have a little bit more quiet so that you can think and work." And it's true. I'm not lying, I'm just telling them they need to be over here so they can concentrate on what they're doing…. That way it's so much easier—easier for them to accept it too. They're willing to just move and keep working and do a better job then. You can't yell at a kid and expect them to do good work, you know, because then they're feeling resentful.

Similarly, stressful situations in the classroom in general are handled without emotion. Deb tries not to let her emotions react to students who misbehave. Instead, she takes a deep breath and realizes that she does not need to react on a personal or emotional level to the behavior in order to address it. In really stressful classroom situations, she eases her own levels of stress by helping the students to also take a few moments to breathe, calm down and just be quiet and reflective. She turns out the lights, and she and the class are just silent for a few minutes. This "really helps to reset everybody."

Deb has also learned how to read her students over the years. Instead of forging on with a lesson if clearly the students are not engaged, she goes to plan B, so that the students can shift their attention to something that is more meaningful or productive for that particular time. She explains that by being able to read the energy of her class, she

"can turn them in another direction so that it [a stressful/frustrating situation] doesn't hit a crucial emotional response on anybody's part. You know, you just kind of head it off at the pass." For example:

> If the kids are just not getting something, then we'll do the same kind of thing maybe, but in a different way, so that they can be more active. Because I know that kids are kids. They gotta be doing something with their hands as well. It works better. So we'll do whiteboard work; we've got a bunch of little whiteboards and whiteboard markers and little, tiny erasers, and we'll switch to that [doing written exercises]. And they're perfectly happy doing that. And we'll continue on [with the lesson].

Deb adheres to the practice of being flexible:

> The important thing is to be able to be flexible. I remember when I was student teaching and a thunderstorm happened, and in California, we don't have that many thunderstorms, so when a thunderstorm comes, it's a big deal, and it really—it overexcites all of them and so it frightens them. So, you gotta do something …I mean these kids stopped what they were doing, and she [Deb's cooperating teacher] stopped them immediately and said, "Let's do.." um, oh, I don't know what it was; some kind of a game, or something where they felt like they were playing a game. And they were so jittery; they were jumping up and down. (*Laughs*) And so that was a real good lesson for me to see that you know, you're just not gonna get anymore because of the outside weather, or whatever it is, and you immediately have to change tasks. So being able to discover any kind of game where they're still learning, and they don't realize that they're learning;

they're just playing a game, that's really wonderful. So what we've been doing
lately is Heads Up, 7 Up…I'll give them a word to spell, and if they get it right,
they get two chances to guess who picked them, and if they get it wrong, they
learn how to spell the word, and they still win… Whenever you can devise a
game, and they're still learning, you're way ahead. It's fun.

Deb is not only flexible and tries to instill a sense of fun into the learning environment,
but because she was also a music major in college, she infuses music into the classroom
whenever she can. She references the *Bad Wolf* plays from Bad Wolf Press, which have
great songs that teach kids subjects such as science and social studies.

Wanting to be creative with her lessons sometimes leads to another conflict. She
explains that there is so much emphasis on the basic subjects that are tested on the state
standardized tests, that it becomes difficult to justify to administrators why one is
infusing something like music. Not being given more independence to teach how and
what one feels is important can be frustrating:

And that's an irritation of all teachers. We don't get treated as professionals. The
only time we're treated as professionals is when they don't know what to tell us,
and they turn around and say, "Well you're the professional, you'll figure it out."
(*Laughs*) "You'll figure it out." (*Laughs*) That's what the Superintendent told us
when they yanked the Spanish Language Arts program out from underneath us
and the kids. The board decided to switch to all English with no easing in time at
all… So the kids that I got that year had had Spanish Reading from Kindergarten,
1st grade, 2nd grade; they got into 3rd grade and all of a sudden were expected to
read at the 3rd grade English level.

Deb experiences the same kind of frustrations and stumbling blocks that many educators encounter: administrators who want miracles and are full of ideas, but unfortunately do not provide the necessary support to carry out their goals.

Instead of allowing these frustrations to inhibit her or to lead to burn out, she considers ways of creatively looking at a challenge. She asks herself:

How can I combine skills and different curriculums in order to accomplish what we need to accomplish? And so I really like the challenge, and as a result of this, I've got a huge, huge library of books with things that I need to call upon, and all these things that I've collected through the years; it's gotten big. (*laughs*)

Deb truly feels that meditation is the reason why she is able to be so creative as a teacher:

It's [meditation] helped me to come to answers that I needed to have for different situations, and different ways of teaching pop into my head when I'm meditating, or when I'm actually trying to be the observer and not think. And they'll [ideas] pop into my head, and I'll file that off to the side until after I'm done [meditating], and a lot of times I'll get my ideas in the middle of the night, and I have to wake up and write them down. (*Laughs*) Yeah, creativity, I think it's greatly enhanced when you're meditating. It allows thought to come through.

According to Deb, meditation helps to foster creativity because the mind becomes clearer and is not "clouded" by emotional issues. She continues by saying that meditation has enabled her to remove certain barriers such as race and language differences. She sees all of her students and herself as one. This ability to see all students as equal and being one with the human race is essential. When this is unable to occur, even well-meaning,

outstanding teachers can lose their resolve. For instance, Deb shares a case of a fellow teacher who experienced this:

> I know I have friends who teach at my school who are planning to retire; like one in particular, who I admire greatly. I think she's one of the best teachers I've ever, ever worked with. But, she doesn't speak Spanish and….I said, "Well, why do you want to retire now? I can't imagine you retiring, you're such a good teacher." And she said, "Well, the clientele has changed." And she, she, well, it's because she doesn't speak Spanish, she always got all the English-only kids and the kids who were second language speakers, but they weren't Spanish speakers. So she got the Cambodian kids for instance. The population has changed over the years. There used to be a lot more white kids in the neighborhood, and it's continually changed and now we have almost all Spanish-speaking kids.

This is the perfect example of a good teacher who is leaving the field of education because she is unable to adapt to the changes and to view herself and her students as one.

In addition to feeling connected with her students, Deb believes that she has an excellent rapport with her students:

> They really love to come to class and being with me. I leave it open at lunchtime, and they come in and work on the computer, and I have some of them come in to get extra help with math or reading, and we have quite a tight little bond through the year. And towards the middle of the year, we've become this little tight-knit family, you know, and, we were [a few teachers] walking out to go to lunch, what was it yesterday-no, it was Thursday. We had a relief day with all the 3rd grade teachers. And they, they [the students] just don't like having a sub. No matter

how good the sub is. So we're walking out to go to lunch, and three or four little girls from both of our classes came out and threw their arms around us. And that's really wonderful to see how close we are.

She continues to explain that her students would describe her as being very friendly and kind:

A lot of the kids write me notes saying, "You're the best teacher in the whole world." They really love the consistency and the care that I give them. And we do a lot of hugging, but I think they would be the first to admit that I'm strict and that I make them do their work. (*Laughs*) But I hope I do it in a nice way. One of my rules is if you forgot your homework, you have two chances. You get on the phone and call somebody to bring it, or you do it here. Because if they don't do that work, especially with the math, they fall behind quickly.

Deb wants only the best for all of her students, and therefore, sets high expectations for them. She conveys these expectations through her own instruction and classroom management and by also working with other teachers and the principal to instill pride and confidence in the students. One of the ways they accomplish this is through a program that they have worked to establish that builds a stronger sense of self and community. Each Monday, the whole school gathers in the courtyard, and as an opening recites a poem. This poem fosters the ideas of students being unique, full of love, intelligence, and potential. Deb reminds students of their innate abilities throughout each school day. Even when they say that they cannot do something, she encourages them to take "baby steps" if necessary because she knows that each of her students has the ability to succeed. Her husband also helps in this endeavor:

My husband is a math teacher so he's come in, and since he's not working right

now, he comes in a couple of days a week and takes my slowest ones out, the

ones who are still counting on their fingers for addition and subtraction. And he

works with them because he has a real sense of how to give them numeracy and

build up their confidence. He's recognized that that's what needs building up

because they doubt themselves when they're doing addition and subtraction. So

he helps them build up their confidence that way.

Meditation has also allowed Deb to interact with and to view her students differently.

She explains that meditation…

gives me more of an awareness of how to see them as a whole person instead of

just a student at school. Especially kids in the situations that they, they're in.

Every teacher has to look at the kids and see if they start acting peculiarly; what's

going on at home? And try to contact the parents and try and find out what's

happening. Why is so and so acting up? And that gives you a better grasp of the

situation—it's the awareness. Meditation gives you a greater awareness of

perception.

Portrait of Linda

Some say that middle school is the toughest age group with which to work. When I started my teaching career, it was in a middle school, and I can absolutely agree with this sentiment. My student teaching was with a group of seventh grade students, and I still recall my cooperating teacher saying that middle school students should not be forced to be in classrooms. They should be out running around in some field because during this time their minds stop working, and their bodies—full of hormones—take over as they grow and develop at record speeds. The following semester when I received my first teaching job teaching sixth grade, I experienced first hand the trials and agonies of working with this age group. My brief stay as a middle school teacher—the following year I gratefully started to teach high school English—allows me to have great respect and admiration for the subject of this portrait. Linda taught middle school language arts for seventeen years.

Now retired, Linda looks back upon her time in the classroom with humor and with a sense of contentment. She taught fifth through eighth grade language arts in an inner-city middle school. She taught for ten years prior to learning how to meditate. Linda started her teaching career in 1961, and then in 1971 learned how to meditate. She has been practicing silent mantra meditation, which she does twice daily for twenty to twenty-five minutes each time ever since.

Linda has agreed to meet me at my house because she needed to travel to this part of town today. She requested that we conduct the interview in one session in order to better fit her schedule. We have already had several phone conversations and email communications prior to this meeting. I have actually known Linda for thirteen years

because we go to the same meditation group meetings. Linda is remarkable in every way. She's around seventy years old; however, nobody could guess that she was older than her fifties. She not only looks very young, she exudes youth through her energy and outlook on life.

Prior to beginning the interview, we discussed some of her personal narrative. In her narrative, she begins by explaining that she now teaches silent mantra meditation, and that just this past week she taught a teacher who teaches in an inner-city public school how to meditate:

Before the formal meditation instruction, I spontaneously said to her (the woman she was teaching how to meditate), "One of the best decisions I ever made was to learn silent mantra meditation. Words cannot express how much I have benefited from this simple practice." I felt my heart swell up and a tear came down my cheek.

Coming home from this session, I recalled that one of the main reasons I learned meditation in 1971 was to be a better public school teacher.

In 1961, I began teaching middle school English classes in an inner-city school. Most of the students were black and came from low-income families. I chose to be there because it excited me that I would be the one to light the fire of the love of learning in the hearts and minds of my students. Two of my qualities are love of challenges and persistence.

Every morning, I would go to school with well laid out lesson plans and optimism, and every day my high hopes were dashed by so many distractions caused by young adults resistant to learning. I did okay, but not great. I knew that

if I could stop feeling so much stress in the classroom, things would go much better. With my whole heart, I wanted to be there to make a difference for them.

This went on for about ten years. This whole time I was looking for better solutions to my students' resistances to learning. Something new happened in 1971. I was listening to a radio talk show, and a meditation teacher was being interviewed about the benefits of silent mantra meditation. He talked about so many benefits that I couldn't remember all of them. But two things stuck in my mind. Meditation could release stress and unleash the potential of the meditator.

I thought, "This could be the answer to my challenges. I will be more relaxed, and I would be able to use more of my abilities as a creative teacher." Immediately, I made a phone call to schedule instruction in silent mantra meditation. My first meditations were amazing. I felt like a brand new person.

The following Monday, I went to school and was wondering if this new found calmness would last. Surprisingly, the day went very well. I continued to meditate, and the week was the best week I ever remember in my teaching career.

I was so happy. This is what I dreamt about. Somehow, it became easy to come up with lessons and projects that captured my students' interest. And the most amazing quality I was able to manifest was the ability not to react, but to act. If a student tried to distract me or the class, somehow I would see it coming, and I was usually able to nip it in the bud spontaneously. I was becoming so flexible and aware that I surprised myself.

This went on for a few weeks. Then I thought, "I have this knack now, and I don't need to meditate anymore. I know that the meditation teacher said to

meditate twice a day for the rest of my life, but that's not for me. I don't need it any more."

Guess what happened? When I stopped meditating, things were not good. I got irritable and stressed out and the kids seemed to be able to distract me. Things were just as they were before (meditating).

The bottom line here is that my teaching career forced me to meditate two times a day—once in the morning and once at noon—if I wanted to be a creative, inspiring teacher who acted calmly and very seldom reacted.

Not only has meditation helped Linda in the classroom, it has had tremendous effects on her physical and mental health. When I asked her why she continues to meditate, Linda emphatically replied, "To bottom-line it, I believe I would be dead if I did not meditate. I was in the hospital for eleven months and because of meditation I was very relaxed in a very stressful situation. And it helped my health, because the more relaxed I got, the more I was able to take pro-active steps to increase my health." Linda was in a horrible car accident, which resulted in eleven months of hospitalization. She explains that meditation enabled her to visualize physical healing for herself. Meditation has also benefited her mental health because she tends to have a very busy mind, and she used to have numerous neuroses, such as fear of the dark and fear of being alone in the house. Now, she doesn't experience any of these neuroses.

When asked if she perceives meditation as being helpful for being able to identify phony/dishonest people or to more accurately judge people, Linda explained:

I think that meditation makes you more innocent. And there is law called Miller's Law. And Miller's Law is you always assume the best about people. So I think meditation has helped me to always assume the best about people and because of that sometimes you get uh, something better than you ordinarily would. But I've always been very sensitive to others and mediation has helped me channel this sensitivity to more astuteness even though it's innocent astuteness. So you, you notice things more. You notice body language more and you, you have, more observation powers. I think meditation makes you uh, I think mediation makes you stronger in the fact that you assume the best about people. And then it gives you a lot more energy. You don't have to constantly be uh, worrying about this, and being suspicious of that and being fearful of that, which really drains your energy. And there is a book out called *The Power of Force* and, this is a book on kineisiology, and they say that the strongest…the people who are physically the strongest, are the people who are the most kind and gracious towards others.

In explaining how meditation has helped her to alleviate fear of the unknown, Linda believes:

What keeps people stuck is, is they-they would rather be in a bad situation than go into the unknown. And I call it adventuring. You adventure into the unknown, you venture into the unknown. And meditation does give you the creativity and the feel of powers that you have where you're more in touch with your capabilities. That you're more willing to go into the unknown because you feel you have some tools to deal with it.

I asked Linda if meditation has helped her to accept herself and others better. She said that even though she's still working on self-acceptance, she is better able to find and accept the good in herself. As far as other people are concerned, she thinks that:

> This is the most remarkable quality I've developed in relationships. I've always been, uh, I've always been accepting of people, but deep down I've had a critical quality. I call it discernment, but I guess it's just plain critical. Which I've covered up. And now I've noticed the critical quality has really diminished a lot.

She feels that overall meditation has helped her to accept more and to judge less. She says that ultimately this is easier. Accepting people and situations is easier in the long run. She believes that this ability to be more accepting has made her happier.

In her personal narrative, Linda used the word spontaneous several times. To verify if meditation has had an impact on her ability to be spontaneous, I asked her again if she thought that meditation has helped her to develop a more spontaneous nature. She described herself as being very impulsive by nature:

> I've always been very impulsive. And I've been afraid of my impulsiveness. But now I notice that uh, it's more spontaneous. It seems like the impulsiveness is metamorphasizing, into more spontaneity…. You know, I think humor is an example of that. Where before, uh, I-I used to be more reactive, more impulsive in a reactive way. If somebody did something that I thought was offensive to me, I used to say, "Oh, oh, yeah, and?" (*laughter*) I just make a joke about it to myself or others now. I make light of it and turn a lot of things around through humor. So, I'd say I have more spontaneous humor for sure.

In describing how she perceives meditation as having an affect on the development of a personal code of ethics, Linda says:

> Well, I've been meditating for a long time, so, yeah, I have, I have my own code of ethics I'll tell you. *laughs* I'm not with the tribe mentality. I heard this story, and I would like to see everybody be self-actualized. And so, I was thinking that the people I deal with, how…how can I support them in their becoming more self-actualized as I become more self-actualized? And there was a story about, it's actually a hypno-therapist and psychologist, who has this story. And this story is…there's a man who has a ranch, and he goes outside, and there's a horse, a strange horse, and he wants the horse to get back to his home, and there's a lot of ranches there. So what he does is he knows… he knows that the horse knows the main road, so if he could get the horse on the main road, then the horse will go by himself back to where he belongs. So he gets the horse on his way-he nudges the horse onto the main road, and then the horse sees a clump of grass. He gets off the main road, so this man decides to go along with him, you know, to go along with the horse. While the horse is eating the grass, he goes off the road with the horse, then very gently nudges him back onto the road again. And then later down the road, the horse wants to go off the road again, to chase something, so the man goes off the road with him and lets him chase whatever he wants to chase, and then the man gently nudges him back on the road, and then eventually, the horse finds his way home-- which is self-actualization. Which everybody wants. That's the deepest need in man. So he doesn't lead the horse. He, he knows that the horse knows his way himself…And he knows that's the deepest

need of the horse, is to find his way   home. The deepest need in man is self-

actualization, according to Maslow,   according to me too. *laughter*

I have to note here that Linda has a truly lighthearted nature. She freely laughs in a

natural, easy-going way. Her laughter isn't a cynical laughter, or a laughter that is

degrading in any way. Rather, her laughter is gentle, honest, good-natured. She seems to

find life enjoyable and doesn't take it too seriously. Her laughter puts one at ease. It

warms the atmosphere.

I then ask her if she thinks that meditation has enabled her to go against

conventional thinking and/or behavior. Ultimately, she feels comfortable either going

with conventional thought or with doing her own thing. She explains that:

> At one time I was more comfortable going against conventional thought. Cause it
>
> seemed pretty stifling. But now I'm comfortable either way. I could go with
>
> conventional thought or not go with conventional thought. But deep down I
>
> always, I have a mind of my own. I can… I can go along with people, especially
>
> if it's not important. Fine. Whatever. You know, it's no big deal…. I wouldn't
>
> be afraid (to go against the norm), but I, I would rather not. I mean, I would
>
> prefer not to, I would prefer not to rock the boat…. It's, it's… self-defeating. It's
>
> not a win-win situation. I try to look for win-win situations.

As far as creating more intrinsic motivation, Linda agrees that meditation has made her

more so:

> Yeah, because – actually, after I've been meditating for awhile, my goals have
>
> become more spiritual. And, I don't even know what that means. Uh, so I am
>
> sort of in, an unknown territory. And, I-I know, sooner or later, it's all gonna

come together. I'm a little lost in unknown territory right now, but sooner or

later it's all gonna come together.

Although, in respect to being more motivated for self-growth, Linda declares that she

prefers to call it self-depth. She likes to think of it as going inward to discover what is

beneath the surface of life. By going deep within, she is able "to bring the treasures of

the inside kingdom to the outside world and share them with others."

With great humor, she alluded to my question of what her purpose/duty in life is.

She admits that meditation has given her a definite sense of what her life's purpose/duty

is; however, she does not share this information with anyone. She says this with warm

laughter. It's her secret—she continues laughing good-naturedly.

Linda is far more forthcoming with telling me about an experience in which she

has felt tremendously happy, or ecstatic, rapturous. She describes a time when she

started to learn meditation:

When I first learned silent mantra meditation, I learned transcendental meditation.

And what I used to like to do in the summertime—I taught school, and in the

summertime, I used to go to these retreats, which were one month long or two

months long. And you would meditate five times a day, and you would do yoga

in between, and you would eat really healthy meals and stuff like that. And I did

it because I was in bliss all the time. And there's a name for these people, called

"blissnics." Which I know Maslow calls them peak experiences. But I think this

was, this was a little bit more *sigh* –it wasn't really a peak experience. It was like

being in a state of bliss. And I met a guy at one of these retreats who emanated

deep, deep peace. And I used to hang with him—I did not like his personality,

but I liked what he, what he exuded, and what he exuded was the peace. And one time I said to him, "Gee, in, in the New Testament, when all the new people were leaving Jesus—Jesus said to his disciples, 'Are, are you gonna leave me too?' and St. Peter said, 'There's no where to go, nothing to do. It's all here now." That's how I felt when I was with him. And that changed my life. And it wasn't so much peak experiences I was after; it was that deep, deep peace that surpasses all understanding. So, I don't know what a peak experience is. I've had visions; I've had blisses; I've had ecstasies; I've had all these things, uh… but I'm after something more calm now. *laughs* And after, I've done all that, been there. Now I'm after, after peace.

I asked her to clarify this deep peace she experienced. Linda expanded by saying:

That deep peace. It changed my life. It was transformative. Yeah, cause I was engaged to a State Representative, and I was really into politics, and I was really into ex-name-band clothes and all that stuff. And, all of sudden when I met this guy I said, "This is what I want. This is it, this is what I want. I want this peace." Cause when you have that peace, there's nowhere to go, nothing to do, it's all here right now. That goes back to being in the present moment.

The concept of being in the present moment is something that Linda feels very passionately about. Meditation has helped her to maintain being in the present moment. As far as teaching is concerned, she believes that "when you have presence and you're in the present, you can really teach well. You can teach so well because you…you have something, you have presence to give, along with the information." The teacher is able to instill this sense of presence into her students. Linda is concerned that the current

education program offered to students neglects to provide them with this concept of presence:

> And the kids are really missing their presence. They might have the information, but they're missing their presence. And everybody's running around looking for something…if you have that presence and you have the juice of life, and education is supposed to give people the juice of life, along with the information and knowledge. So, so, our educational system, I feel, is going to transform into more juiciness. (*laughs*) You know, more juiciness. And I just know I feel psychology is transforming into more realization that when you are, for example, in the present moment, and you have that peace, you…you automatically let go of the past. You don't have to process it. Like, like in a Freudian way, or in a human way, or anything like that. You can actually be…be focused in the present moment, in the now. And you have that presence, and that presence is… when you have that, you can enjoy everything else. You can have everything else. You can have great learning; you can have great wealth; you can have all that stuff.
>
> But if you don't have that juice of life then, you know, life's kinda empty.

I tell her that I like her description of the "juice of life." She laughs and says, "Yeah. I never used that word before. (*laughter*) See? Spontaneity. That's an example of spontaneity." It's a great example of spontaneity. "I never know what I'm gonna say."
laughter

> Getting back to when Linda described a moment when she had the experience of bliss at the meditation retreat, I wanted to know what she remembered of her

surroundings and what she remembered of what she noticed at that time. As she describes them, she has a happy, content, peaceful look upon her face:

> You know a lot of these bliss experiences were real profound. Like lots of light, lots of sound, lots of – I remember when I was out in the woods with this guy I knew on the TM retreat…I remember and this young man. So the three of us used to go out in the woods all the time and once I was in the woods, and things became very still, and I looked down and I saw this frog in the brush. It was totally camouflaged, and I saw this frog or this toad or whatever it was right there. And then I heard a sound, and I heard this inchworm going up a tree. We went around a corner and there was a butterfly emerging from its cocoon. And the green was very green, and the birds' trills went right through me, and I thought, "Holy Toledo." You know it was like something had been covering my eyes and then something-something, uh, something was like oh, I-I could now see things like the world in a whole new light. And then I realized that we only perceive a very small percentage of what is. The depth, the color, those songs, those sound and light shows were nothing compared to being in nature and perceiving more deeply these things. I never, never told anyone this. (*laughs*)… But it's like, whoa, you could go into bliss, you could go, you could have peaks, but I'm thinking I did not know what a peak was until that happened. I know it's because of this guy—his name was Sam. You know as I said before, his personality was um…I didn't like it very much, but in his presence, a whole new- because of the peace that emanated from him, a whole new world was opened to me, a whole new dimension. That's it… it's a new dimension.

How does this blissful, fully awakened kind of experience where one sees, hears and feels things more vividly, more fully translate into the classroom setting? Does this acute sensory awareness and this new dimension that Linda speaks about allow her to handle stress and conflict differently in the classroom? To find out, I begin by asking her how she handled a student who was misbehaving in class. Is there a distinction between how she handled disruptions and misbehavior prior to starting to meditate compared to how she handled these type of situations after she introduced meditation to her life? Looking back at her classroom experience, Linda recalls:

> Before meditation, it was more stimulus and response. It was, uh, you know, very conventional—with conventional ways of handling things. You know, like keeping points and demerits and keeping kids after school and sort of a reasonable way of handling things like that. The only thing is, in a stimulus and response situation, the type of school I was in; there would always be the chance of something very disruptive happening. So if I was responding to a stimulus, the kids could play me. Because if they would, if they would come up with a certain stimulus then they knew what my response was going to be. And so they could play me that way. And uh, it was… it was, stressful, because… because I-I didn't know how to get out of it. "Alright, you're gonna get a hundred demerits!" (*laughs*) And to these kids, the type I was teaching, what's a demerit? What does that mean? (*laughs*) And so I ended up in very disruptive situations. I ended up being goofy, absolutely goofy. And, and it got so bad that I really didn't want to teach. I spent all my time, you know—most of my time dealing with these disruptions and worrying about them and trying to figure out strategies and you

know, keeping kids busy and having to do a lot of correcting and keeping

everybody busy and having to do a lot of book work to make sure that they were,

you know, doing-being busy; to make sure they were being busy. So, it was

stressful. And I found out that I-I kept, you know, I really wanted to be in this

type of school; cause I always went to a private school. I was never-the first time

I was ever in a public school in my life was the day I taught.

If it wasn't for learning how to meditate, Linda probably would have finally given up on
her students and possibly have quit teaching altogether. Meditation provided her with
new tools, new enthusiasm and a new outlook on her profession. She clarifies how
meditation saved her career:

Well, what happened was you know, as I said before, I was in the car one day and

I thought, "Well, I'm going to, I'm gonna quit, or either go to a different

school…" I remember saying, "I don't even know if education's for me

anymore." I was looking at different jobs. My family was in the hotel business,

the hotel/motel business. I was looking maybe at going into hotel management or

something like that. And coming home one day I heard somebody talk about: if

you're in a stressful situation, learn to meditate, and you can handle it. And that

was TM teacher that was on the radio. So I went, and he said, "I'll be teaching

this weekend and my telephone number is…" And I immediately went down and

learned meditation. And I thought it was really strange. I didn't want anybody to

know I did it. This was in 1971. (*laughs*) I thought, I loved it, but I didn't want

anybody to know I did it. And there were parts of it that were real, real unusual. I

thought, "Wow, this is, this is-I don't want anybody to know I'm doing this."

More and more I was finding out I saw clearly, objectively—hey, this kid is stimul-creating this, this stimulus, and I'm responding this way. And I thought, "Wait a minute. I could stop this." And what I would do, I would do something unexpected. I wouldn't respond in that way. Say for example, a kid was doing a disruptive thing, I would say, "I see you." And I would point to a kid who was doing his work, and I'd say, "You're doing really good work!" (*laughs*) And the kid -(*laughs*) and the kids are saying, "What about John? What about John?" "Oh yeah, okay, stop that John." "Oh Joe, you're doing such good work!" (*laughs*) And—what happened was, my creativity just flowed forth. Then I realized, some of these kids… they don't need to sit in their desk all the time, that's why they can't stand it anymore—that's probably why they're being disruptive. So we started to do all kinds of projects. We did puppet shows; we did movies; we did plays; we did all kinds of things like that. Music, dancing, we did all kinds of things like that. Exercises, yoga-we even did yoga in class.

Linda points out that at the time she started to do these kinds of activities and employ these types of strategies, it was quite unusual. Most teachers were not applying this kind of teaching technique. Truly what Linda started to do in her classroom was new, unique, and certainly open to criticism from other teachers:

And we had kids helping each other, so there was movement in the room. Those were the days when kids just sat in their desks. In 19-well, I started in 1961 actually. Kids just sat in their desks. And I was in the type of school where I could be free, just as long as I didn't send kids to the office. (*laughs*) So I was in a perfect place for this…it was wonderful. And I had the creativity to plan all

these projects and everything like that. So there were very few discipline

problems because it was like what we were talking about previously, about

… an animal being tethered to a string, and they can't move; it was just like

that—meditation just released that, and I was able to be creative, and I was able to

be unpredictable, and I was able to break the stimulus and response pattern that

these kids were used to.

However, there were of course residual effects from people outside of the classroom who

perhaps didn't quite understand. For instance, her students became so engaged in the

learning process—probably in part because they did not realize they were learning or

doing "school work" that they started to really excel. They started to read and to write.

They started to do really well in reading and writing. In fact, their standardized test

scores went up. The scores rose sharply. The results were so remarkable that the

principal called Linda into his office and accused her of teaching to the test. I laughed

when she told me this because now we (at least in my school) are forced to teach to the

latest state mandated test. However, in her situation, this was no laughing matter. The

principal insisted that the only way these kinds of students could improve their scores that

dramatically was if she was teaching to the test. She swore to him that she indeed was

NOT teaching to the test. She hadn't even seen a copy of the test. But he insisted,

"There's no way in hell…" (and he used that word.) He said, "There's no way in hell

that kids could go up three grades in reading." Linda quickly came to a realization:

So then I realized, whoa, there's really no room for creativity in the schools.

That's when I start getting really depressed, I have to tell you. Because, with my

classroom system, the kids were used to asking questions, and they'd go into

another room, another classroom and ask questions, and the other teachers didn't like it.

Linda defends herself by saying:

And the kids were not out of control, by the way. Cause I was a very strict disciplinarian. What I mean by strict disciplinarian is I wouldn't put up with anything. And I had to be that way cause I was reading a book on power at that time. I'll never forget that book. And what it says is there are some people who have a mindset that they're only two types of people in the world, the intimidator and the intimidatee. And that, if you're not intimidating, you are being intimidated. And I realized a lot of these kids grew up in households like that. And so I realized I had to appear to be the intimidator, even though I was not. And appearing to be the intimidator was a role I played very lightly. So I had no ego involvement in it. It was just, it was just a toy used. Since the kids were used to that—that's another thing meditation helped me do. It helped me to understand what the kids were doing, what kind of background they were from, and it helped me understand that I'm not going to change them overnight. And if they were comfortable in a certain paradigm, I could role-play that paradigm for them to learn better. In fact, I became so good at doing that and we had, we had a lot of fun. It was like something I was meant to do. So, what happened was the principal decided, since I never sent anybody to the office—ever—that they had 38 kids they didn't know what to do with, so they gave me the 38 kids for the whole morning every day.

Linda learned to become flexible, but it was difficult for her. At this point, the frustration came from the administration and the other teachers. According to Linda, "I think they gave me the 38 kids because they knew I could handle it. But also because they knew that I was disrupting their system. And that would keep me busy."

Linda provided some other examples of innovative teaching techniques that she employed in order to engage the learning process and to awaken their own creativity and potential. For example she described showing students different masterpieces of artwork each day. Eventually the classroom was filled with these masterpiece paintings. Each time she presented a different masterpiece, they would take just a short amount of time and discuss aspects such as the colors, the composition, and the lighting. Then the students would vote on their favorite one, which would be hung in the classroom "gallery." She wanted her students to be exposed to the arts. She wanted to help to broaden their horizons and help to show them some of the beauty and culture that they may have otherwise been deprived of.

Linda performed similar strategies with books. She would take a few minutes each day and talk about the "salacious" and "juicy" parts of a given book. Then she would put each of the books up on the ledge above the chalkboard. The class would vote on the book that they wanted to read most. But Linda didn't give in so easily. She would tease the students until they were *begging* her to be allowed to read the books. She had them hooked. She helped to create a craving to learn. She did the same type of introduction with classical music.

Even with the most creative, enthusiastic teacher, stress and conflict can creep into the classroom. In order to deal with stressful times, Linda would rely on breathing exercises. She also incorporated the students into the stress relief strategies:

And I would have the kids, if it was a stressful situation in the room, either play some kind of game or they would do some type of yoga stretch or they would march in place or, well, the older kids wouldn't do that. They would do certain exercises. They would like dance in place and stuff like that. So it cleared the air, broke up the energy; the stressful energy. She explained that meditation helped her with these stressful situations, and that she would incorporate these strategies because:

I wanted it to be a win-win situation. There were things I thoroughly enjoyed. I thoroughly enjoyed the projects; I thoroughly enjoyed confusing the stimulus response, uh, that whole thing. I enjoyed exposing these kids to more quality even though, it was more like a game. But the games we played were quality, the plays we did were quality. It was like *Helen Keller*, *The Christmas Carol*; it wasn't like cutsey little stuff. I had a real strong urge to expose these kids to quality. Now, I'm sure that in some kids it didn't take root, but I'm sure in some kids there's a little tinge of that somewhere. And I learned for one thing, no matter what background students are from, they respond to quality. Every…every person responds to quality in some way…. It was a quality education. Now that I look back on it, I realize one of the reasons I was into culture, exposing these kids to culture was because that's the way I was taught. So in a way, it wasn't like, altruistic, it was like-the schools I went to; all through school, we had French music appreciation and art appreciation and things like that. I just wanted to give

the kids a little of that. And the principal said to me one time, "What are you doing with these pictures on the wall, these kids can't even read." Well, what happened was; this is so funny. The day I released the books is the day, the day he decided to look in the room. In the window, in the room, he saw them all reading, and he walked in… He said, "What are they doing…reading…what?" I also found out the kids could read a lot better if they could relax and focus. I found out that when they were exposed to the tools enough that they could read if they were able to calm down and focus.

Linda created an atmosphere conducive for students to be calm and focused and this enabled them to learn and to want to learn. Her own calmness and focus from meditation seeped into the classroom environment. I immediately think of Hiam Ginnot's quote stated earlier regarding the teacher who sets the climate of the classroom. Linda's tactics had worked in creating a meaningful learning environment. She also wanted to ensure that these students received "quality"—not just quantifiable lessons, but quality, cultural opportunities that many students in a low-income environment would not have the privilege of having. She refused to teach down to their economic level. She wanted to elevate them to the same level of quality in arts/culture/education that she recalls receiving in her years at private schools growing up.

In order to survive the stress of the administration, Linda needed to use some different tactics. She explained that ultimately she always received high ratings as a teacher because: "I didn't send kids to the office, and I was there on time. (*laughs*) That was, that was the key, to be there on time. (*laughs*)

In comparing how she would handle certain situations prior to practicing meditation to after she started to meditate, Linda says:

> Before I meditated, I was always trying to fit in. So I was doing a pretty fair job presenting the material and, you know, keeping the demerits lists and all that stuff and keeping kids after school and everything. And uh, I just found myself being stressed out, worried about the work and, you know, having to take off weekends to thoroughly relax and de-stress. But after I started meditation, it became more rich. It was a more rich experience and more relaxing and, I didn't have to take time out to de-stress. Cause I was pretty relaxed because I knew after I meditated that I had the tools I needed to diffuse situations. And that's where I trusted my spontaneity, by the way. I knew I had a tool—creativity, and I knew I had a tool—spontaneity, and I trusted in them. So I wasn't really worried. Cause I knew that things would work out really well.

Linda viewed each of her students with respect. She viewed them as having far more possibilities/potential after she started to meditate. Whereas, before she started to meditate, this was not always the case:

> I used to see their IQs and their records from the previous year. I sort of categorized them. And after I meditated, I didn't really think along those lines as much. Like, this is a B student, this is a C student, that kind of thing. It was more like—I just saw… I just saw new potential, new possibilities. I was moving ahead with possibility thinking. And I was hoping that they would move ahead with possibility thinking too.

In describing her rapport with her students, Linda believes that she had an excellent

rapport with them. She was tough, but she feels that they knew that she really was kind

and cared about them. I asked her how she thought her students described her.

Laughing, she replied:

> Well I know what they said, "Miss ---, she's crazy." You better watch out. You
>
> go in that room and you're gonna have fun. (*Laughs)* They really enjoyed
>
> coming to my classroom because we did so many projects, and we did have so
>
> much fun. And also because I saw students having skills that were not part of the
>
> curriculum, but very valuable nonetheless. And I acknowledged that. Like one
>
> girl I had, she was very slow, but she was very kind to her sister, who was
>
> retarded. And I let her know how much-how beautiful that was…not in a goofy
>
> way. Do you know what I mean?

Linda maintained high expectations for her students—for all of her students—because

she adamantly felt that:

> Everybody has potential, untapped potential that they don't use and everybody
>
> doesn't wanna use it because, you know, we're all lazy, and we all get stuck in
>
> ruts and stuff like that. But I particularly like teaching struggling students
>
> because they have a certain delightfulness that other kids don't have. I don't
>
> know what it is. A certain something that really appealed to me. And I
>
> appreciated that. I appreciated their uniqueness, their individuality and who they
>
> really were. I had a deep appreciation of that. It made me happy.

When thinking about her experiences teaching and interacting with students after she started to meditate compared to the first ten years of teaching when she did not meditate, Linda explains that:

> The classroom, after meditation, became not only a sacred space, but it became more of a play space. And so it was sacred, but also a lot of playing went on. There was more cooperation that they did, where kids were helping each other. More cooperation where the gang leaders-you have to understand, some of these kids carried knives at that time. It was different. Like if you have a knife-if you even have a butter knife now you're in jail, but back then kids just carried knives to school and sometimes even guns. So this was like a different environment and so-it was just right up my alley. Because, I -I thrived on the challenge. And the more I meditated, the more I thrived on the challenges that I was up against. It was serious situations, and many times there were sad things that came to my attention. But I felt that these are God's children and they, they deserve a glimpse into their true identity, not who society puts them in that particular slot. So even if I gave them a glimpse or a spark that was enough for me. And I never looked at the results because there were no results. There were some results, where kids got excited about writing or they got excited about art, or they got excited about certain information, but… it was-I was there to help kids realize that they were a lot more than who they thought they were.

Portrait of Mike

Upon walking into the suburban high school where Mike teaches, it instantly becomes obvious that this building is undergoing major construction work. Half of the building is still the original building, and the other half looks like a state-of-the-art educational facility with wide, bright hallways, a huge gymnasium with a jumbotron, multiple computer labs, a television studio, and a large group instruction room with amphitheater seating. The classrooms in this new portion of the building are carpeted, equipped with computers, brand new furniture, SmartBoards and LCD projectors. Looking around the old part of the building (where classes are still taking place as well), there is a very different scenario. Hallways are narrow, dim, dreary. Parts of the hallways are boarded up where the construction divide occurs. The temperature is colder over in this part due to the outside air seeping in through the plywood make-shift walls. The classrooms are at full capacity. All teachers must share classrooms, so that there is never an empty room during a lunch or planning period.

Clearly, this high school is moving ahead in a positive direction to offer top-of-the-line amenities to its students. I was told that this is an extensive renovation project that is at about the half-way point to completion. Teachers and students are experiencing the growing pains—this is the third year for the project, but with high hopes of being able to enjoy an outstanding facility in the near future. Mike, however, is fortunate to already be in the new part of the building.

His classroom is really a computer lab. There are approximately thirty student computers and the teacher computer in the room. The room is carpeted and contains very nice, new computer tables and chairs.   He teaches Graphic Design I and Graphic Design

II to ninth through twelfth grade students. His courses are elective courses, so he usually finds that students who are in his classes want to be there. However, there are a number of students each semester who just needed another elective credit and their guidance counselors signed them up for the course without their wishing to be placed there.

Attached to his classroom is the Yearbook Room. Mike is also the sponsor of the school's yearbook. Unfortunately, due to construction this year, it has been turned into a make-shift faculty planning room; however, starting next year it will be returned to him for his use as a workshop room for the yearbook.

When looking at all of the renovation work taking place and looking at Mike's new computer lab, one might assume that this is a wealthy school district. It's located in a suburban area, but has a wide range as far as demographics are concerned. Approximately 1800 students attend the high school. These students range from upper-middle class families to families who live in the projects. There are two housing projects that feed into this school. The housing projects contain African-American students who have moved from the inner city and students who are new to this country. This school district has one of the highest numbers of English Language Learners in the county. Many of the ELL students are refugee students from the Bosnia/Croatia area or from the Sudan. A large number of them never spoke English prior to coming to the United States. Most from the region of the Sudan have never even stepped foot inside of a classroom. These students are illiterate in any language.

This school district is interesting in that there are students who live in million dollar houses, students who live in average suburban homes (these are the majority) and

students who live in housing projects. Mike describes his school as being a good case study on diversity.

The interviews were held in Mike's room after school. Mike, who is in his late thirties, has a calm presence and is dressed during both interviews in casual dress pants with a collared shirt under a blazer. I must note here also that he looks young for his age. By looking at him, one would not guess that he's approaching forty. He looks to be no more than thirty years old. Very quickly, I realize the truth behind the words of his personal narrative:

The most obvious of those changes [experienced from meditating] are in the form of patience and calmness of demeanor. I find the changes to continue to develop over time. In the classroom, my patience has drastically improved over the last few years. An incident that would have caused me to become aggravated in the past, now evokes a sense of compassion. An example of this would be when a student displays behaviors that would be confrontational in nature. Five years ago, I would have reacted to the behavior. Now, I am immediately drawn to the circumstances that are causing that student to behave in that manner. My communication with that student is far different and I have found that I am more successful in my communication with the student, resolving the conflict before it escalates.

I sometimes feel like an observer of life while participating. In traffic for instance, I would have found an aggressive driver who is ill-mannered, even vulgar towards other drivers to be a nuisance and perhaps even cause me to become irritated. Now, when I see that same type of driver, that same type of

person, I allow them to pass. I feel sorry for them and that they have so much

anger and lack of balance. I don't know what inner suffering is causing that

person to behave in that manner, I don't know the circumstances in that person's

life. I consider that this person may be experiencing a crisis, perhaps this person

is reacting to an emergency. I silently offer my wishes for this person to find

peace, I allow them to pass. Whatever the urgency, it is obviously very important

to that person at the moment.

Mike definitely exudes a peacefulness, a calmness. In a relaxed manner, he begins to

answer my questions.

Mike has taught at the high school level for over fourteen years. He's certified in

studio art although he has primarily taught graphic design. He has been meditating for

close to five years. Reading about philosophy—mainly eastern philosophy—and eastern

cultures made him decide to learn to meditate. He practices a form of silent mantra

meditation in which he focuses on his breathing while silently repeating a mantra given

specifically to him by a meditation teacher.

Each meditation lasts approximately a half hour. Ideally, he likes to meditate at

least once a day; however, with teaching full-time and raising three children who are

eight years old and younger, he averages five meditations per week. During really busy

weeks, that number might slip to only two to three times a week, but during the summer,

he is able to meditate more frequently.

Mike explains that he practices meditation for several reasons. Meditation helps

him to be more peaceful, to create a stronger mind-body connection and a mind-body-

soul connection. He views life as a journey and believes that meditation is helping him

along that journey. Meditation has also benefited his physical and mental health. For instance, he believes that his mind is sharper, more focused and has better comprehension ability. Physically, Mike explains that his health has benefited:

> I think my immune system has improved considerably since I started meditating. That and, headaches, I think are far less as well, along with any kind of stomach or nausea problems. And I think that's due to a lack of stress, or better, better stress management at least.

When asked if meditation has helped him to more accurately judge people, he replied:

> I don't like the word judge. I think if anything, I've learned not to be judgmental. Cause then, everyone has their own circumstances. So someone who may be doing something that appears unethical, they may be doing it for reasons that are, um, I don't know, very difficult. Could be survival oriented. So, yeah, I'm careful not to judge and that's something I may not have done before meditation.

He continued to say that meditation has helped him to "read" people better.

> Meditation has also helped him to alleviate fears. He attributes this to his ability to be able to better accept circumstances:

> You start to accept things. You accept the world for what it is. You accept that things are out of your control. Life is difficult and there's nothing you can do about it. So you don't blame and you know, you understand that everything happens for a purpose. Everything happens. If you accept that everything happens exactly as it is supposed to, then you do lose fear for things that are out of your control.

This feeling of acceptance goes beyond helping him to alleviate fears of the future and the unknown. He has also developed a sense of acceptance for himself and for others. He explains that meditation has helped him to have a better understanding of himself, and has definitely given him a greater ability to accept others for who they are.

When asked if meditation has helped him to develop a more spontaneous nature, he replied that it did not. However, meditation has helped him to develop a more individual code of ethics. He attributes this to now being able to view people differently—with more acceptance. His individual code of ethics prevents him from necessarily following a prescribed set of rules set forth by his church for instance.

Mike also expressed that he does not feel the need to follow along with conventional ideas and practices. He explains that this is a blending of what he has learned through meditation and what he has learned through practicing martial arts. He believes that his practice of meditation and his practice of martial arts are closely related. Mike connects the idea of not simply following along with conventional thoughts and behaviors with his sense of duty in life. Although, he doesn't necessarily know what his exact purpose in life is or that he even has a specific purpose, he does believe that meditation has helped to define is overall duty (meant in broad terms) in life:

> So many people are caught up in a rat race, where they're working jobs they
> dislike, making money to buy things they don't need, and you know, whether they
> like going to a football game or they, they like vacationing at spot X or going to
> restaurant Z, or whatever it might be, that doesn't cross their minds. They're
> doing what's expected of them. And I think people who meditate have…--

they're on their own path. They're not influenced by things that mainstream society dictates as the expectations for success.

I asked him if he thought that teaching was his life's calling. He replied:

Teaching, living peacefully, helping people, being part of another person's success, easing their suffering, living compassionately. I don't know what the title is, but in the meantime, I'm just living a compassionate life, a peaceful life. And I'll find out later what the big endzone's gonna look like, I guess.

In describing a time when he felt tremendously happy, ecstatic, rapturous, Mike decides that:

It's…it wouldn't be a big moment. You know, spike the ball, do a touchdown dance moment, you know, receive and award and, you know, colleagues are clapping for you in the auditorium. You know, nothing like that. It would be more, more along the lines of holding Alaina's (his oldest daughter) hand and walking and having a conversation or doing something with Jimmy (his son) that you can see that he's making these connections and it's just having one of those moments that you know will be a memory; a memory of theirs' 30 years later. And then, what does it feel like? It's just that you're aware how important that moment is. And it doesn't have to be anything spectacular. It doesn't have to be anywhere other than the backyard or in the family room, at the library, at the zoo.

During these type of moments, Mike explains that he is more aware of his surroundings:

The one thing I'd be doing differently is being aware. Just being aware of this just incredible feeling of purpose and contentment and just everything feeling absolutely perfect. You know, that this is the absolute meaning of life, right here.

Our first interview concluded, and I left with a sense that Mike truly has many positive qualities for being a teacher. A calmness, poise, stillness almost emanates from him. He seems to embody a quietness and softness that instantly puts people at ease. There is nothing harsh or abrasive about his personality, just a gentle friendliness.

For the second interview, I arrive a bit early and witness his interaction with his students. Again, he has a calm demeanor. His students feel comfortable coming up and asking him questions. The classroom does not have strict order; however, it is apparent that amidst the chatting, there is productive work taking place. Mike has classical music playing in the background. A few students joke with him. He laughs and jokes back. Clearly, his students view him as a teacher with whom they can relate. Although, I don't want to give the impression that the students don't show him respect. They honestly seem to want his opinion on their projects and listen attentively as he offers them pointers on how to make their work better. When the bell rings, he wishes them a good afternoon. As they leave, they say goodbye.

We begin our second interview focusing on how Mike handles stress and conflict in the classroom. I ask him how he typically handles a student who is misbehaving, and he replies:

Very differently than I would have five years ago. Five years ago I would have become agitated, allowed it to aggravate me. Now, I just seem to have patience of steel. I surprise myself with how patient I've become. Students will actually

comment on that and say, "Boy, my dad would've flipped" or, "I have other teachers that really would've flew off the handle." Yeah, I've noticed that. It takes a lot to get me aggravated and that was not the case before.

So if they're misbehaving; rather than it bother me, I'm usually able to deal with it immediately just by communicating, and the kids respond differently if you don't lose your temper. But I think they're so used to people losing their temper that there's a conditioned response. But I think when they see that you're not aggravated, that you're just reminding them that it's time to reel back here. They respond to that. I have very few behavior problems now.

As far as being able to handle stress and conflict within the classroom, Mike explains that he has a difficult time answering that question because:

I don't get stressed in the classroom very often. (*laughs*) I don't know, I think what's stressful for a lot of people isn't necessarily stressful for someone who meditates or someone who, uh, has a more peaceful mannerism. I don't know-- I don't get stressed very easily when it comes to work. I think when a student sees that you do not become aggravated—if you stay calm, there's a calmness in your voice then I think they're more likely to calm themselves as well. If you meet that conflict with aggression, then you're gonna escalate it, then that, that situation's just gonna become worse. Probably fights are the most stressful conflicts that we would have to deal with in this environment. In a fight, students, their adrenaline is flowing, they're agitated, they're hostile. You can handle that in a calm manner, even if you use an authoritative voice. Or, if you use body language, that, that will establish yourself as the authority. Meeting that

aggression with a calm manner though has, in my case, always helped to deescalate the situation. Especially making eye contact, making sure that you become that student's focal point; stepping in front of their field of vision. And you establish that close relationship with eye contact, instantly.

The example of a fight is an extreme example, so Mike provides a more typical example of reacting to a student who is late to class:

Something like that I think teachers become defensive over because you almost want to take it personally. But you have to understand that kids have their own set of circumstances, and what they perceive as priorities are not necessarily what we see, so we're trying to teach them to correct their priorities and become more responsible. The kids know that I'm not gonna argue with them. I'm not gonna become aggravated. We're not gonna become enemies over tardies. If it's a problem then it has to be written up and it goes to the office. That's the procedure; that's the process, and they know that. And they know I'm gonna write this up; I have to send it to the office. Hopefully, you're going to correct the behavior, but in the meantime we don't have to… we're not gonna become enemies over this. And I think they become less defiant. Because if you have a student who does wanna push your buttons, I think they're less likely to do that if you handle it in that manner.

I asked him how he handles other forms of classroom interruptions caused by students misbehaving such as students who interrupt lessons by yelling out or by walking around the room and goofing around as he is trying to teach a lesson. All teachers at some point

or another have experienced not being able to teach a lesson due to students misbehaving. Mike is no exception:

> And that (misbehavior) does happen. And some students, they're medicated. And some of them can't help it. And that's hard for us to understand that. But that personal contact is first. Establishing that personal relationship with students is important. Cause it's easy to walk over to them and tap them on the shoulder and they know. Okay, I need you back here, without correcting them in front of everyone, making an example of them, but doing it in more of a sensitive manner. Cause they're kids, too. Okay, so, something out in the hall—so something just, something distracted them. Now they're saying something inappropriate, or they're not paying attention. So I need to reel them back without embarrassing them. I think they appreciate that. And then I'm gonna have their attention. But then you have the kid who will continue and then you try to reel them in again, by trying to make them apart of the conversation. So, you try to give them an opportunity to participate and leave that negative behavior behind, become a positive part of the classroom community. That seems to work. If not, then you have to address them, but I do it in a quiet manner, where I'll lean over and talk to them in their ear or over the shoulder and say, "I need you to pay attention here" or something, still something that's not aggressive. Something that's not going to put them on the defensive, cause when that happens, forget it, then you're gonna have an enemy.

Even though Mike now experiences very little stress (or at least perceived stress) due to meditation, I wanted to know how he does handle a situation in which he feels stressed in the classroom. How does he cope personally with the stress and demands of the job? Pausing for a moment, Mike says:

> I can't say that I have moments where I'm feeling enough stress that I have to reel back, or I would have to remove myself. I guess if I was aggravated enough I would just have to disconnect from the situation for a moment, just to regain my balance. And I think that the only time that I've ever experienced that would be in dealing with a fight. So, yeah, in the last, say five years, there was a fight where a student hit another right in the face and that was just a very upsetting visual to see another be so aggressive. That would be the only time afterwards that I would have to just give myself a bit of downtime just to regain my balance again.

I ask him if meditation has played a role in enable him to handle stress differently in the classroom—to handle it more positively. He expresses that meditation certainly does help him in handling stressful classroom situations. Mike recalls that five or so years ago:

> I would've become defensive. I would've taken it personally. Now I see a student and, especially knowing what some of these kids deal with… We had a kid, his house burnt down. Another kid, his mother passed away. There was a student whose father committed suicide. We've had some kids deal with some really awful things that kids this age should never have to deal with. So knowing these kids come from backgrounds that uh, really could turn the world upside down. It's hard to really get aggravated at a person without knowing what's

causing the behavior. So, yeah, I'm not as quick to react emotionally as I

would've been before meditating. Before meditating, I would've expected this

student to respect me, my position, to behave, to follow the classroom rules. You

become a little older, a little wiser, a little more experienced, and you understand

that these kids are dealing with a lot of emotions and situations that are very

difficult for an adult to handle, let alone a teenager. So some of their behaviors

are deeply rooted in a situation that is causing that student a lot of pain.

Not only does Mike notice a difference now with how he handles stress and conflict in

the classroom after having been practicing meditation, there are other facets of teaching

that he believes are different or improved due to practicing meditation. He's been

teaching for over fourteen years, and he's been meditating for the last five years of that

time. Here are some of the changes that he attributes to meditating:

I think I communicate better with the students. And I think the reason is because

I understand them better. I have a better rapport with them than I did in the

beginning of my teaching career. And some of that comes with the experience of

teaching, but also, I think that, I have more—I have more of a compassionate way

of living now, since meditating. And because of that awareness, (*snaps*) I think in

turn then, my communication with the students is better, my rapport with the

students is better, and because of that, then I know I'm not leaving anyone behind.

I know that they understand; I'm happy to spend the time with the student to

make sure. Some students take longer than others. I have a student who's mildly

retarded, yet he's in mainstream courses. Sometimes it takes three times

explaining it. You may explain it perfectly and then the very next day you'll

come in and he'll have no recollection of what we did the day before. And I

know that that would've drove me crazy ten years ago, eight years ago. But it's

hard to be aggravated when you know that kid honestly does not remember. Your

heart just goes out to that kid. If he needs me to explain it to him ten times to get

it correctly, then that's what I do. I don't know if I would've had—not that I

wouldn't have had the patience years ago… but I don't think I would've had the

understanding five or so years ago.

From the previous questions and from seeing him interact with some students, I can tell

that Mike has an excellent rapport with his students. In order to find out some more

specifics from him, I asked him some questions pertaining to how he perceives his

interactions with his students. He views each of his students as individuals and says that

although they have similarities, "Each of them is just an ocean of circumstances and each

one has to be approached as an individual." Overall, he feels that he has an excellent

rapport with his students:

I'm very happy with my relationship with them. It's funny that you would think

that your Christmas vacation or your summer vacation would be such a… just a

great time away, but it's hard not to think of them. You'll hear that there's a car

accident, and immediately, I get a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach

thinking, "It could be one of our kids." Well you wonder how they're doing.

Some of these students here don't have the structure at home that they need, and

they rely on you to be that father figure, to be that, that role model, to be the

mentor. During the span of summer vacation, you're not there, so it's hard not to

think about them. Of course I love being off for the summer, but it's hard not to

worry about them too. You figure if a student comes here and this is the only

structure in their life, and you're the best part of that kid's day, so then,

essentially, you're the best part of that kid's life and then you're absent for three

months—so yeah, I think I'm very happy with the relationship I have, and during

those spans of time, I worry about them. Over the weekends and the holiday

breaks, some of them make some bad choices. You hope that they're not getting

into a car after drinking. You hope that the people around them will watch out for

them when they're vulnerable. It's a very personal relationship.

Clearly, Mike greatly values his students and the relationship that he has with them. How

does he think his students view him? How does he think that they might describe him?

"I think a number of them see me as a mentor. I think a number of them would refer to

me as being understanding and caring."   He also believes that they would describe him

as being calm and relaxed. Furthermore, he says:

 I think a number of them find it odd that I'm interested in so many different

things. A number of them are, I think very interested that I'm involved in

different things. Such as the opera, or history, music, art, martial arts, and not

sports, and not pop culture. Cause everyone's interested in pop culture. I think a

number of them are impressed with the fact that I live outside of the

mainstream; that I do have these interests that are very different than what they

have in their circles or in their neighborhoods.

Mike also demonstrates that he has high expectations for his students. In response to my

question regarding what his expectations are for his students, he replies:

> To do the best they can and hopefully to succeed beyond where they saw
> themselves. So, I hope they become more competitive. I hope that they hold
> higher standards for themselves. But one thing over and over that I will preach is
> that they have to be happy. So, so many of them are misled by this worship of
> money, and they see success as, basically working a job, like it or don't like it, so
> that you make more money, so you can buy things that you really don't need.
> And I think a number of them are becoming more aware of the fact that success is
> not a materialistic result; that success is more of a lifestyle. So I hope that
> they'll… I hope that they'll find happiness and not money. I hope money isn't
> their goal.

He conveys his expectations to his students through being a positive role model and also
through the projects he has students complete in his classes. For instance:

> If I know that they can do better, I will let them know about it. And we have a lot
> of group discussions and often times we'll discuss whether or not they have
> worked to their full potential; whether or not they are extending themselves;
> whether or not they are reaching beyond their abilities.

Mike believes that meditation has definitely enabled him to interact and view his students
differently. He maintains that meditation has positively affected him:

> It (meditation) changes so, so many aspects of your life. The way you perceive
> the world, the way you perceive people, the way you communicate with people.
> So it's hard not for it to affect how you deal with students.

In comparing his first nine years of teaching to the past five years when he also
meditated, Mike explains:

I've always liked the job. And I've always liked the kids. But I don't think I fully appreciated it until these last few years. And I think a lot of people get burned out. In my case it was more of an awakening after my first nine years. So now I think I can fully appreciate it, and I enjoy it more, and I understand the importance of the job now. While I think a lot of people start to…they start to tune out; they start to disconnect. There are some very good teachers who don't. Some do improve with age. But I, I do see a difference in the last few years, and I think it was…I think it's more of an awakening than just becoming a more experienced teacher.

RESULTS

Beyond what each of these participants wrote in his/her personal narratives and what he/she said in his/her interviews, it must be noted that certain dispositions, certain personality traits were detected in each of them. Each of the participants had a quality of calmness and kindness, yet also had a wonderful sense of humor. Their humor was not a mocking, deprecating humor, but more of a jolly, carefree kind of humor and light-heartedness. Each of the participants seemed to embody a strong sense of self-confidence that was balanced with humility. Most interestingly, each participant was keenly interested in his/her self-growth along with their students' growth and full-potential being realized.

The following pages break down each of the main categories of the study in order to provide an analysis and summary.

Background and Meditation Analysis/Summary

Elementary school, middle school and high school teachers were represented in this study. Both male and female perspectives were given from teachers who have taught for fourteen to seventeen years. The participants ranged in age from being in their late thirties to early seventies. Years of meditation range from five years to thirty-six years. Each of the participants teaches or has taught in a school with mixed diversity and with a large portion of students from low-income families.

All of the participants practice silent mantra meditation; the elementary school teacher (Deb) and the middle school teacher (Linda) both faithfully meditate twice a day, every day for approximately twenty minutes each time, while the high school teacher

(Mike) only meditates an average of five times per week for approximately thirty minutes each time.

While all three of the participants said that they meditate in order to relieve stress and to receive the benefits of physical and mental health, Deb and Linda appeared to have more of a connection with the spiritual aspects of meditation. Mike noted some spiritual development with an overall sense of peacefulness and mind-body-spirit connection, but the other two teachers emphasized the spiritual side of meditation more.

Physically, Linda and Mike strongly agreed that meditation greatly improved their physical health. Linda even contributes meditation to saving her life after a horrible car accident. Deb agrees that meditation has helped her physically to create a stronger body-mind connection and that meditation has helped her to stay healthier overall, yet her responses to the physical health benefits questions were not as strong as the other two teachers.

Mentally, all three teachers expressed findings of benefits from meditation. Deb said that meditation helped her to beat depression and to avoid the traps of mental issues that ran in her family. Linda claims that meditation has helped her to remain calm and to relieve neurosis. Mike experiences a peaceful, calm state of being with increased focus and clarity due to meditation. All three teachers concur that meditation has benefited them both physically and mentally over the years. Again, no adverse reactions—physically or mentally—were indicated by any of the participants. Meditation appears to have no known side effects.

Self-Actualization Analysis/Summary

Why is the development of self-actualizing qualities so important for teachers? If a teacher is certified, has received satisfactory ratings from his/her administrators, and does a decent job teaching, then why be concerned with his/her psychological development? To answer these questions, one must consider Maslow's basic definition of self-actualization being "The full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, and the like" (Maslow, 1987, p. 126). On perhaps the most simplified level, a reasonable answer might be that if teachers are working towards cultivating their own unlimited potential, then hopefully they will serve as positive role models for their students to also work towards achieving their full potential. Abundantly clear in the narratives and the interviews of each teacher was this emphasis of developing their own and their students' full potential. Each teacher attributed this factor to the practice of meditation. All three of the teachers set high expectations for their students and supported them through encouragement.

Setting high expectations for one's students is necessary for the students to reach their full potential; however, each student might have his/her own specific abilities/talents that factor into his full potential. In order to ensure a more individualized approach to helping each student reach his/her full potential, having a solid understanding of each student is essential. While the participants varied in their responses to the question pertaining to meditation helping them to detect dishonest people and/or to more accurately judge people, (Deb agreed with this whole-heartedly, Linda said that usually she felt she could do this, and Mike preferred to replace the word "judging" with "understanding."), they all agreed that meditation helped them to develop a greater sense

of awareness and understanding. This awareness and understanding allowed each of the teachers to understand the needs of their students and to support them accordingly.

All of the participants said that they absolutely felt that meditation helped them to alleviate fears—particularly of the unknown. Linda explained it as "adventuring." She said that meditation has helped her to embrace the unknown and look at it with a sense of power and creativity. Deb also stated that meditation absolutely alleviated her fears of the unknown. Mike agrees and said that his fears of the unknown, particularly that of the future have been minimized due to meditation. The main reason that each of the participants gave for their fears being alleviated due to meditation dealt with the connection with acceptance. Two of the key questions pertaining to self-actualizing qualities revolve around the concept of acceptance: acceptance of oneself and acceptance of others. Not only did each of the participants indicate that meditation enabled them to be more accepting of themselves and others (only Linda stated that she was still working on accepting herself), but this acceptance of oneself and others seems to following through with accepting situations that are out of one's control. Each participant felt that they were better able to accept situations and circumstances as they encountered them. This ability allowed them to overcome any fear that may arise from the thought of not being in control or of not knowing what would happen next.

The one question that did not have a consensus with the participants was the question asking if meditation has helped them to develop a more spontaneous nature. Both Deb and Linda said that meditation did help them to become more spontaneous; however, Mike said that he was no more spontaneous after meditating for five years than he was prior to meditating. This was the first of three questions dealing with the category

of spontaneity as a self-actualizing quality. The other two questions found more of a consensus between the three participants. All participants said that as far as developing an individual code of ethics and feeling comfortable going against conventional thought and/or behavior, they usually agreed with both questions. None of them were absolutely in agreement with having an individual code of ethics or going against conventions. Primarily, they felt that sometimes it was wiser to go along with conventional behavior or to acquiesce to certain social norms in order to avoid conflict. The participants indicated that they felt comfortable going against conventions, and that if and when necessary, they would be able to uphold their own beliefs; however, they would not just capriciously or just for the sake of being different defy societal conventions.

As stated earlier, each of the participants have experienced greater intrinsic motivation and motivation for self-growth due to meditation. This desire for self-growth fosters their awareness of needing to constantly develop new ways to teach and to relate to students. Their intrinsic motivation instills in them the goal of fulfilling their full potential. They view this as not only making themselves better teachers, but also enabling them to help students to reach their full potential as well.

Ultimately, meditation has instilled in each of the teachers a sense of purpose or duty in life (part of self-actualization's problem centering rather than ego centering). Deb feels that she is definitely meant to be a teacher—whether that means to be an elementary teacher or a meditation teacher. Mike's description of his purpose or duty in life is more generalized. He doesn't believe that there is a particular career necessarily meant for him, but rather, his overall role in people's lives is to serve as a teacher and a role model who lives peacefully and compassionately, and helps people to realize their own

potential. Linda is a bit more elusive in her response. She said that she definitely has a purpose/duty in life, and that she knows exactly what that purpose is; however, she would not share it. She has never told anybody; it's her "secret."

Based upon the responses of these three participants, it appears as if meditation absolutely leads teachers to develop self-actualizing qualities. Most importantly related to the field of education, meditation has enabled these teachers to alleviate fears, to be more accepting of themselves and others, to become intrinsically motivated and motivated for self-growth, and to understand their purpose/duty in life.

Thematic Analysis/Summary

Throughout the personal narratives and the interviews, numerous themes, metaphors and patterns emerged. The thematic patterns present in all three of the participants consist of: calmness, compassion/kindness, deescalating of conflict/stressful situations, sharper/more focused, acceptance (of self, others, situations), understanding and/or "reading" people better, alleviation of fears, individual code of ethics/beliefs/practices, sense of duty/purpose in life, awareness/awakening, contentment, does not use conditioned-response patterns, does not take student misbehavior personally, positive rapport with students, works to humanize rather than dehumanize students, does not "react"/not reactionary, sees the whole student, teaches beyond the curriculum, expectations are for students to reach their full potential, sense of humor, observational powers, created calm/focused learning environments.

These areas of commonality between the participants create an overall picture of a teacher who has moved past the egoic mindset of power and control and has delved into

the realm of being the facilitator of learning—learning both on the curricular level and on

the individualized, self-growth level. These teachers embody the belief that all students

can, regardless of background or current levels of deficiency, grow into more fully

realized beings. This philosophy does not just involve the students, but the teacher

him/herself also strives to evolve into a more fully realized individual in order to better

understand his/her students, to discover ways to deescalate stressful situations, and to

create calm, positive learning environments.

Areas of divergence between the participants are somewhat minor and may

indeed be a factor of wording or of simply not discovering a particular theme in the

participants' personal narrative or in the responses/anecdotal stories that he/she shared

during the interview. For instance, certain participants may have worded a response

differently than another participant or perhaps they did not think to include a description

of something that they take for granted as being second nature to them. Also, when

looking at Table 5.4 Thematic Matrix, one will notice divergent categories that perhaps

only apply to one of the participants. In these cases, often times it was due to this being a

particular description/wording offered as a type of metaphor by that teacher. Therefore,

the same idea or concept might overlap with another area of convergence found within

the matrix.

However, there are a few unmistakable areas of divergence. These definite areas

of divergence appear to relate to spiritual pursuits connected with meditation. For

example, only Deb and Linda indicated that they absolutely view meditation as a means

to further their spirituality. Mike hinted at this in places, but Deb and Linda made it quite

clear that beyond the stress relieving abilities of meditation, they meditate faithfully

every day for the spiritual connection as well. This ties in with an earlier area of

divergence. Mike is the only participant who did not express consistency in his practice

of meditation. He meditates on average five times a week, but when he's busy,

meditation does not appear to remain his top priority. He seems to meditate when, and if,

he finds the time. Both Deb and Linda, however, were clear that no matter what else was

going on in their lives, they made it a priority to meditate. They viewed meditation as a

means to cope with the chaos in their lives, not as the chaos being a hindrance to

meditation.

To further distinguish between the participants, Linda was the only one to indicate

that she had experienced moments of "bliss" or peak experiences. Linda explained living

in the present moment as well. These descriptions tie in with the transcendental level that

extends beyond self-actualization according to Maslow. Deb came the closest to this

when she explained a time when she was meditating, and her mind felt as if it "opened

up." Deb further used the metaphor of clouds to describe her mind being clear and free of

being "clouded." Another indication that Deb might be close to the transcendental

experiences noted by Linda is her sense of seeing all beings as one. Although Mike has

many qualities related to self-actualization, he does not appear to have moved past the

qualities associated with self-actualization in order to move into the realm of

transcendental qualities. While neither Linda nor Deb appear to completely embody the

elements of the transcendental state described by Maslow, and they do not indicate that

they are always at that elevated level of existence, it does seem that they have at least had

a glimpse of the transcendental level at some points in their lives.

An explanation for the differences between Mike, Linda and Deb in this area might be linked with the number of years each participant has meditated along with the consistency of the daily meditations. Both Linda and Deb have meditated for a considerable number of years, and they both meditate faithfully two times each day for approximately twenty to thirty minutes each time. Meditation is ingrained into their daily schedules. Mike, however, has only been meditating for five years, and does not consistently practice meditation; meditation occurs when he can fit it in rather than being an integral part of his daily routine.

Table 4.1

Thematic Matrix

X=Present in this participant

Emergent Themes/Patterns/ Metaphors	Deb	Linda	Mike
Patience		X	X
Calmness	X	X	X
Compassion/Kindness	X	X	X
Better Communication	X		X
Deescalating of conflict/stressful situations	X	X	X
"Observer of Life" metaphor			X
Peacefulness		X	X
Mind-body-soul connection		X	X
Sharper, more focused	X	X	X
Acceptance (of self, others, situations)	X	X	X
Nonjudgmental		X	X
Improved immune system		X	X
Understanding and/or "reading" people better	X	X	X
Alleviation of fears	X	X	X
Individual code of ethics/beliefs/practices	X	X	X
Sense of duty/purpose in life	X	X	X
Awareness/awakening	X	X	X
Contentment		X	X
Does not use conditioned-response patterns	X	X	X
Does not take student misbehavior personally	X	X	X
Positive rapport with students	X	X	X
Works to humanize, not dehumanize students	X	X	X
Does not "react;" not reactionary	X	X	X
Sees the whole student (i.e. student's background, personal issues)	X	X	X
Teaching extends beyond the curriculum (cares/concerned with students' whole being)	X	X	X
Attempts to broaden students' horizons (make them more culturally aware/well-rounded)		X	X
Sense of appreciation		X	X

Expectations are for each student to reach his/her full potential	X	X	X
Sense of humor	X	X	X
Spontaneity	X	X	
Love of challenges	X	X	
Persistence		X	
Flexible	X	X	
Creativity	X	X	
Inspiring	X	X	
Relaxed		X	X
Visualization of physical healing		X	
Absence of neuroses		X	
Innocence/Assumes the best about people		X	
Observational powers	X	X	X
Increased energy	X	X	
Increased happiness		X	
Light-hearted; good-natured	X	X	
Spiritual pursuits (Meditation as a means of stress reduction and spiritual connection)	X	X	
Experience of "bliss;" of peak experiences		X	
Being in the present moment		X	
"Juice of Life" metaphor		X	
Enthusiasm	X	X	
Release of the ego	X	X	
Incorporation of fun into the learning environment	X	X	
Balanced	X		
Created calm, focused learning environment	X	X	X
Able to spot superficiality or dishonesty	X		
Prevention of depression	X		
Prevention of "falling apart"	X		
Sees all beings as one	X		
Able to answer question "Why am I here?"	X		
"Mind opening up" metaphor	X		
Mind is not "clouded" metaphor	X		
Intrinsically motivated/motivated for self-growth	X	X	X

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Overall Observations

After reviewing all of the personal narratives and the interviews of the three participants, some overall observations were quickly ascertained. Most notably, none of the participants noted or indicated in any way any negative or adverse reactions/outcomes related to meditation. All of the participants indicated positive outcomes from meditating. Within both their personal and their professional lives, the participants described positive attributes of meditation. Occasionally, there was a slight difference in how strongly a participant felt about one question or the extent that meditation influenced a particular segment of his/her life. However, each participant felt that meditation did indeed change his/her life for the better and that through the practice of meditation, he/she developed into teachers who were healthier psychologically and better able to handle stress and conflict within the classroom. Additionally, each teacher viewed his/her interactions with the students as more positive and rewarding due to meditation.

Extensions of Previous Research

Earlier studies have investigated the effects of meditation upon self-actualization and upon teachers. Maslow (1964) himself felt that our education system was "failing to enlarge the personality," and that rather, education should be improving "all human capacities, not only the cognitive ones" (p. 48, 50).

In order to determine if meditation helped one's movement towards self-actualization, Hunynh (2004) used various quantitative scales and questionnaires to measure Vietnamese American Buddhists who practice mantra meditation. The findings indicate that meditation did help to reduce stress and to aid movement towards self-actualization. Hunynh recommends further research in this area needs to be conducted that involves participants who are long-term, consistent meditators. The three teachers in this dissertation's study provide the long-term, consistent criteria to expand upon Hunynh's (2004) research. Also, by utilizing a more open-ended, qualitative approach, the participants were able to share ideas that might not be included in a predetermined scale.

Janowiak's (1993) research determined that meditation helped one move towards self-actualization. Janowiak utilized several scales to reach this conclusion and then suggested that further research needed to be done in which a more qualitative approach was implemented in order to discover insights perhaps not found within the measurement scales. The research conducted in this dissertation provides the type of extension in a qualitative methodology suggested by Janowiak.

 One of the ways to accomplish an educational system that addresses all of the needs of the students is to ensure that the teachers are psychologically healthy. Studies have been conducted to determine if meditation has an effect on areas such as teacher stress and burnout. For instance, Anderson et al. (1999) utilized pretests and posttests and anxiety scales to assess the effects of meditation on teacher-perceived stress. Quantitatively, the study revealed that overall meditation did positively affect teacher stress, anxiety and burnout. The major problem with this study was that the participants

who were taught to meditate did not always adhere to their meditation instructions and practice regular meditation.

The research compiled in this dissertation extends beyond Anderson et al.'s study because it approaches the question of meditation affecting teachers from a qualitative perspective, and it focuses on teachers who have already been practitioners of meditation, so that issues of following meditation instructions and practicing regularly are reduced.

The findings of this study also support research done by Orr (2002) who posits that an educational environment that is more holistic diminishes oppressive pedagogies; therefore, alleviating discrimination in schools. By evaluating the responses of the three teachers presented in this study, it is clear that meditation has enabled them to perceive each of their students equally and with unlimited potential for all.

Gates (2005) finds that meditation allows teachers to transcend their ego and fear-based actions in order to be more trusting and compassionate. This doctoral study further supports this notion. All three of the teachers ranging from elementary to high school settings agreed that meditation has enabled them to be more accepting and compassionate towards their students. They were able let go of reacting through their egoic state and approach each student and situation more openly without the fear they might have experienced prior to meditating.

Miller (1994) taught meditation to preservice teachers in various courses at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Student responses from learning how to meditate include key themes such as being more accepting of themselves and others, acquiring a more developed listening ability, and being more relaxed and focused. The three veteran teachers highlighted in this current study echo these

preservice teachers' explanations of how meditation has affected them. Furthermore, Miller (1994) emphasizes the importance of teachers overcoming their egos. The participants portrayed in these portraits are in alignment with Miller's beliefs and indicate that meditation has helped them to be less ego-based in their teaching practices.

The research conducted by Miller and Nozawa (2002) is perhaps the most closely related research to the findings presented in this dissertation. Miller and Nozawa interviewed twenty-one teachers ranging from elementary to post-secondary schools who have meditated an average of four years. This follow-up study from Miller's research on preservice teachers yielded enlightening results, which included: a sense of calmness and gentleness, improved personal relationships, and an ability to not be as reactive at work. The subjects of the portraits found within this dissertation's study mirror and further support the findings of Miller and Nozawa (2002).

Overall Conclusions

This study set out to determine if mantra meditation created self-actualizing qualities in teachers; how teachers who practice mantra meditation perceive their response to stress and conflict within the classroom; and what perceptions do teachers who practice mantra meditation have of the effects of meditation on their personal and professional lives.

Through analysis of the personal narratives and the interviews, this researcher concludes that mantra meditation does create self-actualizing qualities in teachers. These qualities unanimously found within all of the participants include: alleviation of fears, acceptance of self and others, development of an individual code of

ethics/beliefs/practices, embodying a sense of duty/purpose in life, and ultimately striving to reach his/her full potential. These qualities have merged into the way each of the participants interact with students, create lessons and establish their classroom environments. Each participant attributed the development of these qualities to the practice of mantra meditation.

Along with self-actualizing qualities, mantra meditation appears to be linked to teachers' perceptions of the way they handle stress and conflict within the classroom. Overwhelmingly, the participants attributed their ability to remain calm, focused, and able to deescalate stressful classroom situations to the practice of meditation. Another quality that the participants noted as being transformative in regard to the way that they interact with students is the attribute of compassion. The more compassion they felt for their students, the more they were able to better understand them, the more they felt increased patience, the more they learned not to take student misbehavior personally and the more they worked to humanize rather than dehumanize a student. Furthermore, two of the participants were able to compare their levels of stress while teaching prior to starting to practice meditation to their levels of stress after they began practicing meditation. These participants were convinced that meditation helped them to better cope with stress and conflict within the classroom, often times even enabling them to prevent the stress and conflict from occurring in the first place.

All three of the participants strongly believed that the practice of mantra meditation had positive effects on both their personal and their professional lives. From mental and physical health benefits to creativity and enthusiasm to having a greater sense of awareness, these participants shared accounts of healing, of increased compassion and

kindness, of being more focused, and of having a sense of calm. All of these factors, they attributed to the practice of meditation.

From this study, it can be concluded that no adverse effects have occurred due to the practice of meditation. Only positive effects have resulted from the practice of meditation. Meditation appears to serve as a significantly positive tool for enabling teachers to attain self-actualizing qualities, to react more positively to, and in some cases, even avoid stress and conflict in the classroom, and for having positive benefits throughout teachers' personal and professional lives.

**Please refer to the matrices located in Appendix D for a comparative analysis of how each of the three participants responded to the different sets of questions.

Future Research in this Area

Determining how to create stronger, more efficient, more effective teachers is crucial before any reform movement, technological enhancements of lessons, or standardized testing can begin to improve education. Regardless of contemporary educational initiatives, the teacher himself remains as the keystone of learning within the classroom. The power and influence of the individual teacher cannot be underestimated. Therefore, if an educational system is to be improved, starting with the foundation of the individual classroom teacher is imperative. According to this study, the practice of meditation appears to have positive benefits on the teacher's psychological composition, which in turn allows the teacher to handle stress and conflict more positively in the classroom, relate better with students, provide a calm, positive learning environment and maintain high expectations for all students. In order to further explore the effects of meditation on teaching and on learning, other studies are necessary.

Future studies could include larger sample sizes and ranges of types of teachers. A larger sample size might allow for further insights that a smaller sample could have missed. Furthermore, it would be interesting to conduct a comparative analysis study in which teachers who meditate are compared with teachers who do not meditate. With this comparative study, the current methodological aspects of the interview questions could be applied, or there could be an expansion of the questions.

Another possible idea for future research could consist of taking a group of teachers who have never meditated. These teachers could be interviewed prior to learning how to meditate then they would be taught how to meditate. After meditating for a given amount of time (several months would be a suitable amount of time), they

would be interviewed again. Their pre and post interviews would be compared. Along with the interviews, the teachers could keep a daily journal documenting their experiences, changes, and perceptions of meditation. How do they feel/perceive meditation as affecting their personal and professional lives? Do they notice any changes? What kinds of changes do they see? The journals could be used as a form of triangulation with the pre and post interviews. This study could be purely qualitative, or it could be a mixed methodology study incorporating both the elements of the two interviews and the journals with a questionnaire or survey type of measurement tool.

To further extend the above research suggestion, there could be two groups of teachers who participate. The one group of teachers could be the actual participants who are taught meditation while the second group of teachers could serve as the control group. Again, with this structure, a purely qualitative methodology could be employed or a mixed methodology could be utilized.

Even though it is this researcher's belief that research in this area needs to incorporate at least some qualitative elements in order to capture the nuances and unforeseen insights shared by the participants, a future research study in this area could be purely quantitative. For instance, a well-constructed survey or questionnaire might provide a solid measurement scale that allows for a more objective approach to the overall research questions.

Another idea to incorporate a quantitative element into a study of the effects of meditation could be accomplished by looking more closely at the physical health effects of meditation. For example, by measuring participants' blood pressure and heart rate

before and after meditation training (and at various points throughout the study), the researcher could determine the exact impact meditation has on these health concerns. Again, this could be applied to one group of teachers who are learning how to meditate, or it could be applied to a group of participants and to a control group.

In addition to analyzing teachers' reactions to and perceptions of meditation's affect upon their psychological state, ability to handle stress and conflict in the classroom and interactions with students, a study needs to be done that includes students' perceptions of their teachers. This could be done through interviews or through questionnaires. For this type of study, it would probably be best to utilize a participant group of teachers along with a control group for comparative purposes. Although, having students provide feedback/insights to only teachers who meditate in a non-comparative study would also be valuable.

Beyond analyzing data presented in interviews, journals, questionnaires, surveys and basic health screenings, it would be extremely valuable to be able to observe teachers as they are teaching. This could be applied to a single group of participants who all meditate or to a participant/control group comparative analysis. Adding the component of observations would further enhance the triangulation of this area of research.

References

Abram, D. (October 2006). *Depth Ecology: The Wild Horizons of Ecological Psychology.* Paper presented at the Duquesne University McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts Psychology Department with Autumn House Press, Chatham College MFA Program in Creative Writing and The Duquesne University Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA.

Abram, D. (1996). *The Spell of the Sensuous*. New York: Vintage.

Aftanas, L. I., & Golocheikine, S.A. (2001). Human anterior and frontal midline theta and lower alpha reflect emotionally positive state and internalized attention: high-resolution EEG investigation of meditation. *Neuroscience Letters, 310*, 57-60.

Ahlgren, G. T. (2005). *Entering Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle*. New York: Paulist Press.

Anderson, V. L., Levinson, Edward M., Barker, William, & Kiewra, Kathleen R. (1999). The effects of meditation on teacher perceived occupational stress, state and trait anxiety and burnout. *School Psychology Quarterly, 14*(1), 3-25.

Avila, T. (2004). *Interior Castle* (E. A. Peers, Trans.). New York: Image Books.

Bloom, W. (2001). *The Endorphin Effect*. London: Piatkus.

Brink, S. (2005, Nov. 30, 2005). Meditation's effects may be a boon to the aging brain. *Pittsburgh Post Gazette,* pp. F-1.

Brown, R., & Gerbarg, Patricia. (2005). Sudarshan Kriya Yogic breathing in the

treatment of stress, anxiety, and depression: Part II clinical applications and guidelines. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, 11*(4), 711-717.

Brown, Z. A., & Uehara, D. L. (1999). Coping with Teacher Stress: A Research Synthesis for Pacific Educators. *Pacific Resources for Education and Learning*.

Bucke, R. M. (1901). *Cosmic Consciousness*. New York: Penguin Group.

Campbell, J. (1989). *An Open Life: Joseph Campbell in Conversation with Michael Toms*. New York: Harper & Row.

Canter, P. H., & Ernst, Edzard. (2003). The cumulative effects of transcendental meditation on cognitive function--a systematic review of randomised controlled trials. *Wien Klin Wochenschr, 115*(21-22), 758-766.

Carson, R. (1990). *Silent Spring*. Boston: Mariner.

Chinmoy, S. (1988). *Beyond Within: A Philosophy for the Inner Life*. Jamaica, NY: Agni Press.

Conley, S., & Woosley, Sherry A. . (2000). Teacher role stress, higher order needs and work outcomes. *Journal of Educational Administration, 38*(2), 179.

Crute, S. (2007). Don't Lose Your Head. *neatoday, 25*(5), 46-47.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New

York: Harper Perennial.

Cullen, T. L. (2006, Jan. 16, 2006). How to get smarter, one breath at a time: Scientists find that meditation not only reduces stress but also reshapes the brain. *Time, 167,* 93.

Cysarz, D., & Büssing, Arndt. (2005). Cardiorespiratory synchronization during zen meditation. *European Journal of Applied Physiology, 95*, 88-95.

Dalai Lama, & Cutler, H. C. (1998). *The Art of Happiness*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Dalai Lama, & Cutler, H. C. (2003). *The Art of Happiness at Work*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Dalai Lama. (2001). *An Open Heart: Practicing the Compassion in Everyday Life*. Boston: Back Bay Books.

Davidson, R. J., Kabat-Zinn, Jon, Schumacher, Jessica, Rosenkranz, Melissa, Muller, Daniel, Santorelli, Saki F., Urbanowski, Ferris, Harrington, Anne, Bonus, Katherine, & Sheridan, John F. (2003). Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 65*, 564-570.

Dworkin, G. A. (2001). Perspectives on teacher burnout and school reform. *International Education Journal, 2*(2), 69-78.

Earley, J. (2002). The social evolution of consciousness. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 42*(1), 107-132.

Easwaran, E. (translator). (1985). *The Bhagavad Gita*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press.

Epstein, M. (1995). Opening up to happiness. *Psychology Today, 28*(4), 42-46.

Flick, U. (2006). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Gates, G., S. (2005). Awakening to school community: Buddhist philosophy for educational reform. *Journal of Educational Thought, 39*(2), 149-173.

Ginnot, H. G. (1972). *Teacher & Child: A Book for Parents and Teachers*. New York: Collier Books.

Goleman, D. (1988). *The Meditative Mind*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Hart, T. (2004). Opening the contemplative mind in the classroom. *Journal of Transformative Education, 2*(1), 28-46.

Holland, D. (2004). Integrating mindfulness meditation and somatic awareness into a public educational setting. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 44*(4), 468-484.

Hoover, E. (2005). Filmmaker wants students to chill out with transcendental meditation. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 51*(48), 32.

Huynh, L. N. (2004). *The effects of mantra meditation and religious orientation on psychological distress and self-actualization among Vietnamese American Buddhists.* Unpublished Dissertation, Alliant International University, Los Angeles, CA.

Janowiak, J. J. (1993). Theoretical foundations of yoga meditation: a contribution to self-actualization and stress management (pp. 1-22). Boone, North Carolina: Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Appalachian State University.

John of the Cross, S. (2005). *Dark Night of the Soul*. New York:

Image/Doubleday.

Kaplan, A. (1982). *Meditation and Kabbalah*. Boston: Weiser Books.

Kempis, T. (2004). *The Imitation of Christ*. Peabody: Hendrickson.

Khan, H. I. (1982). *The Art of Being and Becoming*. New Lebanon: Omega
Publications.

Kjaer, T. W., Bertelsen, Camilla, Piccini, Paola, Brooks, David, Alving, Jørgen,
& Lou, Hans C. (2002). Increased dopamine tone during meditation-
induced change of consciousness. *Cognitive Brain Research, 13*, 255-259.

Krishnamurti, J. (1954). *The First and Last Freedom*. New York: Harper &
Brothers.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Davis, J.H. (1997). *The Art and Science of
Portraiture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lazar, S. W., Kerr, Catherine E., Wasserman, Rachel H., Gray, Jeremy R., Greve,
Douglas N., Treadway, Michael T., McGarvey, Metta, Quinn, Brian T.,
Dusek, Jeffrey A., Benson, Herbert, Rauch, Scott L., Moore, Christopher
I., & Fischl, Bruce. (2005). Meditation experience is associated with
increased cortical thickness. *NeuroReport, 16*(17), 1893-1897.

Leung, Y., & Singhal, A. (2004). An examination of the relationship between
Qigong meditation and personality. *Social Behavior and Personality,
32*(4), 313-320.

Maharishi, M. Y. (1963). *The Science of Being and Art of Living*. New York:
Meridian.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing Qualitative Research* (4th ed.).

Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and Personality* (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

Maslow, A. H. (1964). *Regions, Values and Peak-Experiences*. New York: Penguin.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*. New York:

Penguin Compass.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a Psychology of Being* (2nd ed.). New York: Van

Nostrand Reinhold Co.

McMillan, James H. & Schumacher, Sally. (2001). *Research in Education: A

Conceptual Introduction* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.

McNaughton, R. D. (2003). *The use of meditation and intuition in decision-

making: reports from executive meditators.* Unpublished Dissertation,

Fielding Graduate Institute.

Merriam, S. B., & Associates. (2002). *Qualitative Research in Practice:

Examples for Discussion and Analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis* (2nd ed.).

Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Miller, J., & Nozawa, Aya. (2002). Meditating teachers: a qualitative study.

Journal of In-Service Education, 28(1), 179-192.

Miller, J. (1994). *The Contemplative Practioner*: *Meditation in Education and the

Professions*. Toronto: OISE Press.

Mitrananda, B. (1999). Undreamed-of possibilities: The divine potentials of all

humankind. In Paramahansa Yogananda, *A World in Transition: Finding

Spiritual Security in Times of Change* (pp. 221-236). Los Angeles: Self-

Realization Fellowship.

Morris, Charles G. (1996). *Psychology: An Introduction*. (9th ed.). Upper Saddle

River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Muktananda, S. (1999). *The Perfect Relationship: The Guru and the Disciple*.

South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation.

Muktananda, S. (1978). *Play of Consciousness*. South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA

Foundation.

Murata, T., Takahashi, T., Hamada, T., Omori, M., Kosaka, H., Yoshida, H., &

Wada, Y. (2004). Individual trait anxiety levels characterizing the

properties of zen meditation. *Neuropsychobiology, 50*(2), 189-194.

Myss, C. (1996). *Energy anatomy: The science of personal power, spirituality

and health*. New York: Sounds True.

Myss, C. (1996). *Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing*.

New York: Three Rivers Press.

Orr, D. (2002). The uses of mindfulness in anti-oppressive pedagogies:

philosophy and praxis. *Canadian Journal of Education, 27*(4), 477-490.

Osho. (2004). *Zen: Its History and Teachings*. East Sussex: BridgewaterBook Co.

Osho. (2004). *Buddha: His Life and Teachings*. East Sussex: BridgewaterBook Co.

Peng, C. K., Henry, Isaac C., Mietus, Joseph E., Hausdorff, Jeffrey M., Khalsa,

Gurucharan, Benson, Herbert, & Goldberger, Ary L. (2004). Heart rate

dynamics during three forms of meditation. *International Journal of

Cardiology, 95*, 19-27.

Prabhavananda, S. & Isherwood, C. (translators). (1953). *How to Know God: The*

Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali. New York: New American Library.

Ramel, W., Goldin, Philippe R., Carmona, Paula E., & McQuaid, John R. (2004). The effects of mindfulness meditation on cognitive processes and affect in patients with past depression. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 28*(4), 433-455.

Ratzinger, J. (1989). Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's Letter on Christian Meditation. Rome: 15 October 1989.

Reglin, G., & Reitzammer, Ann. (1998). Dealing with the stress of teachers. *Education, 118*(4), 590-597.

Renshaw, K. (1997). Symptoms and causes of teacher burnout. *The American Music Teacher, 46*(4), 57.

Rinpoche, S. (1993). *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. San Francisco: Harper.

Rogers, C. R. (1989). *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1980). *A Way of Being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Shank, Gary D. (2006). *Qualitative Research: A Personal Skills Approach* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Shimazu, A., Okada, Yusuke, Sakamoto, Mitsumi, & Miura, Masae. (2003). Effects of stress management program for teachers in Japan: a pilot study. *Journal of Occupational Health, 45*, 202-208.

Solberg, E. E., Holen, Are, Ekeberg, Øivind, Østerud, Bjarne, Halvorsen, Ragnhild, & Sandvik, Leiv. (2004). The effects of long meditation on plasma melatonin and blood serotonin. *MedSciMonit, 10*(3), 96-101.

Stein, J. (August 4, 2003). Just say om. *Time, 162,* 48-56.

Suzuki, S. (2001). *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind: Informal Talks on Zen Meditation and Practice*. New York: Weatherhill.

Tacon, A. M., McComb, Jacalyn, Caldera, Yvonne, & Randolph, Patrick. (2003). Mindfulness meditation, anxiety reduction, and heart disease. *Family and Community Health, 26*(1), 25-33.

Tatar, M., & Yahav, Vered. (1999). Secondary school pupils' perceptions of burnout among teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 69*(4), 457-469.

Walton, K. G., Schneider, Robert H., Nidich, Sanford I., Salerno, John W., Nordstrom, Cheryl K., & Merz, C. Noel Bairey. (2002). Psychosocial stress and cardiovascular disease part 2: Effectiveness of the transcendental meditation program in treatment and prevention. *Behavioral Medicine, 28*(3), 106-119.

Wenk-Sormaz, H. (2005). Meditation can reduce habitual responding. *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine, 11*(2), 42-58.

Wilber, K. (1996). *The Atman Project: A Transpersonal View of Human Development*. Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books.

Wilkinson, P. (2005). The path to divine transformation. *Spiritual Life*, 158-165.

Yogananda, P. (1993). *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship.

Yogananda, P. (1990). *The Essence of Self-Realization: The Wisdom of Paramhansa Yogananda*. Nevada City, CA: Crystal Clarity.

Yogananda, P. (1999). *A World in Transition: Finding Spiritual Security in Times of Change*. Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship.

Yukteswar, S. S. (1990). *The Holy Science*. Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship.

Appendix A

Letter of Invitation

Duquesne University
School of Education
ILEAD Program
Canevin Hall
600 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15282

(Date)

Dear _____:

I am a doctoral student at Duquesne University's School of Education. Currently, I am in the final phase of my program and am working on my dissertation regarding the effects of mantra meditation on the personal and professional lives of teachers.

You have been referred to me as being a teacher who has practiced mantra meditation while teaching for at least three years. I am looking for several participants who are willing to write a personal narrative and talk with me several times about their perceptions of the effects of mantra meditation. Please take a look at the enclosed consent form. If you agree to participate in this study, your confidentiality will be protected at all times.

I would be honored to have you participate in this journey. Please contact me if you have any further questions. I can be reached by phone at 412-334-3745 or by email at kleinl@duq.edu

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lisa Klein

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

TITLE:	Developing Higher Consciousness: The Effects of Mantra Meditation on the Development of Self-Actualizing Qualities in Teachers
INVESTIGATOR:	Lisa Klein Duquesne University. Canevin Hall. Pittsburgh, PA 15282 Phone: 412-334-3745 Email: kleinl@duq.edu
PURPOSE:	You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate how your experience as a meditator using a silent mantra meditation technique has influenced various aspects of your teaching.
RISKS AND BENEFITS	There are no risks for participation. There are no direct benefits. However, your participation contributes to research on factors that affect academic achievement.
COMPENSATION:	Participants will not be compensated in this study. However, participation in the study will require no monetary cost to you.
CONFIDENTIALITY:	Your name will never appear in the interview notes. An identifying study ID number will be located in the notes instead. Your name and study ID will only appear on a single sheet locked in the researcher's office. No identity will be made in the analysis of the interviews. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. Your responses will be completely anonymous. All materials will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the research.
RIGHTS TO WITHDRAW	You are under no obligation to participate in this study, and there are no adverse consequences should you decide not to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. If you choose to withdraw, none of your previous responses will be used.
SUMMARY OF RESULTS	A summary of the results of this study will be supplied to you at no cost, upon request.
VOLUNTARY CONSENT	I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.
	I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation this study; I may call Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326).

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Appendix C

Personal Narrative Prompt

As a teacher who practices mantra meditation, please write a narrative essay in which you describe your experiences and perceptions of the impact that meditation has had on your personal and professional life. You may share any anecdotal stories to illustrate your thoughts. There is no length requirement.

Appendix D

The following pages contain the matrices of the analysis described in

Chapter 4.

Table 1

Participant Meditation/Teaching Background Matrix

Participants	How many years has participant meditated?	How long has the participant taught?	How long has the participant taught while also meditating?	What subject/grade level does the participant teach?	What is the setting/ demo- graphics of the school in which the participant teaches?
Deb (Elementary School)	24 years	15 years	15 years	3rd grade—all subjects; has previously taught K-3	Low income (98% poverty rate and free lunch); large population of Latino students and English Language Learners
Linda (Middle School)	36 years	17 years	7 years	Middle School (grades 5-8) Language Arts	Low-income; high crime; large African-American population
Mike (High School)	5 years	14+ years	5 years	High School (grades 9-12) art— specifically Graphic Design I and Graphic Design II	Mixture: range of students from upper middle class families to low socio-economic families; large # of English Language Learners/ refugees

Table 2

Meditation Questions Matrix

Parti-cipants	Type of medi-tation	Freq. and Duration of medi-tation	How they learned about meditation	Reason(s) for practicing meditation	Effects of medita-tion on physical health	Effects of medita-tion on mental health
Deb	Silent Mantra Medita-tion	Twice daily: 20-30 min. each time	Husband learned first; introduced her to a meditation group	Stress/ Depression relief, create balance/ energy, spiritual pursuits	Overall balance of body/mind	Alleviates depression creates balance, helps to maintain positive attitude
Linda	Silent Mantra Medita-tion	Twice daily; 20-25 min. each time	Heard about meditation and its positive effects on stress while listening to a radio program	Makes her feel good, physical and mental health benefits, spiritual pursuits	"Would be dead without it" Helped her to visualize healing after a horrible car accident; improved immune system	Helps her to calm her mind and to alleviate neurosis
Mike	Silent Mantra Medita-tion	On average 5 times per week for approx. 30 min. each time	Learned about it from a friend; also read different books on Eastern philosophy	Creates peacefulness, body-mind-soul connection	Improved immune system, fewer headaches and fewer stomach problems	More peaceful state of mind, more focused, better compre-hension

Table 3

Self-Actualizing Qualities Matrix

Self-Actualizing Qualities	Deb	Linda	Mike
Identify dishonest people/more accurately judge people (perception of reality)	A	U	W
Alleviate fear of unknown (perception of reality)	A	A	A
Accepts oneself for who he/she is (acceptance)	A	U	A
Accepts others for who they are (acceptance)	A	A	A
Spontaneous nature (spontaneity)	A	A	N
Individual code of ethics (spontaneity)	U	U	U
Comfortable going against conventional thought and/or behavior (spontaneity)	U	U	U
Intrinsically motivated; motivated for self-growth (spontaneity)	A	A	A
Sense of purpose/duty in life (problem centering)	A	A	A

Absolutely= A
Usually=U
Sometimes=S
Never=N

W=Has a problem with the wording of "judging;" prefers to call it "understanding"

Deb's Themes/Patterns/Metaphors

1. Light-hearted; good natured

2. Increased energy

3. Enthusiastic

4. Kind

5. Balanced

6. Inspiring/encouraging

7. Sense of humor

8. Better Communication

9. Deescalating of conflict/stressful situations

10. Sharper, more focused

11. Acceptance (of self, others, situations)

12. Understanding and/or "reading" people better

13. Alleviation of fears

14. Individual code of ethics/beliefs/practices

15. Sense of duty/purpose in life

16. Awareness/Awakening

17. Does not use conditioned-response patterns

18. Does not take student misbehavior personally

19. Positive rapport with students

20. Works to humanize, not dehumanize students

21. Does not "react;" not reactionary

22. Sees the whole student (i.e. student's background, personal issues)

23. Teaching extends beyond the curriculum (cares/concerned with students' whole being)

24. Expectations are for each student to reach his/her full potential

25. Spontaneity

26. Love of challenges

27. Intrinsically motivated/motivated for self-growth

28. Flexible

29. Creativity

30. Observational Powers

31. Created calm, focused learning environment

32. Incorporation of fun into the learning environment

33. Spiritual pursuits

34. Prevention of depression

35. Prevention of "falling apart"

36. Able to spot superficiality or dishonesty

37. Sees all beings as one

38. Able to answer question "Why am I here?"

39. "Mind opening up" metaphor

40. Mind is not "clouded" metaphor

Linda's Themes/Patterns/Metaphors

1. Sense of humor

2. Contentment

3. Spontaneity

4. Love of Challenges

5. Persistence

6. Calmness

7. Does not "react;" not reactionary

8. Flexible

9. Awareness/Awakening

10. Creativity

11. Inspiring

12. Relaxed

13. Visualization of physical healing

14. Improved immune system

15. Absence of neuroses

16. Innocence/Assumes the best about people

17. Observational Powers

18. Increased energy

19. Alleviating fears

20. Does not take student misbehavior personally

21. Acceptance (of self, others, situations)

22. Happier

23. Nonjudgmental

24. Intrinsically motivated/motivated for self-growth

25. Individual code of ethics/beliefs/practices

26. Expectations are for each student to reach his/her full potential

27. Light-hearted; good-natured

28. Spiritual pursuits

29. Sense of duty/purpose in life

30. Experience of "bliss," of peak experiences

31. Peacefulness

32. Being in the present moment

33. "Juice of Life" metaphor

34. Awareness/Awakening

35. Does not use conditioned-response patterns

36. Enthusiasm

37. Release of the ego

38. Sees the whole student (i.e. student's background, personal issues)

39. Teaching extends beyond the curriculum (cares/concerned with students' whole being)

40. Attempts to broaden students' horizons (make them more culturally aware/well-rounded); quality; wants to make sure that students are exposed to quality

41. Expectations are for each student to reach his/her full potential

42. Created calm, focused learning environment

43. Sense of appreciation

44. Incorporation of fun into the learning environment

Mike's Themes/Patterns/Metaphors

1. Patience

2. Calmness

3. Compassion

4. Better Communication

5. Deescalating of conflict/stressful situations

6. "Observer in life"

7. Peacefulness

8. Mind-body-soul connection

9. Sharper, more focused

10. Acceptance (of self, others, situations)

11. Nonjudgmental

12. Improved immune system

13. Understanding and/or "reading" people better

14. Alleviating fears

15. Individual code of ethics/beliefs/practices

16. Sense of duty/purpose in life

17. Awareness/Awakening

18. Intrinsically motivated/motivated for self-growth

19. Contentment

20. Does not use conditioned-response patterns

21. Does not take student misbehavior personally

22. Positive rapport with students

23. Works to humanize, not dehumanize students

24. Does not "react;" not reactionary

25. Sees the whole student (i.e. student's background, personal issues)

26. Teaching extends beyond the curriculum (cares/concerned with students' whole being)

27. Attempts to broaden students' horizons (make them more culturally aware/well-rounded); quality; wants to make sure that students are exposed to quality

28. Expectations are for each student to reach his/her full potential

29. Sense of appreciation

30. Sense of humor