

TEACHERS AS CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTITIONERS:
PRESENCE, MEDITATION, AND MINDFULNESS
AS A CLASSROOM PRACTICE

By

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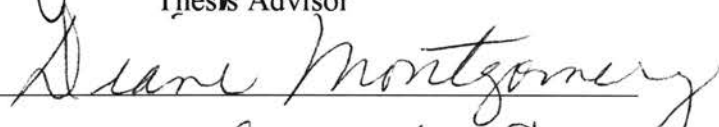
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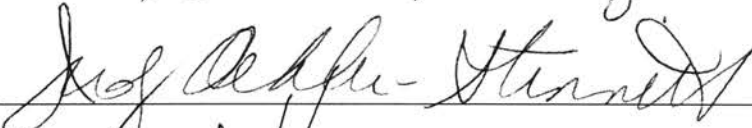
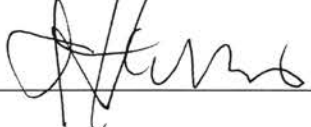
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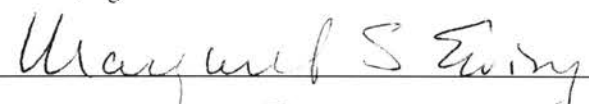
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Most traditional educational research has conceptualized teaching from a scientific materialism perspective that is considered reductionistic. This means researchers have focused on measuring and quantifying predictable student and teacher behaviors and ignore unpredictable contingencies (Bolster, 1983; Bracey, 1998; Heinecke & Drier, 1998). But real world classrooms demand that teachers craft moment by moment decisions arising out of complexities that resist measurement or prediction and that are not subject to being ignored through control of the curriculum or the environment. How might teachers and researchers understand the classroom more holistically?

Heinecke and Drier (1998) suggest research is needed that seeks “theoretical knowledge of teaching...based on a holistic conception of the classroom [and] that assumes multiple causation of events” (Heinecke & Drier, 1998, p. 275). Although a viable holistic model of classroom practice, one that more closely aligns itself with the complexities, the uncertainties, of classroom practice, has not been the primary focus of educational research to date. Such research is now recognized as needed (Bolster, 1983; Bracey, 1998; Heinecke & Drier, 1998).

Classroom Management and Reflection

Two areas of research that speak to the complexities of classroom practice are classroom management (Kounin, 1970) and reflection (Schön, 1983; 1987). Kounin (1970) suggests a way of being in the classroom that is sensitive to classroom management issues—“withitness” (p. 74). Withit teachers are concerned with manifesting behaviors that communicate to their students that they are aware of the behavior of all students. Devious, sneaky misbehavior is not overlooked by the alert “withit” teacher. The withit teacher is described as having eyes in the back of her or his head and issues of control are the foreground of her or his presence. Kounin’s model has been criticized both for the nebulous nature of withitness and for the discrepancies between his findings and those who have tried to replicate his work (Irving & Martin, 1982). Kounin’s model as well as other models that foreground the classroom as an arena of control dynamics conceptualize teaching as a matter of “sorting, organizing, categorizing, overseeing, and controlling” (Davis & Sumara, 1997, p. 105). This view of teaching as a narrow set of techniques and methods to be mastered has increasingly been the target of criticism by mainstream researchers for its failure to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Bolster, 1983; Bracey, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Greene, 1995; Heinecke & Dryer, 1998; Torbert, 1981).

Donald Schön relies on Michael Polanyi’s (1969) “tacit knowledge” to describe his concept of reflection-in-action, a special quality of attention. The practitioner makes decisions in the thick of activity and is unable to describe the process by which she or he made the decision. Schön uses the term “professional artistry to refer to the kinds of competence practitioners sometimes display in unique, uncertain, and conflicted

situations of practice” (p. 22). Reflection-in-action arises out of the individual’s conversational or dialogical relationship with the activity. Schön explains the process as a constructionist kind of world making:

Through countless acts of attention and inattention, naming, sensemaking, boundary setting, and control, they make and maintain the worlds matched to their professional knowledge and know-how. They are in transaction with their practice worlds, framing the problems that arise in practice situations and shaping the situations to fit the frames, framing their roles and constructing practice situations to make their role-frames operational. They have, in short, a particular, professional way of seeing their world and a way of constructing and maintaining the world as they see it. When practitioners respond to the indeterminate zones of practice by holding a reflective conversation with the materials of their situations, they remake a part of their practice world and thereby reveal the usually tacit processes of worldmaking that underlie all of their practice. (p. 36)

What this area of research has addressed quite well is the effective “sorting, organizing, categorizing, overseeing, and controlling” (Davis & Sumara, 1997, p. 105) of experience. What it lacks is a way out of conceptualizing teaching as only a dialogic relationship with the paraphernalia of the situation out of which the teacher constructs a practice. Again, a narrow definition of practice is precisely the conceptualization teachers find unsatisfactory as they negotiate the complex relationships and connections or missed connections between themselves and their students and the students and the course content. They sense that there is more to classroom practice than professional

artistry (Fried, 1995; hooks, 1994). It is the position of this study that models like reflection-in-action are a move in the direction of a more holistic view of the classroom but continue to be unsatisfactory in their incapacity to free attention from the narrow boundaries of pre-defined categories.

Aoki (1992) notes the seductive appeal of understandings that reduce teaching to a set of behaviors. Those reductions occupy a useful place in classroom practice. What he makes problematic is the mainstream emphasis on technique and behaviors to define teaching. What this emphasis hides, he notes, is an understanding of teaching that includes who the teacher is not just what the teacher does. He proposes a way of thinking about teaching in which the teacher is the teaching. This is teaching infused with the presence of the teacher, “thoughtfulness as an embodied doing and being—thought and soul embodied in the oneness of the lived moment,” (p. 26). Here the being of teaching is not lost in the doing. Aoki points to an answer to the current call (Bolster, 1983; Bracey, 1998; Heineken & Drier, 1998) for research that explores classroom practice beyond technique—presence, the being of teaching.

Contemplative Practitioners in the Classroom

The literature on contemplative practice in the classroom, although limited, provides insight into the issues of a more holistic view of classroom practice. This is a view that neither excludes the doing nor the being of teaching. Teacher educators who are also contemplative practitioners share the current concerns posited in mainstream journals. These teacher educators seek answers to a broad arena of perplexing questions that range from issues concerning the unpredictable nature of classroom practice and how best to prepare oneself for this unpredictability, to concerns for developing in non-experts

the capacity of the expert teacher to read more relevantly between the lines in a situation than a non-expert (Brown, 1999; Kessler, 1991; Mayes, 1998; Miller, 1994a, 1994b, 1999; Tremmel, 1993; Yinger, 1990). Their work emerges both from personal experience with contemplative practice in the classroom and the uses of contemplative practice by their teacher education students in the classroom. Their work intersects with the call in mainstream journals for a holistic direction in educational research. Their work argues for the need for further exploration of the relevance of contemplative practice for the teacher. The present study was designed to make a contribution to the slim body of literature on contemplative classroom practice as a way of embracing the ambiguities and complexities of the classroom.

The purpose of the present study was to create narratives in teachers' own words of their experience of a classroom practice aimed at a "synthesis of theory and practice," a moment-to-moment insight...characterized by openness, as sense of relatedness, and by awe and wonder...[in which] duality drops away" letting the complexity of classroom interactions be themselves (Miller, 1994a, pp. 24, 25). This holistic model of classroom practice is described by Miller (1994a) as a contemplative model of classroom practice.

Miller's Model

Miller (1994a) suggests a model for contemplative practice that may be implemented by teachers. The model has two components. First, a formal contemplative component. This formal component may be implemented through a meditation practice or by the practice of identification with a universal myth. In the present study, vipassana meditation was chosen as the mode for the formal component of the model. This form of meditation practice is one of Miller's (1994a) suggestions and is a meditation practice

with which I have had experience. I have had a regular vipassana practice since the fall of 1995. The second component is the informal contemplative component—mindfulness, a particular quality of attention. This quality of attention is an attention that focuses on seeing “everything from a non-judgmental perspective,” letting the thing be what it is before we bring our own categories and labels to it (Miller, 1994a, p. 151).

Vipassana Meditation

Vipassana, the formal component of Miller’s model as implemented by the teachers whose experiences this study explores, is a practice aimed at training oneself to experience life from moment to moment exactly as it is happening without preferences or biases. Specifically, the practice consists of sitting with the backbone straight, eyes closed, hands on thighs, with your attention focused on the sensation of the breath as it enters and leaves the body. The duration of the meditation time is spent with the attention so focused. Normally, the attention wanders. When this happens the instruction is to gently bring the attention back to the in and out of the breath non-judgmentally. It has been described as “... a process of self discovery, a participatory investigation in which you observe your own experiences while participating in them as they occur” (Gunaratana 1993, p. 30).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness, the informal component, is an extension of sitting meditation into the activity of daily life. It requires focusing attention, from a neutral position, on what is happening internally and externally as it happens. The neutrality requires the initial intention of a non-judgment, a kind of momentary standing back from the activity of assigning a meaning to what is happening. It is not at all passive, but an active watching

and doing at the same time. It is not at all a passive reception of events, but a proactive observance of events. Mindfulness practice has been described as a “panoramic awareness” (Welwood, 1983, p. 47) of both internal and external components of the environment. Grasped all at once in this way, the dynamics of interactions as they are happening are seen. Observing the elements of the interactions as they affect each other in this way—opens awareness to more of what is given in the environment. The judgment that follows is more apt to be informed by the complexity of what the environment has to offer. Judgment is less apt to capitulate to distortions of past memories or future fantasies. Sylvia Boorstein (1996) describes the task in mindfulness meditation as it extends to mindfulness in daily life:

Here the meditator attempts to cultivate composure with a wide focus of attention on all current experience, internal and external. An attempt is made to be aware of all changing physical sensations, mental states, thoughts, and perceptions while maintaining a nonreactive attitude to them. (p. 347)

A more ancient description of this ‘no action’ comes from the Eastern philosophy of Chinese Taoism. The Chinese term is *wu wei*, and it is a kind of activity that seems like no activity because it is the attempt to move with events as they arise, keenly observing and letting action then be the complement to what is observed. It might be imagined as an improvisational dance between two partners whose movements are so complementary that they appear to the observer to be choreographed. *Wu wei*, then, is the spontaneous emerging of action out of a keen observation that makes the action appear to be the just right complement to the event observed without the actor preplanning the action or forcing or repressing anything to achieve the complementary response. Zaporah’s (1995) work with dance and improvisational theater are mindfulness

practices. Both follow her Zen practice and parallel the spontaneity of wu wei's complementary actions—"movement, speech, action. It's all dance emanating from the inside out, one moment nourishing the next, uncoiling itself... a collective experience, the audience and the performer meeting in a clear space....without any ego interference" (p. 132). Although, the possibility of perfection of mindfulness eludes the grasp, even minor attempts widen awareness and clarify skillful action (Langer, 1989).

Orienting Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The theoretical construct of "mindfulness" as a practice in the classroom supported by meditation outside the classroom is central to Miller's conceptual model of the Contemplative Practitioner. Mindfulness is addressed by Miller's model in two ways: 1) a formal meditation practice such as vipassana, and 2) an informal practice in the classroom in which the teacher attempts to see what is happening as it is happening. The teacher is instructed to notice when attention has been diverted from what is actually happening to habituated memories, judgments or fantasies and refocus it on what is actually happening.

Mindfulness

As defined by Miller (1994a), "mindfulness is wholeheartedness, meaning that when we do something, we do it completely. Our consciousness is whole...Being fully present..." (p. 62-63). Gunaratana (1993) describes this presence as "...a completely different way to look at the universe. It is a level of functioning where the mind does not try to freeze time, where we do not grasp onto our experience as it flows by, where we do not try to block things out and ignore them....it is a learnable skill" (p. 12).

Relationships with Students

S. Kessler (1991) describes mindfulness in the classroom, as a teacher's practice of being "fully present...alert to the circumstances of what is happening right now...open to perceiving what is happening...responsive to the needs of this moment...flexible enough to shift gears, and to have the repertoire, creativity, and imagination to create a new approach in the moment" (p. 13). Mindfulness invokes a holistic presence, an attention that attempts to initially step outside the boundaries of categories, in order to more effectively relate to students and their needs (Kessler, R. 1999; Kessler, S., 1991; Mayes, 1998; Miller, 1994a, 1999; Tremmel, 1993; Yinger, 1990).

Langer's (1989) research situated "entirely within the Western scientific perspective" (p. 62) and outside a contemplative frame, suggests that cultivating mindfulness enhances one's capacity to grasp contexts more holistically. Her work documents the enhanced capacity for flexibility that mindfulness cultivates; specifically, the capacity to make in the moment adjustments that others miss.

Contemplation

Miller (1994a) defines contemplation as involving "the development of compassionate attention" and "characterized by...a merging of subject and object...a radical openness in which the individual does not try to control what is happening" (pp. vii, 2, 3). The essence of contemplation is two-fold. The first aspect has to do with developing the capacity for widened attention. The second aspect has to do with the nature of that attention—the nature being one of initial intention of non-harming, and a hesitation before judgment before assigning meaning. Contemplative practice invokes an holistic openness to what is there with the initial intention of mindfulness, an intention of

compassionate attention (Miller, 1994b). Welwood (1983) suggests that this widened attention “helps us see situations in a larger way, beyond how they affirm or negate ‘I.’” (p. 47). This is the basis for compassion.

Subjective Experience of Time and Place

Mindfulness establishes a basis for experiencing time and space differently which acts to merge the individual and the activity and the activity becomes satisfying in and of itself (Miller, 1994, p. vii). Thus, such a quality of awareness makes it possible for “transform life—to create more harmony in it and to liberate the psychic energy that otherwise would be wasted in boredom and worry” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 42).

Personal Identity

Mindful experiences invoke a sense of competency and well-being leading to transformations in identity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Those experiences expressed in the stories we tell ourselves and others construct our identity (Sarup, 1996).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to create narratives, in teachers’ own words, describing their experiences in implementing Miller’s (1994a) contemplative model of classroom practice. The construction of these narratives was facilitated by focusing on the teachers’ perceptions of four aspects of this experience that the literature suggested might be affected by this model of classroom practice. The teachers’ perceptions of their relationships with their students was explored. The quality of experience of time and place as they perceived them to be affected by contemplative practice was explored. Their perceptions of their classroom practice in general as it was affected by their

implementation of contemplative practice was explored. Finally, their perceptions of their personal identity, their story of who they were as a result of their efforts to implement contemplative practice in the classroom were explored. Western empirical researchers have begun to study the benefits of the systematic cultivation of mindfulness, aligning themselves with the claims regarding mindfulness found in Eastern philosophies (Miller, 1994a). History records such practices in every culture and major religion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Recently, the Buddhist practice of vipassana meditation has been introduced in the West. Gunaratana (1993) describes vipassana as the practice of cultivating mindfulness through close “attention to, and clear comprehension of, the whole process of breathing” (p. 4). As a contemplative practice, vipassana holds potential for managing consciousness in everyday experiences so that the experiences in and of themselves become satisfying. Vipassana opens awareness to the dynamics of interactions in the environment as they are happening.

Although the nature of the teacher’s role in the classroom becomes more complex with increasing diversity in student populations, electronic technologies, and curriculum responsibilities, no consensus for how to deal with these complexities has arisen. The clamor surrounding the dilemma has only increased the perplexity regarding the gap between educational research and classroom practice. Recently, there has been an increase in the call for research that more directly embraces the complexity of classroom practice holistically.

Miller’s (1994a) concept of the contemplative practitioner is holistic in that it goes beyond the emphasis on techniques driving on-the-spot decisions “based on an intuitive sense of what is appropriate for the student” to include the “quality of Being or

Presence” that the teacher brings to the classroom (p. 21). The contemplative practitioner cultivates a depth of character or Being that infuses classroom practice with something more than technical proficiency. This something more includes the teacher’s capacity to be present in the classroom with a widened attention that views complexities and ambiguities as they arise but without the distortions of habituated responses. Dualistic perceptions are replaced with a sense of relatedness and openness and provide the means for insightful negotiations of the complexities of classroom practice.

Structure of the Study

Action Inquiry

The methodology of this study is derived from Torbert’s (1991) research model, *action inquiry*. Mindfulness is the essence of action inquiry, the goal and primary instrument of which is the individual’s “consciousness in the midst of action—a special kind of widened attention that embraces all four territories of experience (intuition, reason, one’s own action, and the outside world)” (p. 221). Mindfulness gives one a sense of space that frees the attention for thought to trace

the patterns of intuition, feeling and behavior as they actually occur. Only such thought remains open to the mystery-revelation of each new moment, open to one’s own and the environment’s implications (Torbert, 1976, p. 167).

Torbert (1976), argues that this practice enhances one’s capacity to “engage in inquiry while in action, [and] see and realize one’s possibilities in one motion rather than reflecting on what might have been after the fact” (p.167, 168).

Torbert's (1991) holistic model of research, action inquiry, is a good fit for the specific needs of this study. Mindfulness, the primary instrument of inquiry in Torbert's model, is the core of Miller's contemplative model of classroom practice. The teachers in this study, as well as the researcher, became the instruments of inquiry. The teachers' perceptions of the effects of vipassana meditation and mindfulness in the classroom on their classroom practice, their relationships with their students, their personal identity, and their experience of time and place is the data for the study.

Analyses

The journal entries and the taped interview transcripts were first systematically analyzed using a qualitative computer program, Atlas-ti. This program gave the researcher the capability of creating categories for quotes of each interview while keeping track of the category, corresponding line numbers in the interview, and the participant connected with the quote. The quotes were then printed onto note cards for further analyses by hand. Each participant's responses were collated into a narrative of their experience which was given to the participant for their perusal. The researcher then took their suggestions into consideration in the final version of each narrative.

Throughout all stages of the study the researcher enacted Torbert's model of action inquiry, mindfulness informed all stages of the study. A key element in the analyses of this study was the researcher's own contemplative practice, vipassana and mindfulness as regular practices. Mindfulness as a strategy of hermeneutics informed the analyses on every level.

Research Objectives/Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the contemplative practice of mindfulness in the classroom supported by meditation outside the classroom. The exploration focused on teachers' perceptions of the effects of mindfulness on personal identity, classroom practice, the quality of teachers' subjective experiences of time and place in the classroom, and relationships with students. The research questions guiding this study include:

- 1.) How do teachers perceive themselves as a result of their efforts to establish a contemplative practice in the classroom?
- 2.) What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice on their classroom practice?
- 3.) How do teachers describe their subjective experiences of time and place in the classroom as they bring contemplative practice to their classroom practice?
- 4.) What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice on their relationships with their students?

Definitions

- 1) Action Inquiry. Torbert's (1991) holistic research model. The goal and primary instrument of inquiry is mindfulness. The participants and the researcher become the primary instruments of inquiry as they implemented mindfulness throughout the study.

- 2) Contemplative Practice. A discipline designed to open awareness to both internal and external experience simultaneously and with humanity (Miller, 1994a). In this study, vipassana and mindfulness were the means appropriated as the discipline for opening awareness.
- 3) Mindfulness. A particular quality of widened attention in which the attempt is made to approach both external and internal experience with the initial intention of non-judgment (Miller, 1994a).
- 4) Personal Identity. The description one gives of one's self as that description emerges out of one's lived experience interpreted in the stories one tells to self and others. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Sarup, 1996).
- 5) Presence. Presence "is not a belief or opinion, but a practice, [which] when a person has learned it and has practiced it, it becomes grasped and valued" (Helminski, 1992, p. 12). "A particular awareness and perspective in the teacher" (Kessler, S., 1991, p. 4) that goes beyond competencies in methods and strategies efficiently crafted as means to predicted ends to an awareness that provides a way of negotiating the uncertain, complex messy arena of student and teacher desires, needs, fantasies, and curriculum demands "so mindful of the moment that it uniquely embraces each student in the class and draws him or her into sacred moments of presence—presence to oneself, to each other, and to the subject at hand" (Mayes, 1998, p.21).
- 6) Subjective Experience of Time and Place. The internal experience of time and place which is not available to public scrutiny (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
- 7) Vipassana. A Buddhist meditation practice aimed at getting the practitioner to perceive everyday experiences from an initial intention of non-judgment. The

method cultivates perception of objects and events as transitory parts rather than as permanent wholes (Miller, 1994a).

Personal Interest in Topic and Method

My first experience with contemplative practice and its effects on classroom practice came as a student in the classroom of a university professor, Dr. Judith K. Lepuschitz, then of the University of Central Oklahoma. Her unconditional acceptance of her students was unusual. Following her example of mindfulness in her university classroom, I began to practice or imitate what I saw as a particularity of attention in my own first grade classroom. The results were astonishing in the insights I had into my practice and my students' needs. I will not give an in depth account of this experience here, as a detailed account is available elsewhere (Solloway, 1999). This life-changing experience lead me to enroll in the Altered States of Consciousness class of Dr. Joe Pearl, then of Oklahoma State University. Dr. Pearl had been Dr. Lepuschitz's vipassana teacher. Beginning a vipassana practice of my own, increased the benefits of mindfulness in my classroom practice and increased my interest in this particular quality of attention as a line of research inquiry. I experienced both professional and personal life-changing insights. I became curious about my experience—Was it a singular event, particular to my personal experience or would other teachers find meditation and mindfulness a profoundly changing experience professionally and personally?

My own positive and profound experience with vipassana both personally and professionally in my classroom practice create an affinity, a bias. Throughout this study, it has been my challenge to keep this bias in check as much as possible. For example, one of the strongest biases, for me, was the profound effects of interconnectedness that I

had experienced with my students as I began to implement mindfulness in my classroom practice. Therefore, in the recruiting of the participants, I attempted to mediate this bias by connecting the nature of contemplative classroom practice to the flow or “zone” experience familiar to athletes in which they perform at their maximum rather than to a profound sense of connection to one’s students. The letter of solicitation (Appendix A) invites the prospective participant to consider the project as an exploration of a “zone” for teachers. For example in the introductory paragraph, I wrote, “When athletes are in the “zone,” they perform at their maximum and experience an afterglow of satisfaction and well-being. Athletes and others accomplish the zone experience by learning to narrowly focus their attention. Is there a “zone” for teachers in their classroom practice?” In the training sessions, I continued this approach by calling attention to the fact that there was an absence in the literature of detailed narratives in teachers’ own words of whether or not these “zone” experiences existed for teachers.

I did not attempt to conceal my enthusiasm for the project. This may have influenced some participants to volunteer, continue, or report positive effects. This may have been a factor for three of the participants who initially volunteered but dropped out when they discovered that the rigor of setting aside the thirty minute meditation outside the classroom was more of an investment than they wanted to make. There were others who may not have volunteered in response to my enthusiasm. I presented the project to the faculties at the private school and the inner city high school at regularly scheduled faculty meetings. The majority of the faculties at each school chose not to volunteer. While there were undoubtedly, many factors involved, my enthusiasm may have been one of those factors.

Significance of the Study

The merit of this study for research lies in its innovative use of a holistic research methodology in concert with the exploration of a holistic model for classroom practice. It adds to the slim body of literature addressing promising holistic answers outside the mainstream to current, problematic educational dilemmas. Current mainstream models of classroom practice do not address the need for a special kind of expanded attention which embraces “intuition, reason, one’s own action, and the outside world,” even though the complexity of classroom practice demands it. The rich text narratives gained in this study support the value of Miller’s (1994a) holistic model of contemplative practice in the classroom to address this need with a viable model of classroom practice for pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school teachers (See Chapter IV). The significance of this study also lies in its implications for further research on the use of contemplative practices in teacher education (See Chapter V).

Limitations of the Study

J. C. Greene (1990) reminds us of the context specificity of all knowledge. Thus, the findings of this study while not necessarily generalizable may be transferable. The transferability of the findings rests in the reader’s judgment of the applicability or the fit of the findings into her or his context (Erlander, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Summary

In this chapter I have stated the problem as a need for the exploration of a holistic model of classroom practice which is sensitive to the complexity of the classroom context. This need arises out of traditional educational research’s consistent construction

of models for classroom practice derived out of contexts that do not take the complexity of the classroom into account. I have shown that this study proposes to be a first step in the direction of constructing descriptive models of classroom practice guided by holistic insights and in teachers' own words. I have stated the objectives of the research to be the exploration of teachers' perceptions of the effects of meditation outside the classroom and mindfulness in the classroom on personal identity, classroom practice, the quality of teachers' subjective experiences of time and place in the classroom, and relationships with students. I have presented four questions that guided the research. Miller's (1994a) model of classroom practice has been defined as the orientation for the conceptual framework of the study. I have summarized my own biases relating to the choices of topic and methodology in this study. I have provided definitions of key terms that guide the study. The details of data collection, sample population, and data analysis as well as the time frame and content of the study has been outlined. It has been suggested that the study is significant in two ways: 1) The design of the study using a holistic research methodology in concert with the exploration of a holistic model for classroom practice to construct a description of a model of classroom practice in teachers' own words and experience is innovative. 2) The study is predicated on the assumption that research in classroom practice must take into account the complexities of that practice through the exploration of models sensitive to complexity. The limitations of the study have been stated to rest in the context specificity of all knowledge and in the reader's judgment of the fit of the inquiry context and findings as explicated to his or her context.

Chapter II elaborates the basis of the study with a review of the relevant literature and situates the study within a contemplative model of classroom practice. Chapter III

elaborates the method used for the study. Chapter IV explicates the results in individual narrative accounts of teachers' contemplative classroom practices specifically addressing research question two. Chapter V provides analyses of the results of the study. Chapter VI provides comments, conclusions, implications, and suggestions for further research. Chapter VI ends with my Concluding Remarks.

Context of Educational Research and Practice

Historical Positions

Educators writing in mainstream journals have noted that there is a seemingly unbridgeable gap between educational research and its influence on teachers' classroom practice or reforms in education (Bolster, 1983; Bracey, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Eisner, 1984; Heinecke & Drier, 1998; Torbert, 1981). Specifically, teachers regard researchers and their inquiries as largely irrelevant to their experiences in the classroom because the researchers' inquiries are not sensitive to the complexities of actual classroom practice. Thus, educators have suggested that to bridge the gap, researchers must direct their inquiries toward models of classroom practice that are sensitive to the complexities of actual classroom practice. In order to bridge this gap, research in education has undergone some changes, moving toward conducting inquiries into classroom practice in collaboration with classroom teachers (Bracey, 1998; Heinecke & Drier, 1998; Richardson, 1994). These changes in educational research have been called "significant" (Richardson, 1994). While it may be too early to declare these changes "significant," the direction appears to have potential for bridging the gap between reforms, educational researchers, and classroom teachers.

"In a name, Edward Lee Thorndike... was the father of educational research" (Bracey, 1998, p. 141). Thorndike's vision of prediction and control as a basis for research in education emerged from his experiments with animals.

Just as animal learning is automatic, unmediated by an awareness of the contingency between response and reward, so, Thorndike argues, is human learning also unconscious. A person may learn an operant response

without being aware that he or she is doing so. As he did, for animals, Thorndike held out the promise of scientific utopia, founded on eugenics and scientifically managed education. (Leahey, 1997, p.305).

Thorndike's vision became the guiding light for traditional education research. Bracey (1998) and others argue that as a result of this primary focus on prediction and control educational research has conceptualized teaching as a set of predictable student and teacher behaviors. The vision defined researchers' foremost task as that of measuring and quantifying these student and teacher behaviors and eliminating unpredictable contingencies from the research model.

Bolster's (1983) examination of educational practice and research prompted him to conclude that although classroom teachers "wish to improve their craft" and "educational researchers want to generate useful knowledge... educational research seldom influences classroom teaching" (p. 294). Using his experience both as a junior high school teacher and a university professor of education, he argues that the problem lies in the difference between the kinds of knowledge teachers count as valid and the kind of knowledge researchers value. The two groups differ on how knowledge about teaching is structured and verified. Teachers tend to value knowledge that is generated and corroborated in actual practice. Researchers tend to prefer knowledge derived from controlling a limited number of variables, filtering out unexpected contingencies to derive knowledge that assumes predictability. Thus, researchers' knowledge most often assumes unidimensional causations that can be measured and quantified, while teachers' value knowledge that assumes multiple causations and unpredictable contingencies. Bolster concluded that researchers who want to create knowledge relevant to teachers

must begin their research with assumptions that situate their research in a holistic perspective of classroom practice as a complex of contingent negotiations.

Torbert (1981) also points to the gap between educational research and actual classroom practice. He positions the failure to bridge the gap in the models of inquiry researchers employ. Researchers employ rigorous experimental research models which require the researcher to exercise the “tightest possible unilateral control” over the research arena (p.142). But, most classroom teachers agree that the arena of actual classroom practice has almost no correlation with “pre-defined, unilaterally controlled (and hence uninterrupted) experimental conditions” (p. 143). As a result, Torbert argues, the conditions under which most educational research is conducted produces knowledge that is not generalizable to the conditions most teachers face in actual classroom practice.

Current Dilemma

This fundamental mismatch between educational research and classroom practice continues to fuel debates in educational arenas (Bracey, 1998). Using Elliot Eisner’s (1984) critique as a point of departure, Bracey suggests that some progress has been made in addressing the issues, but that educational research continues to be retroactive in its influence, rather than innovative: “...it seems clear that educational research and practice, after decades of following separate paths, have met. But they still do not know each other very well” (p. 145).

Heinecke and Drier (1998) take a new look at Bolster’s (1984) insightful critique of the mismatch between educational research and classroom practice. Their review of educational research to date reveals that little has been done to make Bolster’s critique any less valid today than in 1984. Rather, they suggest that Darling-Hammond’s (1996)

critique summarizes the continued failure of educational research to inform actual classroom practice. They argue that for research to more profoundly influence classroom practice, researchers must align the direction of their inquiries with the nature of actual classroom contexts.

Classroom contexts demand that teachers be accountable for crafting on the spot decisions arising out of unquantifiable, unpredictable contingencies that are not subject to being eliminated and that must be grasped holistically. The complexities and unpredictable nature of the classroom have left teachers ill at ease and apprehensive when the formula directed results of researchers are presented as unambiguous solutions for classroom practice (Davis & Sumara, 1997).

In short, the current dilemma calls for research that directs its inquiries toward the complexity of classroom contexts. Researchers face the challenge of developing models of inquiry that take into account the unpredictable, unquantifiable contingencies that are a regular part of classroom practice. A viable holistic model of classroom practice has yet to be the primary focus of educational research, although it is the kind of research teachers see as relevant to their practice (Bracey, 1998; Bolster, 1998; Heinecke & Drier, 1998). The slim body of literature on contemplative practices, teacher education and classroom practice offers holistic solutions to current problems.

Contemplative Practitioners in the Classroom

Uses of Contemplative Practice in Education

Teachers who are contemplative practitioners have suggested a variety of uses of contemplative practices in the classroom. These suggestions arise out of their

experiences with contemplative practice personally and out of the experiences of their students. These suggestions include:

- Holistic improvisations during the performance of classroom practice that allow for solutions “especially suited to situations that discourage or prevent deliberative processes such as planning, analysis, and reflections” (Yinger, 1990, p. 85);
- An enhanced capacity for focusing attention in the present moment known as “mindfulness” (Tremmel, 1993);
- As a quality of hospitality: “Hospitality defines a space for the visitor—the student—to be herself, because she is received graciously... call[ing the teacher to] consider the singularity of each person, the diversity of needs” (O’Reilly, 1998, p. 9);
- An increased sense of interconnectedness and awareness of the full humanity of the student (Brown, 1999; Miller, 1994a);
- An increased capacity to mediate the effects of stress and an increase in self-knowledge and insight (Miller, 1994b);
- Preservice teachers’ refined capacity for self-reflection and consequent improvements in classroom practice (Mayes, 1998, p. 18);
- And a strengthening of the teacher’s capacity to be present in the classroom “so mindful of the moment that it uniquely embraces each student in the class and draws him or her into sacred moments of presence—presence to oneself, to each other, and to the subject at hand” (Mayes, 1998, p. 21).

Presence

The idea of presence as described by Mayes in the last example is a particular quality of attention that may be attained by practice. This particular quality of attention is

found in both Eastern and Western philosophies. S. Kessler (1991) conceptually frames this presence as “teaching presence,” “a particular awareness and perspective in the teacher” (p. 4) that goes beyond competencies in methods and strategies efficiently crafted as means to predicted ends. Teaching presence is a way of opening to the complexity of classroom practice that both dissolves and affirms boundaries of untidy loose ends that are never fully caught up. These complexities are the messy mismatches between student desires, needs, fantasies and those of the teacher. These messy mismatches alongside the demands of curriculum create separations and gaps that are most often invisible spaces unknown and unembraced although not unheard in their clamor (Ellsworth, 1997) of everyday classroom interactions.

Contemplative practice as presence provides a way of negotiating the clamor of such spaces with a presence “so mindful of the moment that it uniquely embraces each student in the class and draws him or her into sacred moments of presence—presence to oneself, to each other, and to the subject at hand” (Mayes, 1998, p. 21). O’Reilley (1998) describes this presence as a way of deeply listening to the student. She reminds us that in the traditional classroom, “seldom is there a deep, openhearted, unjudging reception of the other” (p. 19). She advocates a contemplative classroom practice as key to the teacher’s capacity to listen to, or be present with a student in an attentive silence that supports and augments whatever strengths s/he has and encourages new ones to flourish.

Mayes leans presence in the direction of a “purity of heart and will” (p. 21). He declines to acknowledge it as a reality in his own practice, preferring instead to posit it as a goal. O’Reilley (1998) and S. Kessler (1991) position presence more in the space of a practice, both teachable and learnable.

Mindfulness, through focused attention, is a way of bringing one's full presence into the classroom. S. Kessler (1991) calls this kind of presence, "teaching presence." She developed her description of teaching presence out of twenty years in the classroom both as a classroom teacher and administrator observing others in the classroom. Teaching presence is a way of being in the classroom that is sensitive to the complexities of actual classroom practice. The teacher brings a heightened awareness that is alert to the new shapes constantly emerging as contexts shift and change, charged by the unique contributions of classroom members. The teacher is not limited by expectations that seek to predict, but is attuned to the insight that the current reality is always becoming obsolete in the next moment. Teaching presence, S. Kessler suggests, means the conscious practice in the classroom of an "open heart," viewing discipline as "empowerment of" individuals rather than "power over" individuals, and "being present." The following is a summary of S. Kessler's concepts for each of these three components of teaching presence:

1. Open Heart: being willing to acknowledge one's own vulnerability as well as acknowledging/granting integrity to/ and protecting the vulnerability of others in the classroom.
2. Discipline as Empowerment of Individuals: actively seeking classroom interactions that define discipline through the teacher's willingness to share power as well as exert power to keep the parameters of the classroom as a caring community safe for everyone.
3. Being Present: a willingness to meet each moment with alert attention both to what is happening inside themselves as well as what is happening in the room,

to be responsive to needs as they arise, to be flexible enough to recognize the need for changes as they arise, to be honest enough to pause and acknowledge that what is needed may not be apparent to them yet.

S. Kessler argues that sustaining teaching presence in the classroom requires contemplative practice outside the classroom although she does not give detailed suggestions for the novice.

Marshak (1997) summarizes Aurobindo Ghose's educational philosophy which includes the importance of the teacher's presence. Ghose, a Hindu teacher and philosopher, called presence the instructor's influence and believed not only in its reality for individuals but also suggested contemplative practice as the support for crafting this way of being in the classroom. Ghose argues that presence is:

not the outward authority of the teacher...but the power of his [sic] contact, of his presence, of the nearness of his soul to the soul of another, infusing into it, even though in silence, that which he himself is. (p. 94)

The power of the teacher's presence or influence as described is attributed to the teacher's commitment to an on-going inquiry and curiosity about the nature of existence. This project includes a profound engagement with her or his own development as a life project referred to as "spiritual development" (Marshak, 1997). Such an inquiry supported by contemplative practice develops the capacity for relating to others with unconditional acceptance.

Lepuschitz's (1991) study of three schools in which spiritual development was a stated goal suggests that such a goal does not always manifest itself in the unconditional acceptance of others as a way of being in the classroom for the teacher. Rather, most

often teachers relate to their students in a way that supports the notion that acceptance is based on conditions of worth. Her observation and interview data document a connection between the teacher's engagement with contemplative practice and a "sense of selflessness that manifests itself in her relationships with her students" (p. 163). For example the contemplative practitioner in her study, modeled for her students the possibility of solving interpersonal conflicts without creating emotional distance between the parties involved. And the usual differences of age or power were not used by the teacher to coerce respect, but respect was a function of what Ghose called the nearness of the soul to another. This is teaching as a balance of doing with being—the isness of the teacher as presence.

Aoki (1992) points to the presence of the teacher. He calls attention to a silence in mainstream teacher education as the forgotten voice of what teaching is. He asks us to see more than the doing of teaching expressed in the emphasis on techniques. He calls us to hear the is as in—the teacher is the teaching. In this understanding of teaching presence hears in it's seeing. The teacher's gaze cast out toward the student does not desire to frame the student. This is a watchful gaze that desires only to be present with the student in a way that is non-harming, free of expectation and judgment. Presence in this way of thinking is a thoughtfulness informed by the mindfulness of the teacher's gaze. It is presence that is "[T]houghtfulness as an embodied doing and being—thought and soul embodied in the oneness of the lived moment," (p. 26). O'Reilley (1998) urges teachers to consider the conditions for establishing the balance between doing and being to which Aoki points. She speaks from personal experience as a contemplative classroom

practitioner and posits contemplative practice as a source for the capacity for deep listening to oneself and others as a condition for this balance of doing and being.

Hwu (1998) finds connections between East and West and the teacher's presence. He suggests that presence has to do with "coming to know oneself, confronting one's contingency" (p. 34), the willingness to question one's source of identity as something moving rather than fixed or unified. It is the project of challenging one's visibility as always the crossroads of what was impossible in the before relations of belief and invention. It is the willingness to be unsure, tentative about the nature of why things are what they are or to wonder/wander how instead of why. "For us the danger is not that we might fail to become what we are meant to be, but that we might only be what we see ourselves to be" (p. 35).

Krishnamurti (1981) spoke of the danger of a narrow vision of ourselves and others. He advocated contemplative practice as "right" education for teachers and students, a life-long inquiry, called mindfulness practice, that looks deeply "into the whole significance" (p. 13) of living and offers a way around an imagination that cannot think itself beyond its own vision, that cannot hear beyond its own it's own voice.

Meditation's Support of Presence

Meditation has long been known in Eastern philosophies as a contemplative practice that develops the capacity for focused attention and refinements of awareness, but it has only recently been the focus of research in the West. Epstein (1995) describes the action of meditation as the development of bare attention which is the condition for examining an activity of the mind that we usually take for granted. This taken for granted activity of the mind is its constant, ongoing dialogue about what is happening to

us. Normally, we assume this interior dialogue to be a description of what is happening to us, rather than what it really is—a reaction to what is actually happening. Meditation allows one to begin to separate out the reactionary dialogue from what is actually happening and has been shown to create a new sense of well-being. Goleman (1998) reports the results of a state of the art research project in which individuals reported feeling more “calm, concentrated, and creative” in the work place after engaging in a regular practice of vipassana meditation (p. 239). This project documented:

positive changes in the scientists’ *brain function* as a direct result of the mindfulness training. Their left prefrontal lobes—the brain area that suppresses amygdala hijacks and generates positive feelings—have become significantly more active than before the program. The scientists’ sense of greater alertness and relaxation is no mere illusion: It stems from an underlying change in the brain. This brain change duplicates that found in those individuals who are most resilient and adaptable under stress. (p. 239) (italics in original text)

The control group who did not receive the vipassana meditation practice showed no significant difference in brain function in their before and after brain scans.

Kabat-Zinn’s (1990) ongoing studies in association with the University of Massachusetts Medical Center with patients who come to the stress clinic suggest “that training in mindfulness meditation can have a profound positive influence on one’s view of oneself and of the world, including an ability to be more trusting of oneself and others” (p. 214). These conclusions came as a result of comparing control group results with the results of individuals engaged in mindfulness meditation.

In summary, recent research in the West supports the older suppositions of the East that meditation acts to refine and assist in establishing a particular quality of attention called mindfulness in everyday life. This support as explored by research in the West has been shown to involve actual changes in brain function congruent with the known brain functions of those who are most resilient and flexible under stress. Individuals engaged in a practice of meditation show heightened awareness of their internal somatic changes as well as the heightened capacity for noticing even subtle external changes in the environment. The capacity for feeling more affiliation or connection with others and more trusting of oneself has been documented by research in the West (Goleman, 1998).

It is clear that the mainstream literature in education supports a call for research models that are sensitive to the unpredictable nature of actual classroom practice. The literature on contemplative practice in and out of the classroom has not been a part of the mainstream. Although outside the mainstream, slim bodies of literature on contemplative practice provide support for contemplative practice as a viable holistic model that is sensitive to the demands of a flexibility needed to negotiate the contingencies of classroom practice. Recent research suggests this flexibility is at least partially embedded in the nature of contemplative practice—which is to enhance the capacity to sustain resilience, a sense of well-being, and heightened awareness of both internal and external changes in the environment. Miller's (1994a) model of contemplative classroom practice is a model that may be implemented by teachers to enhance their sensitivity to the complexities and contingencies of the classroom.

Miller's Model

Miller (1994a) documents the benefits of contemplative practice for the teacher as a practitioner. The strength of Miller's model for classroom practice is his step-by-step guide for the novice who would like to enter into a contemplative practice.

Contemplative practice transforms the teacher's capacity for paying close attention to in the moment experiences even in the often hurried, chaotic environments of classrooms. The capacity to sustain a practice of close attention both to one's own inner experience and at the same time pay close attention to others creates greater harmony for oneself and others. Two contemplative practices are offered: meditations and identification with mythology as a metaphoric inspiration. The various meditation disciplines offered follow the meditation disciplines established by traditionally recognized contemplatives: Buddha, Teresa of Avila, Emerson, Gandhi, Merton, etc.

Miller's model consists of two components, a formal component and an informal component. The formal component in this study is vipassana meditation. The informal component in this study is mindfulness.

Vipassana

Insight or vipassana meditation is a practice that in the beginning focuses on the awareness of the in and out movement of the breath while sitting quietly with the eyes closed (Gunaratana, 1993). It is a common experience for the attention to wander from the breath, when this is noticed, the attention is gently brought back to the breath as an anchor in the present moment (Miller, 1994). This practice may include moving the awareness or attention to whatever is predominant in the moment, simply noting what is predominating until something else arises to take its place. Daily practice in this way

strengthens the capacity to pay attention to what is happening in each moment and acts to open the individual to being informed by the insights that create harmony not only for themselves but also for others (Welwood, 1983).

The formal component, vipassana meditation outside the classroom, develops the teacher's capacity for focused attention and flexibility in responding to moment to moment changes within the classroom. The regular meditation practice outside the classroom progressively strengthens enhanced capacities for centeredness and attentiveness in the midst of classroom activities. The practice of non-judgmental witnessing of events/thoughts as they arise provides the foundation for the informal component known as mindfulness.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness, the informal component is conceptualized as a practice that cultivates compassionate attention. This special case of attention attempts to view experience non-dualistically by focusing on what is usually thought to be irrelevant, namely, the exact experience as it presents itself without assigned meanings. For example, as I write this sentence, mindfully, my attention is focused on the movement of my fingers on the keyboard, the sensations of fingertips touching keys, the thought that I am explaining mindfulness by doing mindfulness. The central essence of mindfulness lies in the nature of aiming attention at the mundane that frees attention to roam beyond dualistic meanings. It is as if on a continuum between two opposites poles, attention erupts into a movement perpendicular to the continuum and looks at the experience differently. Although we can never entirely escape dualism as we can never really escape language as a way of explicating experience, mindfulness practice can promote a gaze, a

particular way of looking, on experience that allows the experience to be what it is. This is in contrast to the way we normally grasp experience through habitual categories. This is the essence of mindfulness and its power to access insights into life processes in the midst of daily activities. Miller's students report that the experience engenders a sense of awe and wonder in the everyday activities in which teachers and students engage. Miller notes that this state of deeply focused attention has been identified with the state of being in which one functions most effectively in their work and is associated with the flow experience.

Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1996) is a quality of subjective experience that is reported by individuals in diverse activities from rock climbing to assembly line work. Although it is a quality of subjective experience available to anyone in any experience, it is rarely experienced by most people. The rarity of flow is due to the quality or direction of attention required. During flow all the individual's attention is focused on the activity at hand. The movements involved in the activity seem to happen by themselves, the experience is one of flowing in time with the activity as if one's whole being is merged with the activity. Two conditions must be met before flow can be experienced.

First, attention must be narrowly focused on a specific goal. This may be as exotic as climbing a sheer cliff face or as common as a face to face interaction between a teacher and a student. The kind of attention in flow is an attention in which you are absorbed in the activity for itself. Second, this close attention prompts awareness of immediate feedback as to how one is doing in the movement toward the goal. The rock climber knows after each hand hold or foot placement, how well that movement is propelling him/her toward the goal. The teacher, as she/he interacts with a student,

knows after each nuance of her/his body language and/or speech, how those actions are moving him/her toward the goal of communicating.

During the flow experience, the individual's focused attention heightens her/his awareness of the present moment. There is no attention left for awareness of anything outside the activity. One paradox is that at the same time individuals often report feeling a sense of being connected with the larger world in a universal way which engenders a spontaneous experience of awe and wonder. Another paradox reported is that the intense focusing of attention leaves the individual with a sense of being energized rather than feeling depleted. A third paradox is that the activity becomes intrinsically rewarding, the individual no longer values the activity for its outcome (exotelic), but values it for the experience itself (autotelic) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). This is close to Gadamer's (1975) description of play.

Play

Valuing an activity for itself and the transcendence of the boundaries of time and place are close to Gadamer's (1975) description of play. He argues that play is not a kind of activity but is better described as the motion between subjects engaged in the motion for itself. Play is not the activity of the individuals, but is the "to-and-fro motion" (p. 94) which itself takes the initiative for calling for response. Thus, the player relaxes and is relieved of the necessity of constructing or anticipating her or his next response:

Play obviously represents an order in which the to-and-fro motion of play follows of itself. It is part of play that the movement is not only without goal or purpose but also without effort. It happens, as it were, by itself.

The ease of play, which naturally does not mean that there is any real

absence of effort, but phenomenologically refers only to the absence of strain, is experienced subjectively as relaxation. The structure of play absorbs the player into itself, and thus takes from him the burden of the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence. (p. 94)

The use of the word “play” in phrases like “play on words,” “play of light,” or “play of waves” illustrates the nature of play as this to-and-fro motion. What is being described is the back and forth changing as much as being changed among the subjects or elements engaged. What we see is the sensibilities of each both being evoked and provoking in turn the sensibilities of the other. The important points of this motion are:

- 1) The motion is engaged for itself.
- 2) The motion is characterized by a back and forth reciprocity.
- 3) The outcome is unknown.
- 4) The engagement involves effort but effort without strain.

In play, the activity of each participant is elicited as a complementary response to the elements of experience as they arise. Although effort is expended, it is effortless and leaves the participant with a sense of “lightness” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 97). Gadamer’s play, flow, and contemplative practice parallel each other as they are conceptualized as effortless effort, transcendence of time and place by way of being absorbed into the thing itself for itself, complementary back and forth motion, and the presence of outcome as always unknown.

Subjective Experience of Time and Space

Flow experiences alter the individual’s sense of time and place (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). There is a feeling of timelessness, as if one is no longer tied to clock time.

Minutes may seem like hours, or hours like minutes. It is as if there is exactly the right amount of time. It is as if this particular place is at once all places and no place at all. The normal boundaries of time and place are transcended. In these experiences, the sense of a separate self defined by linear time and space, drop away and “we can lay aside our sense of self, shed time’s continuum” (Ackerman, 1999, p. 23). There seems to be no origin of time, as if the sense of time we have in ordinary experience no longer has any relevance, but what is relevant is the sense of a generosity of time and place that is as small as the smallest increment of time or space and at the same time infinite (Aitken, 1997; Tart, 1994). Merleau-Ponty (1968) posits this experience as “the idea of *chiasm*” (p. 266), a touching as much as being touched. He thought of the past and present as

The idea of *chiasm*, that is: every relation with being is *simultaneously* a taking and a being taken, the hold is held, it is *inscribed* and inscribed in the same being that it takes hold of... then past and present are *Ineinander*, each enveloping-enveloped.” (p. 266, 269)

Abram (1996) suggests that Heidegger’s description of this experience of time and space follows Merleau-Ponty as mysteries that “draw us outside of ourselves, opening us” (p. 211) to an extension of ourselves as much forward as backward. Abram quotes Heidegger to describe this extension of ourselves as it were to beyond horizons both behind and in front of us:

What has been, which, by refusing the present, lets that become present which is no longer present; and the coming toward us of what is to come, which, by withholding the present, lets that be present which is not yet

present—both manifest the manner of an extending opening up which gives all presencing into the open. (p. 212)

Mindfulness is a presence that opens the experiences of time and space to something else than the usual linear perception.

Minogue (1997) takes her formal contemplative practice as a Zen meditate into her everyday life as she “runs the bush.” This is a First Nations Sekani practice she learned from an elder, a ninety-three year old woman resident of a Sekani village in British Columbia. To run the bush is to go into the bush surrounding the village and run as if you were a deer pursued by a wolf pack. Minogue describes the sense of time and space in this activity opening as she runs the bush, “I brought my attention to the present... My full attention rested in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and understanding what was going on in the immediate moment. I entered a present tense that was both dynamic and timeless,” (p. 58). Time and space become extensions of oneself that are at once vital in sensing particular details and universal in its sense of spacious movement beyond the limitations of linear temporal and spatial horizons.

Relationships to Self and Others

Individuals report changes in their perception of self and others after flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1996). Specifically, they feel “more together than before, not only internally but also with respect to other people and to the world in general” (1990, p. 41). In addition, flow experiences leave the individual feeling more capable and more skilled contributing to an enhanced sense of well-being. Gadamer (1975) speaks of the player as one who gets “rid of the tension which he feels in his

attitude to his aims” and aligning himself with “the purpose of the game [which] is not really the solution of the task, but the ordering and shaping of the movement of the game itself” (pp. 96, 97). Practically speaking, this alignment engenders a sense of well-being.

Personal Identity

Personal identity in Western psychology is associated with one’s personality—the unique characteristics of an individual’s attitudes, experiences, skills, preferences, etc. (Tart, 1992). In this view, the development and strengthening of one’s personal identity is an important on-going task, worthy of devoting significant amounts of psychological energy toward. Spiritual psychologies have a different view. Personal identity or personality is seen as a lower level of human development. Personal identity, here, is viewed as just a surface reality or illusion. The deeper essence that lies beyond this surface reality of being is seen as the more worthy direction for psychological energy.

Directing one’s psychological energy toward the realization of this deeper essence may be experienced in meditation. In meditation, the meditator uses the concentration of attention to develop mindfulness. In this practice, the mind becomes a witness to the flow of random ideas, thoughts, images out of which reality is continually structured. As this practice deepens, the meditator’s personal identity eventually comes into view as a discrete set of constantly changing entities. This is witnessed as impermanent as all other phenomena (Goleman, 1992).

At this point, the meditate ceases to identify with any unique characteristics that set her/him apart from others. As a witness to rather than being attached to the discrete entities that one usually associates with personal identity, the meditator becomes more and more unaffected by either internal or external disturbances associated with those

entities (Chaudhuri, 1992). There is no one map or timeline by which these experiences occur. Although there are some general guidelines, the various paths are varied as the individuals who explore these higher states of consciousness.

Expectations and judgments help create the stories we tell ourselves in order to establish a fixed identity for ourselves. Identity has its place in the healthy functioning personality as a center of gravity that gives a sense of balance in the uncertainties of life (Roshi, 1983). The preservation of this “I” is the subject of Western psychology and psychotherapy. What has not been made problematic in the West is the cost of maintaining a fixed identity. While psychotherapy and psychology may work to heal the splits that exist within an individual, they do not address the alienation a fixed identity must maintain with the world (Welwood, 1983). Separate identity demands the borders between self and others be discrete. Maintaining the definition of those borders is the source of gradations of alienation from others. These gradations form the basis for hatred, greed, envy, pride and ignorance—the cost of separate identity and the source of a dualistic view of others as objects to be manipulated in the preservation of self (Bankhart, 1997; Cushman, 1995; Welwood, 1983). Eastern psychology suggests that in addition to the separate self (the fixed identity of the West), there is also an integrated self. The point of vipassana is to widen awareness giving a panoramic view of both internal and external experience. One effect is that the nature of the fixed identity is seen for what it is—a construction of expectations and judgments that may be witnessed without attachment, without losing one’s balance. Within this widened awareness the integrated self recognizes itself in the Other it encounters. This recognition is the source of

compassion and connection to others and the source of spontaneous joy in relationships—in experiences in and of themselves (Miller, 1994a; Shainberg, 1983; Welwood, 1983).

Personal identity is spoken of as constructed through the life-stories one tells others and themselves about oneself. Sarup (1996) argues “we construct our identity at the same time as we tell our life-story” (p. 15). In the current study, personal identity is defined as the stories we tell others and ourselves as descriptions of who we are.

Summary

In this chapter, the literature of educational research and practice in which the study is contextually situated has been summarized as: 1) Traditional educational research has conceptualized teaching as a set of teacher and student behaviors that can be measured and predicted; 2) Teachers experience actual classroom practice as an arena in which much that is relevant cannot be measured or predicted; 3) Traditional educational research has not made the contingent nature of classroom practice a primary focus of their research, and the current dilemma calls for such a focus. Finally, the literature on contemplative practices in education argues a match between contemplative practice and negotiating the complexities of classroom practice more holistically.

Miller’s model of contemplative practice was shown to be a viable example of a model of classroom practice that answers the call for research that focuses on the complexities of classroom practice.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of personal identity, classroom practice, the quality of teachers' subjective experience of time and place, and relationships with students as they are affected by a holistic classroom practice theorized by Miller's (1994a) model of contemplative classroom practice as a first step in the direction of providing teacher constructed narratives of classroom practice guided by holistic insights.

One current dilemma in research and practice revolves around the failure of research, classroom practice, or education reforms to influence each other. Mainstream educational researchers in self-critiques currently call for research that models holistic practices, that align themselves with classroom practitioner demands and insights. Outside the mainstream, contemplative practitioners have contributed to a slim body of literature that provides insights into contemplative practice as a viable, holistic model of classroom practice. This study is a response to both the mainstream demands for holistic research and the need for more definitive explorations of contemplative practice in education.

Participants

The participants for this study were teachers who volunteered their participation during the fall of the 1998-99 school year. The study was conducted in a mid-western state, in rural, urban, and inner-city sites within that state. All school names and participant names are pseudonyms. Three participants, (one female, two males) were teachers in an inner-city high school, Medford High School. Two, both females, were teachers in an inner-city elementary school, Horace Mann Elementary School. One female was a teacher in a rural middle school, Bryson Middle School. Six (five females, one male) were teachers in an urban, private preschool/elementary school, Roserock Private School. In addition, one female middle-school teacher who lived out of state began the study but dropped out, one female inner-city high school teacher dropped out, and one female middle-school teacher dropped out. The number of teachers completing the study was twelve.

Instrumentation

Torbert (1991) states:

... action inquiry... is a kind of scientific inquiry that is conducted in everyday life... As a result... action inquiry is a kind of social science that deals primarily with “primary” data encountered “on-line” in the midst of perception and only secondarily with secondary, or instrumented data, collected and analyzed “off-line”... “Consciousness” in the midst of action—a special kind of widened attention that embraces all four territories of experience (intuition, reason, one’s own action, and the

outside world)—is therefore, both the ultimate aim and the primary research instrument in action inquiry. (p. 221)

Following Torbert's social science research model, action inquiry, the "primary research instrument" in this study was the researcher's and each teacher's "widened attention" referred to in this study as "mindfulness." This "consciousness in action" was the aim and primary research instrument of each teacher in her or his classroom practice during the eight weeks of the study and the aim and primary research instrument of the researcher during unstructured interviews and the analyses of the teachers' interview and journal responses.

Reason (1998) suggests that one of the strengths of action inquiry is the recognition of "the particular individual skills required for valid inquiry with others" (p. 285). Action inquiry challenges individuals to cultivate a "wide-ranging and subtle attention...and it offers methods for the detailed examination of our purposes, theories, and behavior, and the consequences of these for our world" (p. 285). Thus the vision of action inquiry:

is an attention that spans and integrates the four territories of human experience. This attention is what sees, embraces, and corrects incongruities among mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes. It is the source of the "true sanity of natural awareness of the whole."

This attention, or "consciousness," is cultivated by personal exercise...generates transforming power and the power of balance. These, in turn, generate continual quality improvement and increasingly just action. (Torbert, 1991, p. 219)

The balance emerges from the individual's immersion in the "moment of action" in contrast to being a "disembodied thinker at the moment of reflection" (Torbert, 1976, p. 167). The immersion in the moment, mindfulness, enhances the individual's access to "intuition, feeling, action and effect" (p. 167) simultaneously. This access works to illuminate ways intuition, feeling, action and effect can meet in mutual congruence (p. 167).

Procedures

This study was conducted during the fall of the 1998-99 school year. The procedures for this study were recruiting and instructing teacher participants; implementation by the teachers for eight weeks; exit interviews and a focus group interview conducted by the principal researcher, and analysis of data as a hermeneutical endeavor.

Recruiting and instructing teacher participants involved soliciting and training the participants. Each participant was given a letter describing the research project and a post card upon initial contact with the researcher (Appendix A). Upon expression of interest in participation in the project each participant was then given a copy of the consent form (Appendix B). The consent forms were read and signed by the participants, then returned to the researcher. A second copy of the consent form was given to each participant for their files. The consent form provided telephone numbers for both the researcher and the IRB Executive Secretary, Gay Clarkson, at Oklahoma State University. In addition, the letter (Appendix A) provided an email address and two telephone numbers for the researcher. The consent form included a statement that the

anonymity of each participant would be protected. Therefore, all names of schools and participants are fictional.

Although each training session had its unique features, these unique features were characterized by the unique nature of human encounters and not as any significant difference in nature of content. An informal training session was presented by the researcher familiarizing the participants with the guidelines for meditation (Appendix C), for mindfulness in the classroom (Appendix D), and for the journaling associated with mindfulness in the classroom (Appendix E). These guidelines were developed by the researcher through an informal process of review with both those experienced in meditation and mindfulness and those unfamiliar with these techniques. Specifically, family, friends, and colleagues read the guidelines and made suggestions. For example, Dr. Joe Pearl, an experienced meditator, read both the meditation and mindfulness guidelines and made suggestions for clarification of certain points. Each resulting set of guidelines was a product that attempted to present the particular set straightforwardly in a manner that needed little or no outside interpretation to understand and implement. In short, they were meant to be as self-explanatory as possible.

The training sessions were conducted by the researcher either individually, in small groups, or over the telephone depending on the needs of the participants with one exception. One session was conducted by a third party, who was a participant in the project and had received the training from the researcher.

At the beginning of each training session, copies of the meditation guidelines (Appendix C), mindfulness guidelines (Appendix D), journal guidelines (Appendix E), and the exit interview guidelines (Appendix E) were given to each participant. Following

the distribution of the sets of guidelines, each session then began with brief instructions stating the purpose of the session. Questions were entertained at any point during the introduction and discussion of each set of guidelines. The session was a simple reading out loud of each set of guidelines by the researcher as the participants listened, following along on their own copies. Questions were entertained at any point in the presentation. The individual nature of the experience of meditation and mindfulness was stressed, as was the encouragement to be non-judgmental about one's attempts to implement meditation and mindfulness in the classroom. The positive aspects of meditation and mindfulness as a classroom practice were presented in the context of Miller's (1994) students' experiences out of which he developed the model on which the study was based. It was emphasized that to the researcher's knowledge, the literature on the contemplative practice model for classroom practice as described by Miller (1994) did not contain complex narratives of teachers' experiences in implementing the model. And that this lack was the impetus for this study. At each session, the journaling requirement (Appendix E) was discussed and each participant was given a bound Composition Book.

At each session, the discussion of the journaling guidelines (Appendix E) was followed by a brief statement informing the participants that the exit interview (Appendix E) would be conducted by the researcher with each participant individually at the end of the study. At this time, it was explained that the participant's experience as given in the interview and journal entries would act as the source of data for the researcher to write individual narratives of each participant's experience as a contemplative practitioner/teacher. Participants were informed they would each be given the opportunity to read their own narrative and make suggestions as needed to produce a

narrative that described their experience from their point of view. At the end of each session, the participants left with copies of each set of guidelines (Appendices C, D, E) and a bound Composition Note Book for their journal requirement. In addition, the options for submitting electronic journal entries by email, or for entries kept in a folder as a Word document and submitted by disk or hard copy were provided. The training session lasted about twenty minutes in each case. The final note of each session was the researcher's statement of gratitude for the participation of each volunteer.

The participants spent eight weeks in the execution of the study's goals for implementing Miller's model in the classroom. At the end of the eight weeks exit interviews were conducted by the researcher with each teacher as well as a focus group interview conducted after all the exit interviews were completed. The interview transcripts and journal entries were the focus of the data analyses.

Recruitment and Training

Amanda and Laverne

As a personal friend of the researcher, Amanda had followed the development of the project from its inception. On August 30, 1998, she volunteered her participation sitting at the researcher's kitchen table. The consent form was read and signed with an additional copy given to Amanda and the training session was conducted in the manner outlined. Amanda stated that her willingness to participate, aside from friendship with the researcher, was based on the pressures she was experiencing at the beginning of the current school year. The pressures of which she spoke actually began in June, when the new principal at her inner-city elementary site sent her a letter informing her that she was being assigned a position in a fourth grade classroom after thirty-one years as a

kindergarten teacher, largely at her present site. A new hire was to replace her in her old kindergarten position.

Through the summer she was involved in intricate negotiations with the principal over this new assignment. The reassignment had been rescinded by the time of the study. There was an ongoing battle at the school positing one group of teachers against the other over the new principal's agenda's which included a broad arena of changes. Amanda saw the meditation aspect of the project as an avenue of personal support for dealing with the ongoing stresses and pressures that had begun in June 1998.

The training session lasted about twenty minutes. She left with the sets of guidelines, her copy of the consent form, her copy of the letter from the researcher and the bound Composition Note Book. She took the Note Book, but said she would post her journal entries electronically through email to the researcher every two weeks. She would date her official participation in the project from September 1.

On September 1, 1998 she called the researcher to report that she had shared the concept of the study with the teacher across the hall, Laverne, who wanted to participate in the study. She gave the researcher Laverne's telephone number. The researcher immediately called and set up an appointment at the researcher's house with Laverne for the next day.

On September 2, Laverne met the researcher at the researcher's house. The session was conducted following the outlined procedures. Laverne stated that the uproar at school left her feeling the need for extra support as she began this new school year and prompted her to volunteer her participation. She chose the option of journaling in her Composition Note Book. The researcher gave her four stamped self-addressed envelopes

for the purpose of mailing her journal entries every two weeks. She was to begin her official participation in the project the next day, September 3.

Sara, Luanne, Mackensie, Sid, Candace, and Jane

At a regularly scheduled faculty development session on August 27, 1998, the researcher presented the study to the faculty of the Roserock Private School. The school accepts students from age three to eleven years old. At this session, six teachers expressed an interest in volunteering their participation in the study. The procedures for obtaining signed consent forms were followed as outlined. After lunch, the researcher returned to meet with the participants for the training session. The school was in chaos as the new building was not completed and materials and furniture were piled into the one completed building. It was difficult to get the six teachers together and impossible to find a place that was not noisy or busy due to the open area architecture. Four of the participants (Sara, Luanne, Mackensie, and Sid) finally were gathered in one corner for the training. The other two (Candace and Jane) had to leave the grounds for personal reasons. Working with their schedules the researcher rescheduled their training for the next day.

The outlined procedures were followed for the distribution and discussion of the meditation guidelines (Appendix C), mindfulness guidelines (Appendix D), journal guidelines (Appendix E), and the exit interview guidelines (Appendix E) with Luanne, Mackensie, Sara, and Sid. The discussion included Luanne's inquiry into the possibility of the six participants "watching each other's kids" at different times of the day to enable each of them to complete the meditation requirement at school during the day. I reminded them that the meditation should be in a place relatively free of noise or

distractions especially for novices. Taking this into consideration, they decided that the school's open area construction did not provide space for a relatively private place for meditation. So, the idea of meditating at school was dismissed. Although, none had experience with vipassana before, they felt the guidelines were clear and did not express any apprehension about beginning the meditation practice. They had experience with walking meditation through faculty activities lead by the music and movement teacher at their school. They expressed pleasant surprise that the meditation would begin with a five minute session the first day adding five minutes a day working up to thirty minutes maximum. They felt this increment of time was small enough to be manageable as they began this practice. But each of them expressed concern that it would not be easy to fit the thirty minutes of meditation five days a week into their lives. Luanne's comment, "*I know this would be really good for me,*" was echoed by the others. It was not clear that their enthusiasm for it being "*really good*" for them would outweigh the pressures of other time constraints and demands in their lives in order to fit meditation into their schedules.

The researcher gave each participant the bound Composition Note Books as the journaling guidelines were discussed (Appendix E). These four participants expressed their delight at the prospect of journaling about their experiences of mindfulness in the classroom. They explained that a new component was being added to their student assessment strategies at the school this year. That strategy included journal entries about each child in their group three times a week. They felt that the mindfulness experiences in the classroom would provide rich journal entries in both their student journals and their project journals. The journal guidelines required that the journal entries be given to the

researcher every two weeks during the eight week study. They did not want to separate the bound pages from the journal, so it was agreed that they would copy their pages every two weeks and place them in an envelope in the school office for the researcher to pick up. They each expressed an eagerness to begin. Luanne and Sara alternately expressed enthusiasm for both the meditation and the journaling but they were more easily distracted than Mackensie or Sid by the external activities going on in other parts of the room. The session ended with the agreement that the participants would officially begin the project on September 1, 1998. The entire process lasted about twenty minutes. The instruction was informal and discussion flowed in an easy give and take manner despite the constant movement through the room of people working in other areas or entering and exiting to the outdoors.

The next day the researcher returned to the school and to meet with Jane and Candace separately. Candace had to leave again for personal reasons, but left word that she would be available for the training the next afternoon at the school. The meeting with Jane went as scheduled. She was given copies of the sets of guidelines and the session proceeded as outlined. She was enthusiastic about participating. Her enthusiasm included her good feelings associated with her walking meditation experiences conducted for the faculty by the music and movement teacher on campus. She said that things at school and home had been so hectic that she was looking forward to the quiet time of the meditation practice. She expressed concern that with her husband and children, it would be *“hard to find the time to meditate”* but that she was willing to give it a try. She would officially begin her participation in the project on September 1, 1998.

The next afternoon, August 29, 1998, the researcher returned to the school for her meeting with Candace. Candace was in her room sorting art supplies. The procedures for introduction and discussion of the guidelines were followed as outlined. She was enthusiastic about each component of the study. She expressed concern about the hectic pace of her life and that it would take an effort to fit the meditation in five days a week into her schedule. She said she wanted to use the Composition Note Book option for her journal. She wanted to keep her journal intact and agreed to make a copy of her pages every two weeks and place them in the designated envelope in the office for the researcher to pick-up. Candace set her official date for beginning her participation in the project on September 1, 1998.

Leonard, Phyllis, Jeanne, and Max

A friend of the researcher, Leonard, teaches at an inner-city high school, Medford High School. Leonard was contacted by the researcher and an appointment was scheduled with the principal, Mr. Robert Turnock for September 9, 1998 when the study was explained and permission requested to present the study to the faculty at a regularly scheduled faculty meeting. This is Mr. Turnock's first year at Medford. Mr. Turnock expressed enthusiasm for the project and eagerly agreed to give the researcher a place on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled faculty meeting, September 15 when he would give his personal support for the study. He stated that he felt that a number of the faculty would want to participate.

The researcher arrived at the Medford office thirty minutes before the scheduled faculty meeting. When she informed the secretary that she was there to attend the faculty meeting the secretary looked puzzled and said that the faculty meeting had been

yesterday. The researcher learned that Mr. Turnock had rescheduled the faculty meeting and failed to inform the researcher. Another rescheduled faculty meeting on September 22 was missed due to the activities surrounding Open House. The next faculty meeting was on September 29. At that time, the researcher returned to Medford and outlined the project and its purpose. The researcher closed by stating that she would be available at the end of the meeting for any one who was interested in more information about the project.

After the meeting, Leonard, Phyllis, and Jeanne volunteered participation. The procedures for obtaining signed consent forms as outlined were followed. Leonard took an extra consent form for his friend, Max, who had wanted to be present for the presentation of the project but was unable to do so because of an extra curricula band activity. The three decided that they would prefer to have the training session on the spot rather than try to schedule another time.

After the training, it was agreed they would start the project on October 1. They all felt that they would rather keep their journals in the bound Composition Note Books. They would either copy their journal pages or tear them out at the end of each two weeks. The researcher gave each of them four stamped self-addressed envelopes in which to mail their journal entries to the researcher every two weeks. Leonard took extra materials for his friend Max. He said that Max had a hectic schedule with his band activities and that he would act in the researcher's place in providing the training session. Max, too, begun the project on October 1.

Fay

Getting a referral from a friend, the researcher contacted Fay by telephone on August 31, and arranged an appointment in Fay's home for the next day, September 1. On the afternoon of September 1, the researcher met with Fay in her den. The procedures for the signed consent form and introduction of the project were followed as outlined. Fay stated that she was interested in the project because of the stress she felt both in the classroom and the residue of stress she carried home each day. She did not have experience with either mindfulness or vipassana but was willing to try both in an effort to make her daily classroom experiences less stressful. She expressed her concerns about time constraints that were a part of her life and how those would impinge on the thirty minute five days a week meditation requirement. She stated, *"But since I only have to do it five days a week that gives me two days to play with. I think I can manage that for eight weeks."*

Fay chose the journal option of the bound Composition Note Book. The researcher left four stamped, self-addressed envelopes with her. She agreed to send her journal entries to the researcher every two weeks.

Lois and Litha

A friend of the researcher has two daughters who are teachers. Lois, teaches middle school English classes in a west coast state. Litha teaches Spanish in a middle school in metropolitan community in a mid-western state. The researcher contacted each of them separately as the study began to ascertain their interest in the project, described the project and both agreed to use the Composition Note Book as her journal and to mail in her journal entries in the envelopes provided. Both agreed to begin her participation in the project on September 10.

Participant Implementation of Study

For eight consecutive weeks during the fall of 1998, the participants followed the pattern of contemplative practice suggested in Miller's (1994a) model.

Amanda and Laverne

Amanda began sending her journal entries electronically by email to the researcher on the same date they were written rather than wait to email them all every two weeks. Laverne made journal entries in the bound Composition Note Book and sent copies of the first two weeks' entries to the researcher in the envelope provided, but did not send the rest of the entries she made. She brought the entire journal to her exit interview.

Sara, Luanne, Mackensie, Sid, Candace, and Jane

On September 17 the researcher returned to Roserock Private School to retrieve the first set of journal entries for each participant. The labeled envelope left in the office for the collection of the entries was empty. Seeing Sara, the researcher asked her about the entries. Sara said that the beginning of school had been hectic for all of them and that the journaling they were required to do for the assessment portfolios for each child were grueling, demanding more of their time than they thought they would. She also explained that she felt that some of those entries would also fit the journal requirements for the study but she just had not had time to pull them out make copies and put them in the office envelope.

Mackensie and Luanne walked up during this conversation and chimed in their agreement with Sara's assessment of why no one had placed any journal entries in the

envelope. They also complained that the beginning of school had been so hectic and chaotic that they had been spending so much time after hours at school that they were not getting the meditation done consistently five days out of each week. While this conversation was progressing, Tracy and Sid also joined the group. The conversation turned into a litany of complaints about the daily problems they were having because the new building was not finished which forced continual changes in everyone's schedules from one day to the next. This, along with the portfolio requirements, according to the group, had made the beginning of school more chaotic than usual. Sid suggested that the group drop their efforts to participate in the study and begin again on October 1. Everyone agreed that this would be a better option. The researcher found Jane and Candace and shared Sid's idea, both of them also readily agreed to postponing the beginning of the study to October 1.

On October 22 the researcher returned to Roserock Private School and there still were no entries in the envelope. Sara and Mackensie were in the hall. Both looked harried. The researcher spoke to both and asked how things were going. The conversation included continued concerns about the time the portfolio assessments were demanding and the demands that the absences of colleagues placed on those who were there as the school did not provide substitutes when some one was absent. It was up to those present to shoulder the extra responsibilities. The researcher asked about the journal entries. Both Mackensie and Sara stated that they still hadn't had the time to pull out the entries they wanted to use for the project from the assessment portfolios but that they would. As the other participants were involved with children or for other reasons were unavailable (Jane and Luanne had both called in sick that day), Mackensie and Sara

said they would touch base about the researcher's inquiries concerning the journal entries with the other participants the next day. As I spoke with them, I noted my internal terror. My initial reaction was one of terror that the project's integrity had been violated, and that it was too late in the semester to start another group. At the same time I was conscious of witnessing this terror reaction and attempting to respond to rather than just fall into a chain of reactions. The conversation was as comfortable as possible with me responding as thoughtfully and empathetically as possible to the concerns, while at the same time being mindful of my own fears that the project was going up in flames and smoke.

Leonard, Phyllis, Jeanne, and Max

The first journal entries for Leonard, Kale, and Phyllis were due after October 22. By October 27 the researcher had not received entries from any of the three. The researcher contacted Kale by telephone. She said that she had not kept up with the meditation schedule nor the journaling and had decided to drop out of the study. The researcher contacted Leonard by telephone. He said he was keeping up the schedule and writing in his journal and he felt that this was also true for Max because they had discussed the effort it took to make time for the meditation. In addition, he believed that he was benefiting from the project and would continue as was Max. He said he would try to get the journal entries in the mail soon. The researcher tried to reach Phyllis by telephone. A message was left on her answering machine but was not returned.

Fay

Fay mailed her journal entries to the researcher promptly at the end of two weeks and kept that schedule each two weeks thereafter. The researcher responded with a hand-

written note each time. The notes thanked her for her journal entries and also included when appropriate a brief response to something in her journal entry. For example, in her first set of entries she expressed several times her worry that because her attention wandered during meditation or mindfulness in the classroom that this was a failure on her part. A sample comment from her first set of journal entries illustrates her inclination to judge her participation as good or bad, *“I didn’t feel very successful today.”* She also included a sticky note that read in part, *“Please let me know if I’m not on the right track.”* The following note was sent by the researcher in response and is typical of the notes sent each time to Fay:

Dear Fay,

Thank you for your journal entries. You are doing just fine! Keep up your 5 days a week 30 minute meditation and continue to be conscious of mindfulness in the classroom. Then write in your journal what mindfulness is like for you in the classroom.

Be gentle with yourself! You are doing just fine!

Sincerely,

Sharon

Lois and Litha

By October 1, journal entries for Lois or Litha had not been received. The researcher contacted each of them by telephone. They both said they had had a hard time getting started on the project but were still interested. The researcher stated that the difficulty of setting a pattern of meditation practice was a common problem and that their experience of this difficulty would be important to the study. They each agreed to give the process another try but each later dropped out of the study.

Comments

The difficulty most of the participants were having setting aside the time for the meditation and the difficulty they were having in getting their journal entries turned in along with their earnestness in their desire to help the researcher with this research touched me deeply. At the same time, I also had heavy concerns that without encouragement, they might not sustain even this effort. I did not want to add to their concerns by being intrusive and pushy where their participation in the project was concerned. Adding to the complexity, observing my own panic, made obvious to me the depth of my personal desire for the teachers to experience the effects of meditation and mindfulness as a classroom practice. This pointed out to me that I was more interested than I had been aware up to now, in affirming the positive experiences I had had with meditation and mindfulness as a classroom practice, than I was in simply creating teacher narratives about the implementation of this model whatever that experience was for these teachers. Attempting to remain mindful, the question for me and one which I recorded in my journal notes became, "How to offer encouragement without being pushy for whatever this experience might mean to each teacher?" The time constraints that each participant felt seemed to make the option of meeting with them regularly impossible. But, it was important to find a way to offer them encouragement and support for what they could do and let the project play itself out in whatever way each saw fit to play it out in their individual lives/practices. It was important to support their efforts to make meaning out of this project in their own way but to do so in a way that would not place another burden on them. To this end I resolved to begin sending each participant a handwritten note each remaining week of the project in which encouragement and gratitude

for what their contribution to the project. The following note is the first in the series and typical in tone of the weekly notes written thereafter:

Dear _____,

Thank you for your continuing efforts regarding this study. I am convinced that your story, including the difficulties you experience in implementing this model of contemplative practice, is as important as the stories of those for whom this implementation is difficult in different ways. I urge you to continue to follow the guidelines for meditation and mindfulness as closely as you can...and when you can jot down your experiences of “mindfulness” in the classroom. I will keep in touch every few days for the remaining weeks of the study. Thank you again.

Sharon

The journal entries were acknowledged if sent, but no effort was made to collect them every two weeks.

Exit Interviews and Focus Group Interview

Exit Interviews

Question Construction. As each participant came to the end of their eight week cycle, they were contacted by the researcher and an exit interview was scheduled. If they had not already supplied their journal entries to the researcher, they were asked to bring their entries with them to the interview. Each interviewee was asked four basic questions (Appendix F). The interviews were conducted using strategies designed for qualitative research (McCracken, 1988; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Questions were constructed following these strategies. Relevant areas in the literature review of contemplative practice and the purpose of this study influenced the construction of the interview questions.

Two specific areas in the literature review (McCracken, 1988) influenced the construction of the interview questions. Miller (1994a) proposes that the experience of mindfulness is comparable to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) descriptions of flow experiences. Specifically, flow is thought to influence the individual's sense of competency and well being. After a flow experience, individuals feel "more together than before, not only internally but also with respect to other people and to the world in general" and flow experiences leave the individual "feeling more capable, more skilled" (p.41). S. Kessler (1991) argues that the essence of "teaching presence" is mindfulness and that teachers with "teaching presence" demonstrate a sense of competency and positive relationships with their students. Questions one and four intended to invite the interviewee to interrogate their experience of contemplative practice for evidence of the effects of perceived competency, sense of well-being, and positive relationships with others as described by Csikszentmihalyi, S. Kessler and Miller or the lack thereof. Question one: When you describe yourself as a teacher to yourself, what do you say? is open to the story that the interviewee is willing to share in his or her own words. Sarup (1996) argues that identity is constructed from the life-experience stories that we tell ourselves. The story the interviewee is willing to share after eight weeks of attempted contemplative practice may be taken as evidence of his or her interpretation of the experience of that practice. The open-endedness of the question intended to elicit a response from the interviewee that would provide a narrative description of the experience as much in the individual's words as possible.

In the same way the interviewee's response to question four: How would you describe your relationships with your students during the last eight weeks? was intended

to leave the interviewee as free as possible to construct his or her interpretation of the experience of contemplative practice on their relationships with their students from their own perspective as much as possible.

Another area in the review of literature on contemplative practice that influenced the construction of the interview questions was the subjective experience of time and place. Miller (1994a) argues that the subjective experience of time and place in mindfulness dissolves normal boundaries of time and place. The individual loses a sense of time as a linear element with a beginning and an end. Place also loses the sense of boundaries. It is as if the moments are time/less and the place is space/less; as if all time and all space were in this one moment. Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996) also argues that individuals who experience flow lose any sense of time or place as constraints, rather there is a sense of spacious for both. Question number three was intended to be an invitation for the interviewee to interrogate his or her experience of time and place during mindfulness in the classroom from his or her own perspective.

The purpose of the study was to explore Miller's model of contemplative practice as a holistic means of negotiating the complexities of classroom practice and to provide narrative descriptions of this experience. The purpose of the study was reflected in question number two: Tell me what it was like for you to be mindful in your classroom during this past eight weeks. This question was intentionally open-ended in construction. It was intended as an invitation for the interviewee to construct the story of his or her experience of mindfulness as a classroom practice from his or her perspective as much as possible. It was important to the purpose of the study for the interviewee's to tell the story of their experience in their own words. Their own words were key to developing

narratives of their experience that paralleled their interpretation of the experience as much as possible.

Interview Site. Each interview was scheduled at the participant's convenience and was conducted in the home of the researcher in a quiet area. The interviews were tape-recorded. The interviewee wore a small lapel microphone attached to tape recorder. The researcher kept notes and asked probing questions as necessary.

Focus Group Interview

After all the individual interviews were conducted, the researcher invited all the participants to a dinner and a focus group interview in the researcher's home on Saturday, December 12. The focus group interview has historical roots in marketing research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Reinharz, 1992). As this technique has evolved in use by both qualitative and quantitative researchers so has the nature of its uses. In this study, its use follows the feminist group interview method as a means of collaboration and support for members of the group as well as an impetus for stimulating enriched responses to the topic through the dynamics of the group (Reinharz, 1992). This technique requires the same skills from the researcher as in the individual interviews with the added responsibility for flexibility in the skill of moving the group discussion along without letting one individual dominate as well as an alertness to the silence of any member (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Six of the participants in the study were able to attend the group interview: Sara, Fay, Luanne, Mackensie, Laverne, and Leonard. The interview was conducted in the researcher's living room. Two tape recorders with microphones were set up in the center of the room.

The interview was unstructured and informal. The researcher directed the conversation in that three specific questions were the focus of the group conversation:

- 1) Tell us what the experience of the last eight weeks was like for you.
- 2) Listening to each of these stories, what similarities and/or differences do you hear?
- 3) What will you do in the future as a result of your involvement in the project?

The researcher was careful to see that each member had the opportunity to respond to each question at least once and more often if they indicated a desire to do so. The researcher was sensitive to the inclination of Leonard and Luanne to dominate the conversation and sensitive to the tendency of Fay and Laverne to be more reticent. The responses of each person were integrated into their individual narrative

Data Analyses and Summary Report

The interviews were taped and transcribed. The initial transcriptions were made by a third party. The researcher then took each transcript and listened to the respective interview tape making corrections and additions to the transcripts as needed. The names of all participants were coded with a pseudonym for both the journal entries and interview transcripts.

The data analyses were two-fold. First, the interview transcripts and the journal entries were analyzed and collated for each teacher to produce a narrative of each teacher's experience in their words as much as possible and taking into consideration their judgments of that narrative as it was produced by the researcher. The second part of the unfolding of the analyses was hermeneutical in nature which pushed the analyses to both direct interpretation of the results as they reflected light on the research questions

and beyond to a broader conception of the nature of contemplative practice suggested by the results of this study.

The interview transcripts and journal entries were analyzed using a computer software data base management system, ATLAS.ti. This software was used in the initial organization of the data from the interview transcripts. The researcher systematically analyzed each interview line by line highlighting and labeling segments guided by the research questions. The software allows the printing of the selected quotations with their associated labels and assigned pseudonym onto note cards. The note cards were then used by the researcher to construct a narrative for each participant. Each teacher was asked to review the description of their practice and their feedback was incorporated into the respective narrative. Each teacher's experience is reported separately in a description of classroom practice in their own words as much as possible in Chapter Four.

Following Torbert's model of action inquiry, the researcher moved through the interview transcripts and journal entries mindfully. The results are reported in Chapter Five. Mindfulness provoked a hermeneutical relationship with the texts and was a good fit for the purpose of this study, which in one part was to explore holistically the nature of Miller's Model as a model for classroom practice that itself embraced the ambiguities of practice. Hermeneutics

wants to recover the original difficulties of life, difficulties that are concealed in technical-scientific reconstructions, concealed in the attempt to render human life objectively presentable. "Original" in this usage does not mean a longing for some unspecificible past "before" technology (a sort of nostalgia) or a longing for one's own past, one's childhood

(echoing in some forms of phenomenological pedagogy), but it is nevertheless a longing. It a longing for fundamental questions of how life together can go in such a way that new life is possible in our midst.

(Jardine, 1992, p. 118)

The aim of hermeneutic inquiry is precisely the exploration of the ambiguity of life, the complexity as it is (Jardine, 1992). As such it requires a quality of attention that mindfulness may offer such an inquiry.

Central to the hermeneutic analysis was Gadamer's (1975) concept of play. The researcher as a contemplative practitioner approached the analyses with mindfulness. Gadamer's concept of play and the contemplative activity of mindfulness share particular affinities. The activity of interpretation, then, was engaged for itself as much as possible, the outcome unknown, and the engagement experienced as a back and forth motion between the researcher and the data as each in turn called forth the other and was called forth.

For example, early in the interpretation stage, the text called forth connections with Csikszentmihalyi's concepts of flow. Evidence from the participants' journals and interviews that demonstrated their sense of timeless/spaceless experiences in mindfulness stood out, as well as their experiences of their efforts being energizing rather than depleting. As this motion played itself out, a bifurcation displaced the continuity of the flow interpretation and became a motion playing itself out in the vicissitudinous arena of language. The motion here played out themes of the complexities of the propensity of language to dictate meaning to experience through the habitual associations of concept and prescribed meanings inherent in words. This motion ran its course bifurcating again,

this time playing with the way the purpose of a participant's looking at their students changed what they saw—changing their purpose for looking, thought their gaze differently in the Foucauldian sense—this became a play on the complexities of issues of control and regulation as the purpose of the teacher's gaze. Aoki's watchfulness and thoughtfulness as a way of being that was also a way of seeing and hearing the student more deeply began to play with Foucault's gaze. This was profoundly experienced as I immersed myself in Leonard's encounter with Taylor. His description of this experience played with not only the concept of thinking gaze differently, but also with the Chinese concept of wu wei as the motion of openness to possibilities of meaning evoking complementary responses that keeps the play in motion rather than erecting barriers to the continuity of motion. The texts began to play themselves out into rich descriptions of the human capacity for circumventing the necessary habits of adaptations for moments of inventing presence that live themselves beyond the individual's memories, fantasies, or dreams.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reiterated the purpose of the study as an exploratory investigation of teachers' perceptions of a contemplative classroom practice theorized by Miller (1994a) as it affects personal identity, classroom practice, the quality of teachers' subjective experience of time and place, and relationships with students in order to create narratives of this experience. I have identified the population of the study as teachers from pre-school elementary, middle, and high school levels. I have defined the methodology as following Torbert's (1991) model, action inquiry. I have noted that the analyses was guided by Gadamerian hermeneutical elements in conjunction with the

purpose of the study and close relationship with the mindfulness element in both Torbert's Model, action inquiry, and Miller's Model, the contemplative practitioner. I have outlined the study to follow the path of: recruiting and instructing teacher participants; the eight week implementation of the study by teacher participants; exit interviews with each teacher participant conducted by the principal researcher; a focus group interview; analysis of data, journal entries and transcriptions of exit interviews, as a hermeneutical endeavor, resulting in the writing of the final report.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS—THEIR STORIES

This study explored teachers' perceptions of personal identity, classroom practice, the quality of teachers' subjective experiences of time and place, and relationships with students as these are affected by the holistic model of classroom practice theorized by Miller's (1994a) model of contemplative classroom practice. Miller's (1994a) concept of the contemplative practitioner as a model for classroom practice is holistic in that it provides the means for negotiating the complexities of classroom practice through an openness to the invention of what is needed moment to moment. The source of this capacity for negotiation is a particular quality of attention known as mindfulness cultivated by the practice of vipassana.

The data of this study consisted of the participating teachers' descriptions, written and verbal, of their experience in attempting to practice meditation and mindfulness, and observe the effects of such practice in their classroom situation. The researcher, as described in Chapter III, organized and synthesized the raw data in order to construct a narrative description of each participant's experience. Those narratives are presented in this chapter. The analyses of the data are presented in Chapter V with the implications for practice and further research given in Chapter VI.

Narratives

The narratives included in this chapter specifically meet the purpose of this study as stated in Chapter I which is to provide rich text narratives of the experience of implementing a contemplative classroom practice as reported by teachers. The four research questions proved to be overlapping with answers to any one having embedded within it threads of another. Thus, as a participant spoke of her or his experiences with her or his students during the eight week study, she or he could not do so without also speaking of changes in her or his perception of herself as a teacher, or perhaps, her or his experience of time and place or her or his experience of mindfulness as a classroom event. The construction of the exit interview questions was guided by the research questions:

Research Question 1: How do teachers perceive themselves after the experience of attempting to establish a contemplative practice in the classroom?

Exit Interview Question: How would you describe yourself as a teacher to yourself? If you were to tell yourself who you are as a teacher, what would you say? Is this description different than one you would have given before this study? Why or why not?

Research Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice on their classroom practice?

Exit Interview Question: Tell me about your experiences in the classroom during this past eight weeks.

Research Question 3: How do teachers describe their subjective experience of time and place in the classroom as they bring contemplative practice to their classroom practice?

Exit Interview Question: How would you describe your experience of time and place in your classroom experiences during the study?

Research Question 4: What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice on their relationships with their students?

Exit Interview Question: How would you describe your relationships with your students during this study? Is this different from your experiences of relationships with students in the past? What led to the changes?

The story each teacher was willing to share after eight weeks of contemplative practice may be taken as evidence of his or her interpretation of the experience of his or her classroom practice during the eight weeks (Sarup, 1996). The tenor of the question left the space open to whatever sensations and senses of self that the experience evoked and which the teacher wished to share. The open-endedness of the question acted as an invitation for the interpretation of the experience to be that of the teacher as much as possible. As Ellis (1997) quotes Merleau-Ponty, this question worked "to give the past not a survival, which is the hypocritical form for forgetfulness, but a new life which is the noble form of memory" (p. 129).

The quotations from the each participant in the narratives are referenced by the line of text either in their individual interview transcript or the focus group interview transcript. For example the elements of (SIT, 70-75): **S** (first letter of pseudonym for participant quoted), **IT** (stands for **I**nterview **T**ranscript), and **70-75** (stands for the numbered text lines in which the quotation may be found). The elements of (FGIT, 173-185): **FGIT** (stands for **F**ocus **G**roup **I**nterview **T**ranscript), and **173-185** (stands for the numbered text lines in which the quotation may be found). Some quotations are from the participants' journal entries. The elements of (SJ, p.1): **S** (first letter of pseudonym for participant quoted), **J** (stands for **J**ournal), and **p. 1** (stands for the page of the participant's journal on which the quotation may be found).

Sid's Experience

Sid teaches math to a multi-age group (9-11 year olds) in a private elementary school by day. At night he teaches two university undergraduate teacher education classes. This has been his pattern for ten years. When speaking of the success he feels as a teacher, he speaks of the reputation he has established as a math teacher at both of the private schools in which he has taught and his history of good relationships with his elementary and middle-school students and their parents. His university students are also a source of positive relationships.

He thinks of himself as *“a teacher who has learned that...the best thing you can do for your students is to be yourself”* (SIT, 70-72). Sid interprets his embodiment of self as *“quiet and reflective...with lots and lots of energy.”* (SIT, 75) He looks back and sees *“the teacher that's always been there for the student, the student was always first”* (SIT, 67-68). The content of the discipline *“has always come second”* (SIT, 68).

Now, ten years into classroom practice, Sid finds that he is experiencing teacher burnout. After the first week in the project, he wrote,

I see a difference in my journaling approach & in my involvement with the kids. I was being professional in journaling for assessment [one of the on-going assessment pieces in the folder of each student in Sid's school] & being healthy in my daily walk & now, meditation, but I think your study can go a long way for me to become a healthy professional...that is so important right now, because after 10 years of very focused & dedicated teaching, I'm tired of being a teacher. (SJ, p. 1)

Sid's description of himself as a teacher is complex. While acknowledging his lack of excitement about teaching, his storying of himself includes the sense that *"there's something else in my soul, it seems to be letting me know it's time to do something else"* (SIT, 89-91). *I think I've just been growing and maturing what I have inside of me and I just need to get a new set of parameters for myself"* (SIT, 100-101). Sid describes the biggest changes in the story of himself as teacher during the study:

the biggest changes are just being able to listen longer and better with the kids and talk, you know, ask more involving questions with them. Be a little more patient with them. And nothing earth shattering in the sense of the way you do your lessons or that sort of thing. It's not that at all. It's giving the kids the respect that they deserve. Even though you say that as a good teacher, and you kind of do it, but it's [mindfulness as it affects listening with respect] a quantum kind of situation. (SIT, 168-

[Quantum in that] I found mindfulness to mean opening up the space of my mind, so I'm there with the student, or with many students but without baggage, without any expectations or memories or just an openness so I'm ready to respond. I make decisions easier and better 'cause just the right thing seems to be there. So it's an awareness and a kind of working out of a silence and watching and a waiting and observation. (SIT, 193-201)

Sid was *"really stuck at first trying to get this"* (SIT, 117, 118) study started.

The thirty minutes of meditation was the sticking point.

You know, school wasn't the right place, there's no place to get away there. I have three boys at home, and I work in the evening and get

home late as it is. Trying to sit in my chair then, [for meditation] just didn't work, because the boys wanted me to lie down with them or something. (SIT, 118-120)

For the first two weeks of the study, he was at a loss as to the possibility of implementing the meditation piece of this project. He finally decided that the only way was to *“take this project on the road”* (SJ, p. 1).

He describes his modification of the sitting meditation:

I've been walking three miles everyday for the last two years of my life, down in the park. So, I took the first thirty minutes of my walk each day, and changed it into a walking meditation. I would concentrate on my breath, and once that happened I was doing this seven days a week and caught up on what was needed for the study pretty quickly. Before that, the walking was just, jogging to this certain place and then just walking and thinking, getting rid of toxins and stress and that sort of thing. The three miles usually takes me forty-five minutes to an hour, so I just figured out, what was about thirty minutes of that walk. And just concentrated on my breath for that part of the walk, and then used the last fifteen minutes for the old jogging. So, now it's just pretty much an established thing for me. (SIT, 125-149)

In the fourth week of the study, Sid writes that he interprets the focal point of mindfulness in the classroom as: *“To be present without past & future”* (SJ, p. 3). He had begun to *“catch”* (SJ, p. 3) himself *“around the children being distracted* [by past memories], *not listening, hurrying a response* [projecting thought into the future and letting that dictate the temporal nature of the present encounter], *and just rather not being with them totally”* (SJ, p. 3-4). He continues, *“I'm going through a bit of 10 year burnout & stress”* (SJ, p. 4) [related to the school but unrelated to the children]. He posits a hope that his participation in the project may be an *“opportunity to help myself”* (SJ, p. 4).

As he continued to be more conscious of bringing a mindful presence to his classroom practice, Sid noticed a change in the way he experienced his students and a change in the way they responded to him:

[This was a] very changing experience, as close as I've been to students in the past, and as successful of a teacher as I've been, until you're asked to really concentrate and practice and try to do the mindfulness in the way of not coming to the child with, oh, "I have to do lunch duty in ten minutes," or "Let's hurry up and get this over with," that sort of thing. Once it happens [experiencing a mindful moment], it kind of stays with you and you are changed, it takes practice, but you do learn to keep your thoughts out of the way. (SIT, 159-167)

It is amazing that if I am just there for them, they can tell. If I don't worry about being a knowledge carrier and just share myself & and my time with them they pay attention more and one student, B___, enjoys the 'unspoken' attention so much. B___ hates math right now. [He] just came to us this year. He's had a horrible math history and hates it and all that. But when I have even just a bit of openness & non-judgment, he knows and follows me with his questions. When I mindfully approach him, when I'm connected to him. He senses that. I think he can feel that for that moment I'm just there for him, listening to him, then, he just turns around and works and asks questions and it makes being together nicer, more respectful both ways. (SJ, p. 4,5)

Sid began to interpret mindfulness practice as a focus or a condition of openness and respect, a context in which he found he had an increased ability *"to listen longer and better"* (SIT, 170) and *"ask more involving questions"* (SIT, 171,172). These were *"changes"* that he describes as *"...opening up the space of my mind, so I'm there with the student, or with many students, but without baggage, without any expectations or memories, just an openness so I'm ready to respond"* (SIT, 193-197). This openness emerged out of his reinterpretation of where attention in a conversation might be focused. He began to just sit there, *"with the student looking into their eyes more [and] seeing the physical student more intensely"* (SIT, 224,225). He developed *"an awareness and a kind of working out of a silence and watching and a waiting and observation"* (SIT,

199-201). Sid further describes the implications he sees in working out of silence and observation:

has lots of implications, like you begin to respond to what is there not what you think should be there and then they respond to that. You're really listening, they're really talking and you're really talking. You're more deeply connected with the conversation or the question about equivalent fractions or whatever. (SIT, 226-228, 490-492)

He indicates that the space for understanding is enlarged, opens so that:

your decisions become like ebb and flow or give and take, real conversation as opposed to doing this "constructive method of math" and "getting these results." It's not technical anymore. You're not doing a technical relationship with your student. (SIT, 495-500)

He argues that rather than having a *"big picture"* (SIT, 293) you are *"trying to control and take care of,"*(SIT, 294) you create a clearing in which *"here you are, here I am, what's going to happen?"* (SIT, 213,214). The openness is the space for the what might not be imagined yet, rather than a predictive space. A space in which curiosity pushes the borders of what might be possible. In this space, Sid found that he could *"just somehow ask them the right question so they start talking"* (SJ, p. 4). He argues that the context of the encounter is no longer *"technical"* (SIT, 498).

Respect, co-present with openness infused the encounters with his students. It's not that this context of mindfulness radically changed the way he wrote his lesson plans or implemented them in the classroom. He states, *"There's nothing earth shattering in the sense of the way [I] do my lessons or that sort of thing"* (SIT, 173,174). It wasn't the what of the classroom content that changed, he still presented math concepts from a constructivist perspective, but the how of the translation changed. More often encounters were infused with *"giving the kids the respect they deserve"* (SIT, 175,176). And even though Sid taught respect as a foundation for classroom encounters in his undergraduate

teacher education methods classes and held it as a belief in his own philosophy of classroom practice, he argues that mindfulness brought respect to a new level. *“Even though you say that [claim respect as foundational to your practice] as a good teacher, and you kind of do it,”* seeing encounters more mindfully makes the actual classroom practice of respect, *“a quantum kind of situation”* (SIT, 176-178). “[Mindfulness practice] *really connects the student to you, to the situation*” (SJ, p. 8). Here, Sid uses the word *“really”* to describe a distinctive difference he sees in the way respect is embodied in classroom practice. *“Really”* in contrast to what came before as a lesser form or shadow, a thinner respect than that engendered in mindfulness practice.

He speaks of this *“really”* aspect of respect as a quality of depth in relationships not experienced before. Even though he is *“a very good teacher with lots of successes with students and families,”* he says, *“...[those relationships have] deepened”* (SIT, 63,64). He explains *“deepened”* as discovering an authentic caring about the student’s interests:

I am getting better at just listening to them & asking questions that are more authentic responses. e.g. asking & being authentically interested in their family life or in something they share with me, which earlier & without some training in presence, I would not have taken the time to follow them & share with them in dialogue. [I find myself] moving from a way of reaction with the kids to interaction with the kids. (SJ, p. 7)
(emphasis in original)

Sid finds that his focus of attention has eliminated the sense of anxiety that often accompanied his encounters with his students. This is an anxiety which arises out of the crush of time limitations and numbers of students. Although, those limitations are still part of the reality of each day, they are refused as limitations in favor of:

just taking time and listening to one student or taking a little extra time when one of them asks a question, instead of just giving a short

response, just saying what I think should be given to the question. (SIT, 370-374)

His own capacity for patience or other responses that seem to exactly fit the need in the moment has been enhanced. Sid describes the impact of his experience of mindfulness in his classroom practice as a:

very changing experience, as close as I've been to students in the past and as successful a teacher as I've been, until you're asked to really concentrate and practice (SIT, 159-160)

you don't realize how the connection with your students can be deeper:

I don't have to expend a lot of psychic energy on it, psychological energy on it. I'm not struggling for my words or what I should do now. Things are happening with the feeling it will be okay. What needs to be done and the time seem to come out even. It changed the time I spend with the kids in the sense of while we're talking things aren't hurried or they aren't slow, they just seem right. It's relieved a pressure or a stress that I always have to be in control and with mindfulness you don't have to worry about that. You don't have to have a big picture of how to save everyone, how to teach everyone, you're there, the student is there, the classroom materials, you know, you're there with the math too, or whatever you're trying to uncover. And everything just starts to fit, to come together. Once it happens it just kind of stays with you, you're changed. It's a snapshot of dialogue. (SIT, 303-306, 389-397)

Sid also speaks about the power of dialogue that is unspoken but felt. This “felt” is a notion of “completeness” that satisfies (SJ, p. 8). He sees it in his students and feels it himself. Writing about B___, he said:

B___ enjoys the “unspoken” attention so much. inspiring him to follow me with questions and then turning back to his work with genuine interest. Truly, I am finding a difference in my classroom emotions (more level), in my classroom mind (teaching more with less feeling of energy expenditure), and something I am just sensing—better skill in my listening to & dialoging with my students. Though I'm not drastically restructuring my teaching, I feel a completeness I haven't felt before. (SJ, p. 4,5)

One of his last journal entries sums the impact of project for him and his students:

The very biggest change in my classroom experience is my increased ability to listen more carefully & dialogue more deeply with the children. Just things like looking in their eyes more, not walking away from them as they are speaking & shutting out more distractions as we are dialoguing are things I do better now. (SJ, p. 12) (emphasis in original)

The next connection he wants to make, he confesses has still eluded him:

I am trying to get back to being authentically curious about learning in an elementary school context. I am not so excited anymore for teaching elementary math & literature. I think it is because I've mislaid my natural curiosity. I have it when tutoring my middle-school kids, but not here. It's a question for me, but I know that the key is: to somehow find & bind authentic curiosity and genuine presence together. I very much like the fact that this presence practice is so practical and adds some energy (or at least conserves some of my energy) now. There's something in my soul, it seems to be letting me know it's time to do something else. An anxious feeling, that's it's time to go. I'll be leaving something that I've had in my life almost day and night, considering my university work for ten years. But I'm chomping at the bit to move on somewhere else. I've just been growing and maturing what I have inside of me: What is the worth of strategies, disciplines, & subject knowledge if the teacher is not healthy & centered? I know fairly deeply, now, that my place is teacher education (I hope to soon be working on my doctorate), helping teachers find ways to maintain balance and energy for the impossible task of teaching! (SJ, p. 12, 13, 2) (emphasis in original)

Max's Experience

Max brings ten years of on the road band experience to the classroom. His public school career includes music and band directing for grades 6-12 in several states. His tenure at his present school began three years ago and he came into the study as a result of hearing about it from his friend and colleague, Leonard. When asked to describe himself as a teacher, Max speaks of himself as:

Friendly, helpful, sometimes severe and probably logical. I plan things out before I say them as a rule. All in all, I think I'm pretty open for the kids, you know, they like to hang with Mr. D, and I'm Mr. D. by the way. I have a lot of students who come to see me who are seniors that have never had me. But they know that I work hard for my kids and I help

them get scholarships and I find scholarship money for them and stuff.
(MIT, 87-142)

Areas that I need to probably improve would be, maybe a little more tolerance in classroom discipline, cause I am very proactive and I don't really like outside interruption. I'm one of those people who want instantaneous results. I look at music basically two ways, right or wrong, you know. And any disruption to that I usually address. I know my area well and over the years I have come up with a working vocabulary as far as adjectives that are meaningful to students. All in all in the classroom, I would like to have a teacher like myself. I think I'm probably a little bit above average, just because I care and I give of myself. (MIT, 67-77)

Mindfulness changed Max's experience of his classroom in two ways: 1) an innovation in the way he worked with his band, 2) the discovery that in relinquishing some of the control he exerted, his students spent more time on task. Both of these changes he traces to the effects of mindfulness on his capacity to be more open. He explains it this way:

This helped me be more relaxed and more open. I'm much more open, because there's so many different ways to get the same, you know, to accomplish the same thing. Now, I'm open not only to the way I work, but also I will listen to students a little bit more and I find out where their problem areas are. I'd gotten into this grind of, you know, producing at school that I'd forgotten that there's creative ways to produce as well. I don't work that way anymore. I am more aware, open to other possibilities. (MIT, 736-750)

This openness is something Max sees in retrospect. During the project, this openness was more of an intuitive response than it was a rational choice. He describes how the changes in the way he conducted his band practices came about intuitively:

Without really noticing I started working my kids the way I used to work the band on the road, not straight through a piece, but just working the problem areas. I started hitting the trouble spots, stuff I knew was going to be a problem. Then when you do the whole piece it sounds great.
(MIT, 9-12)

This is a technique he developed as the rehearsal director with an on-the-road band:

As a professional we never ran a tune from the beginning to end unless we were on the job. We'd come in and say, 'okay, let's hit the shop section over here,' and 'okay, let's go over this tune, let's hit the chords here, saxophones here.' I was rehearsal director. We had what we called 'league players,' the regular band members. Then there were the musicians we would pick up in whatever town we were in. It was my job to get them to play together for the performance. We'd have leads on sections that know the book, and then the fill-ins at each local stop. And I knew I had an hour and a half to teach a two and one half hour show. Obviously, that doesn't work, and that's where I started this hitting the trouble spots, stuff I knew was going to be a problem and you get to the show and it sounds great. (MIT, 720-731)

Coming into the classroom, Max left this knowledge behind in favor of methodical step-by-step plodding through a piece from beginning to end. Continuing his description of how this changed during the project he says:

I don't know why, but for some reason when I started doing this [the meditation and mindfulness practices] all that stuff came back to me and it started clicking. I don't know why I haven't thought of doing it before. But, practicing mindfulness, without noticing it, I became more goal oriented and I don't think about, you know, all the variables involved in reaching the goal so much. I became very focused on what we have to do. I hear the trouble spots, I work with students. Now, I might work sixteen bars with the flutes, 'cause it looked like a problem area and then I might have another eight bar section over here with the trombones. I'd start skipping around there and just work the problem areas and then at the end of the hour when everyone thought it was chaos, we'd go back to the beginning and finally go from beginning to end without stopping. And it sounded great. They couldn't believe how good they sounded. (MIT, 731-752)

Changing the way he worked the band rehearsals also changed the quality of teacher/student communication and student/student communication. Max describes both his rationale for the strict discipline he enforced in his classroom and the changes mindfulness induced in his classroom practice:

Running a 117 people in my band without an assistant, I have to be proactive with discipline. But, this did help me as far as relaxing me and keeping me where I wasn't necessarily overcorrecting children. There's a certain amount of talking that goes on in class now and there used to be none. They dialogue with me a little bit now. Before, I think it was that they were afraid that they might say something wrong and I'd jump on them or something like that. But, the mindfulness slows me down so I have a lot more interaction with students. It allowed me to have a little gentler approach, be more open. I'm not just preaching at them, "This is what we're going to do, this is how we're going to do it." And it has enhanced communication between students. You know, not in personal communication but actually time on task communication. Actually, with this minimal relaxed state, I found that the students accomplish more. That surprised me. What they learn is more permanent. I don't have to re-teach the next day. It takes a lot of aggression out of the classroom. The kids are having more fun. Band should be fun. (MIT, 227-245,254)

Max has always had kids come in after school to "*hang with him*" (MIT, 94).

But, during the study, the nature of these moments changed. He explains:

Another thing, I'm in my third year here and most of the time when kids want to hang with me [after school] it wasn't so much to utilize my talents and my knowledge, but it was just to hang with me, and you know, now they're making more of a connection with their instrument and with their experience of that instrument. They are asking for methods books and want to learn techniques and performance techniques and discuss them. Sometimes they'd want a lesson. It's interesting and it's kind of exciting actually, that they're actually coming in wanting some help, you know, play wise. It's becoming more educational, you know, after hours is educational and as a result, by them coming in and getting methods books and talking about techniques and methods, I see more horns go home and they practice more. (MIT, 806-816, 813-815)

As Max searches for an explanation for this change, he says:

Well, I'm not sure. You know, my guess would be, perhaps by not making them go through start to finish and stuff like this, I'm thinking they're finding that there's alternatives to practice too. And maybe I'm more relaxed and that might have something to do with it too. (MIT, 815-824)

Max suggests that he has become a more "*thoughtful person*" (MIT, 980) and this has changed the way he comes to the end of a day--"*more relaxed*" (MIT, 836):

You know, I think [the meditation and mindfulness practices] makes me a more thoughtful person, thoughtful, not nice, but you know thoughtful, actually givin' thought to what I'm doing, while I'm doing it, and it allowed me to do that, because as you know, in this world today we don't allow ourselves that time...and it does make a difference in my day. I think the kids notice that. (MIT, 980-990)

He came to a working definition of mindfulness in the classroom as:

going to this, relaxed state, bringing yourself back to that state, you know, when you do feel anxiety or the pressures of your class. It means not only focusing on yourself, but still being aware of what is going on. It's being able to sit in the middle of it and still be your entity and still be a part of the overall. (MIT, 950-960)

He explains both how this works and how it indirectly gave his students a model that they used to their advantage outside his classroom. One example emerged out of a classroom altercation between a young man and a young woman. Max says:

I had a young man and a young lady involved in a more pushing than anything else altercation. I tend to jump pretty quickly on stuff like that [young men being physically abusive to young women]. But this time before I jumped in, I did take a moment and the reason I did is because I knew I was going to jump the young man, because I know that pattern, young lady today, wife batterer tomorrow. Usually I just jump right in. But I didn't do that this time. I did go through the breathing and just tried to, you know, take myself out of the situation for a moment, because I saw that, you know, the battery was over so there was really no reason to go overboard.

As a result, I pulled them out and wrote the referral and explained to them that they would both be going down. They were saying, "He did it, she did it." I said, "It doesn't matter, school policy is you'll both go home."

He spent several minutes calmly talking to the young man about the issues of male/female battery and found out the young man was the youngest child with several older sisters whom he admitted [he often exchanged physical hitting]...going through the mindfulness routine I think probably allowed me to address the issue a little more calmly.

As a result the young man responded better, he wasn't aggressive as far as denying it and he agreed that it [his behavior] could be a problem. You know, by doing it that way, because I know, I know that last year if the same situation had come up, that boy would have been in my office and I'd been all over him, an "in your face" kind of thing. I'd have had

his folks up there and that really wasn't a major enough thing to have parents, yes, they were notified as they should be, but as far as disrupting their day at work and stuff, it wasn't worth that And I think that just by taking that extra moment I think that's what allowed me to handle it that way. As a result, the two kids came out better off.

They went to the office. They explained to the principal, of course, I wrote the referral so they knew what they were going to hear, but they [the kids] explained to them what they did and they managed to get their punishment reduced. Because for one thing, they went in there with a better attitude, because instead of me hollering at them, I SPOKE to them and they went and SPOKE to the principal, then, instead of yelling off at the principal. You know, usually we get three days of suspension, but they stayed on campus and still got their school work done. So it worked out better for everyone actually. (MIT, 332-381)

Max has always felt that with 117 students in one room alone, he had to maintain a tight rein to keep everyone on track. Basically, that meant silence for the students unless he called on them. As a result of his mindful practice, he became aware of the tenseness and aggression that often permeated the room. This prompted him to modify his tolerance:

I find myself able to tolerate a little bit more. You know, things that usually would have bothered me, I just kind of sit back and take a couple of breaths and we'd just start again. And, um, it did have some effect on the class, because they would start seeing me take, you know, just a moment and a couple of sighs there, next thing you know, they're quieting down, trying to figure out what I'm doing. (MIT, 233-237)

It was kind of surprising to me, the students did start to respond when they'd see me do that. Now, they know when they're agitating me. You know, they start buckling down. They can read my routine, the closer ones to you. And then the next thing you know, you've got some leaders starting to emerge and they're quieting the other people down and learning to do it this way [taking a breath] instead of going "shhhhhh," and causing more noise, you know. So the environment is a little less hostile. Now, there's a certain amount of talking that goes on in the classroom and stuff like that. And they've honored this tolerance. They don't abuse it, But what's happened is they get to talk a little bit, and you know, I've got kids all over the school want to come join the band, and some of it's because the other students are saying, well, you know," Mr. D's neat." I don't think it's that I'm neat, it's just that I'm treating them a little more humane. Maybe, that's a bad word for it. But, as a

teacher, sometimes we look at them as our project, and not as human beings. So I think this has kind of softened my edges a little bit. (MIT, 252-265, 544-546)

Max's students not only were aware of the way he was using his breath to calm himself, anchor himself back into the moment, but two of them asked him to show them what he was doing and then co-opted the technique to help them refocus when they needed too. This is another example of how Max's students co-opted the use of breath as a technique to refocus their attention. Max recounts the story:

I had two drummers, that started doing the breathing and I have noticed that they are more focused and on task. Not to the degree I'd like, but more than they were and they both have IEP's and are ADD and ADHD, attention deficient and hyperactivity.

They came up to me after class one day and asked me about the breathing, so I told them to come after school and I would tell them a little bit about it. After school I told them this is something I was trying in the classroom to help me. And I told them it was a part of this study. I said, "You know, it's almost like a selfish thing because it allows you time that no one else gets to invade your space." And I think that's kind of what motivated them, but you know, they'd sit there in class, and get a little hyper and then they started using the technique to calm themselves down. I would watch them in class use it [the breath] to calm themselves down.

Then at an IEP meeting for one of the boys, it came up. I was talking to his grandmother about it and the other teachers chimed in and said he had been doing it in their classes too. They said how it did have a grounding effect for him. He had not told the other teachers what he was doing, but they just noticed that he was getting quiet all of a sudden and then getting back on his task. He was redirecting his focus to the task at hand and then getting back on task. So, he's not just doing it in my class, he's started using in his other classes too. (MIT, 546-555, 589-605)

Max finds that although he has practiced a type of yoga breath technique since he was a teenager, he hadn't thought of taking the technique into his classroom practice. He also had trouble settling into a routine for the daily meditation, finally he "*started going to school at 6:30a.m., which is a marvelous time to go to school because nobody's*

around” ((MIT, 158,159) He plans to continue this routine and the mindfulness in the classroom because:

it relaxes me. At the end of a period is the difference, at the end of a period, I'm still somewhat relaxed, much more than before. By doing this, it did allow me to be less uptight. I did care what was going on, but I didn't feel those anxious moments. I felt more like, you know, what we accomplished today was good, maybe tomorrow will be a little better, but I was more satisfied. Because it wasn't that my goals were any less, and accomplishments sometimes were greater than I expected, sometimes were less just like always. But I was less affected by it. If I didn't accomplish what I planned, then you go to the plan book and you change tomorrow and say, 'well, how do we approach this to get there.' It's all in being able to sit in the middle of it and still be your entity and still be a part of the overall. (MIT, 463-476, 959,960)

Laverne's Experience

Laverne is a veteran teacher with twenty years of experience. She has been in the same inner-city elementary school for many of those years.. For the past several years, she has had developmental first grade students in a transitional first grade classroom. Transitional first graders are students who at the end of kindergarten are considered too advanced for kindergarten, but not ready for first grade. Laverne became interested in participating in the study through her colleague across the hall, Amanda. She found the nature of the study particularly relevant to the daily “chaos” generated by the new principal in her building. She describes herself as:

By nature [I am] a worrier, [and] a tough task master. I never quite meet my standards. I'm always working for that. I'm not a truly confident person. [I am a] straight down the road person. What I want to be is efficient. (LAIT, 49-50, 28-29)

For reasons that are not clear, she was one of the teachers singled out by the new principal for daily scrutiny. Her participation in the study coincided with the first eight weeks of school, and this was eight weeks of turmoil, centered around frequent pop-in

visits from the principal and daily upsets as one or another of the targeted faculty experienced written reprimands or angry tirades. The normal beginning of school frustrations were exacerbated by ***“having to worry about the nasty things”*** (LAIT, 15) going on.

Laverne’s interpretation of mindfulness in the classroom was a concrete focus on using the breath to calm her self and to anchor her attention in the moment. She also, early in the project, shared the technique with her students. Her principal’s use of frequent drop in visits and written reprimands during this eight weeks unnerved her and consequently her students in the beginning.

She traces the ease of transferring what she had learned in meditation to her classroom practice and eventually introducing the breath technique to her young students as an evolution that was ***“gradual,” “painless,”*** and ***“amazing”*** (LAIT, 505). In her meditation at home, she discovered she could maintain a focus on her breath instead of letting her mind dwell on worrisome thoughts. She explains what happened as she sat in one room meditating and her husband began a noisy activity in the next room, ***“Well, my husband was in the living room and it sounded like he was taking something apart,”*** (LAIT, 173-174). Upon hearing these sounds, she saw her thoughts leave her breath and go to the intention of getting up and checking to see what was going on or in fretting about it while she sat during the meditation. But, she remembered the meditation guidelines that instruct to just come back to the breath when the mind wanders. She brought her mind back to the in and out of her breath and discovered that:

When you concentrate on your breathing instead of what’s going on around you, you feel that everything is okay, it is peaceful, you can say “we can deal with that later, you know, I can do this now, I can relax now, I can have this time to keep going down the road.” (LAIT, 51-55)

For Laverne, this was a revelatory experience, for the first time she had experienced some control over whether or not she would entertain worrisome thoughts. She says:

Focusing on the breath has somehow given me the ability or strengthened what little ability I had along that line, to go ahead and do that and close those other thoughts until it was time to deal with them. (LAIT, 56-60)

She began to look forward to meditation as time she could let go of everything else and just be present in the peace of watching her breath. She says, *“I thought if this can work here, why can’t it work everywhere I go”* (LAIT, 183).

She began using her breath to refocus at school. One of her journal entries in the third week reflects the effects she is experiencing:

Thurs., Sept. 17—Rec’d note about discipl. mtg. next Wed., never had such a thing before...Think the meditation truly helped keep my mind on teaching today. Was able to take min. and get worry off mind. (LAJ, p. 2)

As one faculty member or another experienced reprimands and letters threatening termination, Laverne used her breath to bring her out of the *“anger and fear and strife,”* (LAJ. p. 2) so she could focus on her work in the classroom. She describes one such occasion:

I had my children around me. We were doing a phonics lesson. Well, they came in to tell me that a friend, a long time teacher, had been accused [by the principal] of saying something really totally incomprehensible, to a child, that she would not have done. She would not have been that kind of person. It made me angry. And my children were right there at my feet. I wanted to scream or punch something.

I couldn’t quite get back to phonics sounds and saying the sounds and everything. So, I just stopped for a minute. They [the students] were already a little bit upset anyway, so I just took a minute and just kind of took my breath and just kind of went back to where I needed to be, that quiet place, and let all of that drain back down. [So, the anger would] not be foremost in my mind and my heart. And then I could pick up my

cards again and we could read and I had the ability then to say, "I need to see your tongue sticking out for this sound," or you know, "watch my lips." I could go back to what I knew was my plan and what I knew the children needed to get, what they needed out of that lesson. It worked so smoothly. I was amazed. You know I'm not a changeable person, but it was so gradual and so comfortable that it was amazing, painless. (LAIT, 461-505)

One day in class as she was in the middle of a teaching activity, she says:

You know, I looked around and there are thirteen children swirling around on their bottoms and rolling around and touching their neighbor and chewing their shoe lace, you know, and I thought, "Oh, well, I can scream at them or we can do something else." (LAIT, 360-364)

She recalled how focusing on her breath worked to calm her and bring her back to a sense of peace, and she thought, *"If this can work for me, then maybe it can happen here for these children"* (LAIT, 600,601). She describes what happened next:

I said, "Let's just stop," and they looked at me and I said, "We're not going on. I want you to sit up and I want you to look at me and I want you to put your pointing fingers on your head like this [index finger of each hand touching temples of head] and I want you to take a deep breath inside you and I don't want you to let it out. "Watch me first." And I showed them how to do it and I said, "Let's take a deep breath and slowly let it out and when we let it out we're going to be back thinking about [the activity]," and they all sat up and they were all still and we started again at what we were doing. And it made me realize, you know, sometimes their little minds just wander completely away and if I can get them to stop a minute, then they're okay. It was just a few seconds even, and yet, they could bring themselves back. That's one of the things that's so nice about it, it's just, seems like a few seconds that you take to do this and then you go back and you're going right down the road and you're comfortable and you're happy and everything just fits again. (LAIT, 365-381)

Her students have taken the technique and use it on their own. She says:

Now they do it by themselves. I over hear them. They say, "You know that we don't have our attention where it needs to be." And I'll look around and there will be 10-12 little kids sitting there like "this" [eyes closed, index fingers on temples] just a minute. And it's amazing to me that they're doing the same thing that I'm doing. I think they've found a way they can deal with things too. I've been very pleased with what it's done for them. (LAIT, 48-54)

After she taught the students to anchor themselves in their breath when they needed to refocus, the principal's frequent drop-in visits became less of an issue for either Laverne or her students. She says of herself and her students:

He comes and just stands there. It threw me off and the children too. So, I got so I just ignored him and the children did too. I could just take a breath and continue doing what I'm doing and the children did the same thing. I'll notice them now, they'll just stop and bring themselves back, with him right there in the room. All of a sudden they don't feel the pressure either, and that was probably one of the most amazing things to me.

At other times, I've noticed if there's someone really dallying around them or something, they'll just stop themselves and they calm themselves down and that's amazing since this is a class of short attention span children. [These are children who] didn't make the cut for first grade last year. Hopefully, if nothing else, they're going to come out with enough ability to mind what they know and to focus for themselves. I will give them that model, and if I can give them that, everything else is going to work for 'em cause they're going to be able to do what they have to do. (LAIT, 91-120)

Laverne uses the comparison of a familiar house to describe the comfort felt when using the breath to anchor herself back in the present moment:

It's like a comfortable old house. You're back where you knew you should be, doing the job you knew you should do and feeling like you've done it well. Once you've got yourself back, anchored and back within the confines of your own heart and mind you can do what you're supposed to do and you can do it well, I think. (LAIT, 167-175)

She uses another analogy to describe her experience of mindfulness in classroom practice. She says:

It seems like it's perfect. It's exactly what you need and you're taking each step, you're going down every step, the way you should. It's like a road that's got perfect plans on it and if you're in the right place in the right time and you take that first step right, then everything else is going to fit perfectly. It's kind of like that. You can just go right on to the next one because this one's been taken care of and you're comfortable with it. You don't have to look around, you don't have to be worried about anything else, you just take care of each thing as it happens and that's

enough. It just makes everything fit. When I stop and think about it, I'm amazed, I guess, astounded. (LAIT, 167-175)

If I've not got myself focused, the classroom is like a racing horse. You know, when you're going to do this and this and this. But if I've got myself focused, and I'm together, it's not a problem. It just slows way down and everything takes care of itself. You know, in it's time and it's place. It's amazing. And it releases pressure that's on the children at the same time. Then everything just fits. I know that sounds very peculiar, but it works. (FGIT, 816-829)

When I get to this focus like this, I think it's more like the storybook teaching that I thought this was going to be when I started this twenty years ago. You know, it's better for the children, and its better for me. It's the situation I would have chosen if I could have chosen. Instead of the slap-dash, "We've got to get this much in or somebody's head will roll." And it leaves me with a better feeling at the end of the day, now. I do appreciate that. (FGIT, 1044-1053)

What she gained from the study was:

Confidence. It's given me confidence. I feel confident now that the things I'm going to teach will be all right. And another thing, I'm an asthmatic and I have a lot of trouble breathing, but now I am using my breath as a comfort. And that's quite a different thing for me, I can breathe and let things go. It's really an amazing thing to stop and notice it (her breath), the thing you've taken for granted for this long, and then be able to use it to enrich my life. I feel like I'm more in control of my life than I was. I've been able to see the kind of person I am. Now, I can think okay, I know these are the things I do, I can live with myself. It just seems to have made it a better, easier life to live and make me more confident living it. And I think that I've grown that way a lot and now I have something that I can take with me and something I can give the children. (LAIT, 664-673)

Fay's Experience

Fay has been in the classroom since 1974 in a variety of positions from second grade to the rural eighth grade English class she has had for three years. She says about herself:

I feel like I have all the right intentions. I love kids and I love to see kids succeed. I'm a very patient person for a long, long period of time. It is very frustrating to me when I don't feel like I'm reaching kids. I spend

a great deal of time wondering, self-analyzing, I'm a big self-analyzer, all day long, all night long. I lay awake at night thinking what could I have said, have done. I'm always looking for answers. I get very frustrated with myself. I'm very hard on myself. I think I'm a very compassionate, caring person. (FIT, 40-68)

Fay describes the changes she felt she had to make when she moved from elementary school to middle school:

With my older students I had to change that [showing caring and compassion]. They see that as a weakness. One of the things that's very hard for me is that I don't feel like I can be the person I really am in the classroom. Putting on this different personality during the day and then by the time I leave I'm exhausted having to be this person that I'm not really. I feel I have to be so much more stern. They feel like a rule is not a rule unless you get caught. You know I feel like I'm spending more of my day policing, instead of teaching, and then, there's documentation and parent phone calls. (FIT, 71-74, 182-183, 243-244)

Although, she made the changes, she finds maintaining this façade each day exhausting. She describes both the feeling of having to be something she's not, and the way mindfulness alleviated the problem:

It's not real comfortable, but that's what I learned six years ago, that first year teaching eighth grade. I learned a great deal I needed to change in myself to get along with them. I found I couldn't deal with this age like I did with elementary, yet in another way they are the same. But I had to become something very different than I was as an elementary teacher in order to "so-called" get along with these kids. And some of those things I like and some of those things I don't. Being outside myself in this project helps me to be able to see that that person's still there, the one I like, and I can bring that person into the classroom. It sounds very foreign. Part of the problem is there are so many commitments that sometimes it's very easy to shrug off a student or not pay attention to something you should because you gotta move on to the next thing. You just don't really have time to deal with it, but that isn't who you really are, it's a lot of what your job requires of you. And mindfulness helped me find that self again, and find that I could take the time instead of getting caught up in the job so that the person you are becomes a part of what your job is. But, when you sit back and become mindful and you're starting to think, you get outside yourself looking in and you remember who that person is. That person outside from being in the classroom and bring it into the classroom. I like myself a lot better. I can stop laying in bed at night judging myself over

and over, stop thinking about what I should have said, how I should have done it, what I'm going to do tomorrow, being freaked out by all of that. I'm just not spending time on that anymore. (FIT, 82-84, 426-441)

During the study, she discovered:

I can still maintain control, but I don't have to be the person that doesn't have any feelings and just be this figure, and separate myself from them. I smile more. It's a natural thing. (FGIT, 1570)

She explains these changes in three aspects of her experience of mindfulness as a classroom practice. The first is the experience of feeling detached, and light, sensations she described as “*foreign*” and “*different*” (FIT, 441) the second has to do with a change in what she sees as she looks out over each class; and the third involves a change in her capacity to access improvisations as she needs them to craft her teaching to fit each situation as it arises. Fay’s experience of being conscious of her internal and external experience simultaneously was:

...almost like an out of body, kind of awareness. I've never stopped to be aware, to really focus entirely on being aware of what is going on. It's very strange, very strange, almost eerie, kind of. On the one hand, I'm thinking why have I never done this before, and on the other it was a very strange sensation. It made me feel closer to what was happening in the room and in other ways as if I was on vacation. Like an out of body experience. Like I'm standing there in the situation, but I'm not me anymore, I'm not in the classroom. I'm standing there observing this teacher, teaching these kids and I'm over there and in there at the same time, an observer, seeing everything from different angles. Like being on vacation, a free feeling, like I'm kind of floating, a wonderful sensation. I felt, lighter. I didn't feel that stern, bogged down thing I feel like I always have to be, feeling every sensation in my body tightening when I'm like that. And then, when the kids leave, I'm so tight, but this was like letting go, just letting go, A real relaxation right there in the class with all the kids and everything going on. I was still there but it was like I wasn't actually in the body, because my body felt so light, not heavy and tight. And I was so aware of everything I was doing and they were doing, but all of it was easy not hard and tight. It would almost feel like, wow, I must have been so into this or enjoying this so much that I didn't realize that the time has just flown by and here it is time to go. And I feel really good at the end of a class like that. It

makes me already feel really good about the next one coming in. (FIT, 260-266, 329-329, 587-589)

I think I'm just, I'm using the moments that I have, I'm really centering on those moments, and not on all this other stuff. And that whole 50 minutes is more quality, because I'm with those 50 minutes. And it actually makes the day go faster too. I just find that the day is over faster. Because maybe again, too, I'm not sitting there thinking about all the things I have to do and when I have to do them and where I have to go next. And I'm just not spending a lot of time on that anymore. (FGIT, 704-719)

I feel very peaceful about it. I don't feel tense or anxiety over not getting some certain thing done. What gets done seems just right. And the other thing, too, and this may not have anything to do with it, but it may again, 'cause I know that kids pick up on things from us but I've always had kids, every class period--'cause the clock is always behind me—so, they would be sure to tell me when class is over. Now they don't tell me. Now, class is over, and it's like we hear people out in the hall and it's like, "Oh, you guys need to clean up and go." (FGIT, 998-1018)

Her perception of each of her classes changed as she looked out over the classroom:

I wasn't seeing the class as this one class, I [began] to see, individual, and this is my teaching for the day. I wasn't seeing it as all one thing, I was seeing all the parts. Okay, I'm going through this maneuver, I am teaching this lesson and seeing each thing as a separate entity coming together as one, all the parts of the lesson, each student's response, body language, coming together like kaleidoscope pieces falling, moving into place, coming together as one, not one entity moving along, I was seeing each of my kids like actually, not just making eye contact, but that eye contact actually like something connecting, with each one individually rather than as this is my fourth hour class, here THEY are, here I AM TEACHING them the lesson and then they leave. It's like I've been in the classroom all this time, and I felt like I was aware and caring of my students but this was like finding out what that meant. It was just so amazing to see the parts coming together as a whole instead of seeing the whole as one thing. It was like parts to whole and that made the whole thing different...It's how they're connecting with you and...understanding, realizing that it's your approach to them that maybe makes the biggest difference. It's like they know, "This person really cares, they're connecting, I can feel that connection. I know that this person's not thinking about other things, they're really thinking about me" (FIT, 279-290, 682-689)

The third aspect of classroom practice that stood out to Fay involved improvisations. She says:

When I was in mindfulness, thoughts could come to me. And I don't know if it's from blocking other things out or because I was feeling this lighted, this sensation where I just didn't feel all the burden on me, I don't know, I can't explain it. I just know that, my mind seemed so much more open to things. You know, you can prepare a lesson and you think, "I've got everything in this lesson that I need," and then come into class and realize that the kids aren't responding like you need them too, or the way you're looking for. And you think, "You know what, I've got to completely change this whole approach." I was better able to do that, than before. Before, it was like, "Oh, this is how I had it laid out, here's a crimp in my lesson," but my mind wasn't clear enough to be able to pull something out at that moment. I had to wait. Sometimes, I'd have to say to the class, "Guys, I can't think of an example right now, let me have some time to think about that before class is up, I'll up with something and I'll bring it back to you." And maybe later, down the lesson, something might come to mind, but it wasn't then. I've always just sort of felt like it may be an age thing. But maybe not, because now I can think, "This is not working with this class, I need to go this way," and it comes together and I can do it, impromptu, just more spontaneously. (FIT, 434-459)

The benefits of mindfulness for Fay, were not immediately apparent. Her journal entries reflect the discomfort she felt for several weeks interspersed with times when it felt comfortable:

9/4 Moments of awareness still seem very uncomfortable to me. I expect that students to notice, but they don't seem to notice – it's as though by tuning into the present only, I am in another dimension. (FJ, p. 1)

9/9 I practiced mindfulness during a conference today. I found it calming. Of course the focus was more narrowed and of a more formal nature. I felt more control of emotion (keeping those separate from the issues). (FJ, , p. 2)

9/11 Morning class—not much success. I kept wandering off to things that directly affected the weekend coming up. I was better able to focus 6th Hr. I felt that my teaching was much more on target despite it being my last class. I felt good. (FJ, p. 3)

9/30 Wed. Today I reviewed a lesson which required dialogue back and forth. It seemed strange to be so aware of facial motions as I spoke, arm movements and my legs, position, etc. as I walked around. it feels as though I'm two people, yet one mind and body – synchronized. (FJ, p. 8)

10/25 Today many students had many problems 😊---I felt torn between being conscious of me and taking care of student's need and couldn't seem to bring it together. (FJ, p. 9,10)

10/6 Tues.—Something scary happened to me today. I was so focused on my presentation in class that I never heard the fight going on out in the hall between one of my students (testing) and a student from another team (out of class on an errand.) It was short, but I wasn't aware until I heard the voice of a male team member getting control of the situation. That has really bothered me – I feel like I was so intuned with myself that I wasn't as conscious as I should have been with all my students. (FJ, p. 10)

10/7 Wed. – Student Conference – I was able to focus on my movements and actions (reactions) as I visited with this student. It was interesting to me (body language and control which was very important in visiting with this particular student). Awareness helped. (FJ, p. 11)

10/8 Thurs. Handing out a worksheet and working through it with students – I felt very conscious of making sure I walked, looked, and addressed every area of the classroom (students). However, again I was unaware of another teacher coming into my classroom and waiting to discuss something with me. I was startled and embarrassed for being so focused. (FJ, p. 11)

10/13 Tues. 1st quarter test. Today I needed to focus on what each student was doing during the test. Sometimes, I've found that the "quiet" atmosphere lends to a mind escape. By being aware of the class as a whole as well as each student, I was able to "head off" possible problems. Example – student looking over at another student's paper, a student wiggling around in his chair until he's sitting sideways (potential talker), etc. I also noted expressions of confusion on directions/comprehension that I was able to help clarify and/or give hints about. Many students at this age won't ask. Had I used this time for reflecting past/future, some students wouldn't have done as well and/or would have caused behavior problems. (FJ, p. 13)

10/21 It pays off to be physically & mentally in the present – I feel like I'm doing a much more thorough job. I notice more detail – student to student and teacher to student. The moment is "richer" for it. I also don't feel as tired at the end of the day. (FJ, p. 15)

10/22 Thurs. I discussed appositives today. Every year my students have problems with this. Every class stayed with me and participated. I was amazed. I anticipated problems with this lesson and knew I would have to “hold” the students by staying focused myself. I felt successful in all classes (very unusual). (FJ, p. 16)

10/27 I feel more ‘insight’ and connection with my students (not that their grades are better ☺, but that I’m picking up subtle things I didn’t before – ex. body language clues, work habits, etc.) (FJ, p. 17)

10/29 Thurs. When I’m focused on my lessons & students, I tend to walk around more and use more body language in my presentations. The students respond more favorably. The grades on their tests this week were up as whole. (FJ, p. 18)

At the end of the project, Fay describes her participation in the study as:

You know, all of sudden, it’s like, you were blind and now you can see there’s a better way. I like myself a lot better. I’m not as uptight. I’m more relaxed. I’ve taken a lot of burden off myself. But the meditation part was difficult for me. It was really hard for me. And I am a very physical doer, kind of person. The sitting for thirty minutes was very difficult for me. (FIT, 896-900)

Fay has since begun Hatha Yoga meditation practice. In this practice, the meditation is focused on movement.

Amanda’s Experience

Amanda has been a classroom teacher for thirty-one years. Most of her teaching experience has been in the same inner-city elementary school. Her tenure in this inner-city school has positioned her to experience first hand repetitious cycles of poverty, drugs, and alcohol as she has watched several generations of the same families pass through her classroom. “*Very few ever leave the ‘flats,’*” she writes (AJ, p. 8). She has also seen administrators, colleagues, and programs come and go. Active in the local teacher’s union, she served as President during a turbulent period several years ago gaining the reputation for “*nerves of steel*” (personal communication) when facing

bureaucracy. Physically, she has a history of heart problems resulting in three coronary angioplasties to widen arteries blocked by plaque.

This past summer, the district assigned a new principal to her building. Amanda received a letter in June notifying her that after thirty-one years as a kindergarten teacher, she was being reassigned to a fourth/fifth combination in one of the building's classroom annexes. A new hire would be assigned to her former kindergarten position. She spent the remainder of the summer involved in an intricate set of both official and unofficial negotiations between the district and union representatives. In the end, the new assignment was rescinded and she began her thirty-second year in the classroom in familiar surroundings.

Amanda began her participation in the study at the beginning of the second week of school. During the eight weeks of the study she received numerous written reprimands, participated in several grievance meetings with the principal regarding the reprimands, and she was evaluated by her principal through in-class observations three times. She received poor evaluations each time.

She describes these events:

I've never had a bad evaluation from an administrator. I have only had compliments from administrators. I've never had written reprimands. I've never had my job threatened and [during this eight weeks], I've had three bad ["needs improvement"] evaluations, three letters threatening termination and numerous written reprimands. I have had my assistant changed four times, [and]...my schedule changed numerous times. I have been stalked by the principal; he set up a desk outside my door and sat there for an hour. He passes through my room frequently and if I am not there, he asks my assistant where I am. My assistant tells him I am in the bathroom. He comes and checks, sure enough, I'm in the bathroom. Basically, it has been a year from hell. (AIT, 236-250)

Added to this turmoil and the normal complexities of beginning a new school year with a roomful of kindergartners, was the loss of a ten-year teaching partnership. Her

teaching partner and friend had moved to another city during the summer. The absence of the familiar moral and professional support of that team partnership augmented the stress and made this year like “*starting life all over from scratch,*” (AIT, 11).

During the eight weeks of the study, Amanda maintained a schedule of thirty minutes of meditation five days for nearly every week. The meditation did not come easily. She states, “*It is hard to find 30 minutes in a really busy schedule to meditate*” (AIT, 569). Each day was as filled with activity as the last, and the time to meditate had to be literally wrenched away from some other activity. Amanda worried early in the study that the calming effects she was experiencing from the meditation would be overcome by her resentment at having to eliminate other activities to do it:

It calms me down but I hope I don't resent the time I have to give up to do it because each day I have to set aside time to exercise, read the paper, read my Bible, fix meals, watch my soap and of course talk on the phone. (AJ, p. 3)

Mid-way through the project, a journal entry connects meditation with:

helping me to laugh off a lot...keep calm through the whole day...find[ing] it easier to do my daily read in my Bible...quickly [going] to sleep...sleeping through the night...and being super relaxed at the end of the 30 minutes. (AJ, p. 4)

At the conclusion of the project, she stated:

For whatever reason I have been able to go to school, go to work every day with a calmness that I haven't had. I don't know what to attribute it too. I don't know if it's because I'm not having to prop up [my team-teaching partner] to keep her on solid ground, if it's because God has got a hedge of protection around me to keep me safe...if it's because I'm reading my Bible...if the meditation has helped me find a calmness I haven't had...But, I've had so many curve balls thrown at me this year, I'm absolutely amazed that I haven't gone off...I think the calmness is a combination of all the factors....I'm just amazed that I'm able to maintain....I will probably continue the meditation and focusing [anchoring the attention in the breath during tense moments]. (AIT, 292-301)

The usefulness of anchoring her attention in her breath in order to maintain a sense of inner peace was experienced most profoundly both during her official reprimand meetings and in the classroom. For example, a journal entry describes her use of this technique during a two and a half hour grievance meeting:

I used the deep breathing, focusing method several times during the morning. Before the hearing started, several times during, and after the hearing was over I focused on my breath. The effect was amazing, I was able to sit there calmly and peacefully, I didn't get mad at any time, even when Dr. ___ was just making up stuff to make me sound like the worst person and teacher in the world. They accused me of abusive behavior and gross misconduct. The accusations were strong, laced with words about the need to call Child Welfare on the kind of behavior I was accused of exhibiting, my low expectations being the cause for the child not learning--Brigance score in the high 20's, sixteen year old drug using parent. Throughout the process I did not get a knot in my stomach, I was calm, I was at ease, I maintained an amazing amount of control. Prayer, meditation, breathing-something gave me control that was incredible. I think it [anchoring attention in the breath, mindfulness] really made a difference. The time [during the grievance meeting] seemed like eternity but it didn't drag on. You know, I was even amused, at times, and that was weird. (AJ, p. 8)

Amanda's words argue that mindfully paying attention to exactly what was happening during these meetings, she watched the proceedings from a position of neutrality, of peace and clarity, that didn't diminish the gravity nor hide the humor. She found she could return to her classroom, with a presence that could then attend to the task at hand. She attributes the capacity to focus her attention on the needs of the moment to the practice of mindfulness she is learning. She states:

and that's where it's all, you know, kicking in, that I'm able to get my little reprimand in my hand and still manage to teach. I think what I am getting out of this [the practice of mindfulness] most is the ability to stay calm, while I am in the classroom. The children are not taking the brunt of my frustrations, I am not focused as well as I should be on my teaching but I am not angry at any of them. (AIT, 252-256)

When Amanda recalls moments of mindfulness in the classroom, she most often thinks of times when:

I look around I see everyone busy doing something, all [are] loud, happy. Little people making great designs with the pattern blocks, messing with getting their assignments done, playing with Lego blocks, building with the Dacta blocks, constructing a kitchen with a special set of Dacta blocks, dressing-up in high heels and fancy dresses “playing teacher” and reading to each other, talking about the “drive-by” the night before like we talk about movies. I just enjoy being there, I enjoy where I’m at. I’m pleased with the situation. (AJ, p. 8)

Amanda notes that mindfulness practice has given her new insights into her own understanding and appreciation of the complexities of the lives of her students. An incident on the playground recounted in her journal serves to illustrate this kind of new understanding:

Friday when I was out on playground duty I was watching the children play when one of the really notorious neighborhood kids, E___, came riding through the school ground on his bicycle. I knew by the time of day it was that he had not come to school that day. E___ is currently enrolled in the Behavior Disorder class but only attends half days when he comes at all. I had forgotten that T___ is terrified by him. T___ came over to stand next to me. As E___ rode by us, T___ looked up at me and said, “He pisses on me.” I asked him if he told his dad when this happens. He said he did and his dad would drive up and down the street in his pick-up. I now partially understand why T___ is so afraid and nervous. At that moment I knew I had no clue to how bad life is for some children in my school. (AJ, p. 26)

Amanda describes herself as a teacher who is:

fairly well focused on getting the job done, whatever the job is. I have a lot of integrity and a lot of good moral fiber. I like the kids, accept them. I have a second sense about what they need and a plan of action and follow it faithfully. It doesn’t matter who’s in my room or who’s not in my room, I’m going to do my job. (AIT, 26-33)

She is amazed at her capacity to live through the events of this year with a sense of well-being and more skillful responses to the tensions she has experienced. She states

that the meditation and mindfulness practice are fundamental to maintaining a skillful composure:

just amazed that I am able to maintain and teach kindergartners what they need to know in first grade with all that's been thrown at me. I'm continuing the meditation because it appears to be one of the pieces that's gluing me together. I keep thinking about the title of that book, "She's Come Undone." And I don't want to come undone. You know, I just feel like that's [meditation and mindfulness practice] one of the things that's keeping me from coming apart at the seams. (AIT, 288-292)

Leonard's Experience

Leonard entered this project during his thirteenth year in the classroom. His classroom is in an inner-city high school, with a predominately African American population. When he signed his contract with this inner-city high school for the first time three years ago, he was unaware that he would be a minority in his classroom. He says, *"I didn't know it was an all African American school"* (LIT, 41-42) His concern was whether or not he could relate to African American students in such a way that they would feel a rapport with him. *"Either the kids are on your side or they are not"* (LIT, 63-64). After a few weeks in his new classroom, he transformed his concerns into challenges for himself. He states:

After a period of adjustment of about a month, it became an intellectual challenge to just see if I could pull this off...[so that] the students feel comfortable with me...relate to me. (LIT, 43-45)

He began this study with a sense of accomplishment as he thinks about the relationships he established with his students, and the academic progress of the students in the science department which he heads. Elated with his work the last two years he says, *"[I have] the sense of accomplishment, greater than anything, of any teaching position or any other job I think I've ever had"* (LIT, 37-38). He speaks of having a:

pure orange personality, outgoing, action oriented, a wild and crazy guy. It seems to work for the content I teach, chemistry and physics, and advanced placement chemistry and physics. I'm student-oriented. (LIT, 81-82, 85-86, 103-106)

He found it difficult to actually begin the study. It was difficult to find a time in his day for the meditation. Trying out several options, a journal entry reflects the guilt he felt in taking the time to sit quietly for the meditation:

10/8/98

This is my prep hour and I felt that I should be engaged in several different activities. I found it very difficult to keep my mind on what I was trying to do. Two days later sitting for fifteen minutes early in the morning also evoked feelings of guilt. I caught myself looking at the clock, an irrational source of guilt. (LJ, p. 1)

The following Monday morning he writes:

10/12/98

I'm determined to be successful with this activity this week if it kills me. On the way to school, I psyched myself up to focus better on the meditation & to apply the mindfulness. I reread the guidelines last night & promised myself not to 'scold myself' as I did last week. (LJ, p. 2)

He began the meditation that day focusing on the in and out of the breath, but he found that a modification of focus was a better fit for him. He continues this entry:

10/12/98

I found it necessary to concentrate not only on breathing (which I have found irritating) but on other anatomical functions and structures. I started to imagine what it would be like to be one of my blood cells for example & found this type of focus more satisfying. I was less judgmental toward myself. (LJ, p. 2)

During the eight weeks of the study, Leonard used several physiological focuses other than the breath during his meditation periods. For example, on the day he had demonstrated the Van de Graff electrostatic generator in his physics class, he writes:

10/12/98

[I] found it stimulating and easy [during meditation] to focus on my hair. I could clearly see my hair rising & falling due to the electric charge. I really got into this today and could visualize the concentration of electrons on each hair strand repelling all the others. I found it more effective to concentrate on a single strand of hair from its perspective. (LJ, p. 3)

He expressed reservations about sharing this experience with others, *“I don’t think I would share this experience with just about anybody”* (LJ, p. 3).

In fact, Leonard began the project with a prejudice against meditation in general:

I had a pre-adjusting prejudice against this. [Because I associate] mindfulness and meditation with California, and you know, I’ve always prided myself as really prejudiced toward that particular thing I always looked at people who get into this sort of thing as ‘psycho-junkies.’ You know, what I’m saying...Psycho-junkies can’t pull their own bootstraps, grab their wagon and pull it by themselves. I kind of look down my nose at them and say, “Yeah, right, you need to get real.” When you come right down to it I think I had an underlying, I call it a prejudice toward the California syndrome. (LIT, 406-407,410-411, 910-915)

At the end of the study he recalls these difficulties in getting started and his early skepticism about the possible benefits of mindfulness and meditation:

I had difficulty at the early part of this, with the meditation and everything...a lot of difficulty getting started. I didn’t really believe it was going to make that big a difference to be honest with you. (LIT, 364-365, 376-377)

By the fourth week in the project, a journal entry indicates a change in his view of meditation and mindfulness:

10/28/98

I really got into this meditation stuff today—my buddy, B ____, asked me if I was on something as I was so calm (not my nature). Things with my classes and etc. are going great right now. I really feel that what I am doing is very beneficial to me personally. I needed something to take the edge off as I am a very intense person as a rule. (LJ, p. 12)

Leonard kept the promise he made to himself at the beginning of the second week of the study. From then on, he kept the five day a week, thirty minute meditation

schedule and conscientiously applied the mindfulness guidelines to his classroom practice each day.

In his second week in the project, mindfulness practice in his classroom brought an invisibility in his classroom to his attention. His journal entry that day references this discovery:

I discovered that some students demand your attention & and a lot of the others get overlooked, the quiet so-called invisible students. In my second time period, I was giving individual attention to my students as they were working on an assignment. This approach (mindfulness) started to work very well by the end of the period esp. with the kids who never ask for help. I think a focused proactive approach as of today was very useful. (LJ, p. 4)

Looking back on his experience, Leonard says:

Once I finally got into it...I began to recognize real quick the benefits from it. It had a much more profound impact than I thought it would. (LIT, 368, 376-377)

He had always thought of himself as “*student-oriented*” (LIT, 106) and was surprised by a contradiction between what he believed about his style and what this new form of attention revealed. Leonard suggests that his experiences in the study gave him an different angle from which to view his classroom practice. From this angle, the contradiction became apparent. He says:

I thought I was doing a lot of this before and you know I came to find out that you know, I'd kind of gotten into some bad habits. (LIT, 131-133)

[Those habits were life-long habits of being absorbed with] ***how I was coming across, perfecting a technically perfect presentation, an ego-involved presentation, concerned with making mistakes technically. My mind was on myself.*** (Personal Communication)

Moving to a position of mindfulness in the classroom, threw Leonard off-center:

I found myself in the mindfulness more forgetting about myself. Which was, with my background (salesman) and my personality is not the easiest thing to do. (LIT, 474-475)

I looked out there now, and could see that something was not quite right with some of those kids, the ones on the opposite end of my personality. It isn't that they weren't paying attention, it's that I'm not connecting with them. I became more sensitive to that and it wasn't only that they were not getting it, it was that they weren't engaged in the class. (Personal Communication)

I'm the wild and crazy guy, the superstar, and for those kids [who relate to that style] all in all I did a great job. But, you know those on the opposite of that style are real frustrated. They were overwhelmed by my wild and crazy style. I never noticed that before, to be real honest with you. (LIT, 116-119)

[I wouldn't notice they were having problems until I would] *see the grades and [then] say, "Why don't you come in for tutoring, I want you to do this, I want you to do that," And then by that time there's a defensive thing there. (LIT, 223-224)*

I don't know that without this thing [meditation and mindfulness] I would have really picked up on that. (LIT, 240-243)

As a result of this new perspective, Leonard maintains he came to see his established classroom practice in terms of performance and control. He controlled his classroom through a high energy performance that he describes as “*patronizing*” (LIT, 757). He says:

I'm talking about control in that I am the teacher and this is the way you're going to do it AND you're going to love it, because I AM the teacher...I'm telling you this because I have gray hair and I am wise, and you are going to benefit from it. (LIT, 756-761)

Recalling his experience during the project, Leonard expresses surprise at the new knowledge he created in the process:

I find it amazing that I've discovered things, you know, I REALLY didn't see before. [I was] patronizing the kids...Instead of, "Hey, they're young people but they got brains and they can think too. And I don't have all the answers." I found myself telling these kids that I

don't have all the answers. And you know, that's real risk taking.. (LIT, 756-758, 760-765)

It's more comfortable being dictatorial, but it's not as effective. (LIT, 751-752)

I'm getting better results. It helped me take my mind off of me. Looking back I see I never really realized it [the focus of his classroom practice] was on me, that my "act" was getting in the way. (FGIT, 1812-1815)

He states that for him mindfulness meant an insight into just who benefited from his style of classroom practice:

It's seeing that I CAN play it that way, have my act, I can do it all, but then I'm still in control, I'm still the one doing the whole thing. This way I've been able to "tone" some of that down, to meet the needs of other people. I was the teacher who couldn't see that the student's frustration with my style, my approach was getting in the way of the teaching. I thought, "Hey, this works for me, what's your problem!?" I didn't take the time to notice it before. You know, I just wasn't looking for it. I had had great success with my program, but there have always been a few people slip through the cracks. I've been able to reach those kids much better than I've ever done before, that's the amazing thing. (FGIT, 266-276)

Leonard dates his "learning to back away, to 'tone' things down, and let other things happen" (FGIT, 1814,1815) to an experience with a student, P___, in the third week of the study. This was P___'s second semester in Leonard's class. Looking back Leonard says:

He was one of those kids overwhelmed by my "act." He was so introverted, he stuttered and stammered, he could not speak to me. I mean he could not speak to me. He would want to ask a question. He would try to ask me a question and he would say, "Mr. __," and I would listen. I'd listen, he was so soft-spoken, I couldn't understand him, he couldn't even communicate with me. It was really that bad. So, on this one day, he was working on an assignment and he was very frustrated with it. The bell rang, all the other kids left. I saw his frustration. I didn't want to disturb him more. So, I just sat down beside him and took the pencil and said, Watch this, this, this, and this." And then he looked at that and he thought about it. We didn't speak. I just tried to feel, understand what he needed, what his question was. I just thought, "How can I be different to do that..?" I just tried to modify my thing. I

tried to be real calm. I tried to find out what it was he needed. We started communicating by body language, through this, and instead of telling him what he needed to know, just kinda watchin' him. We communicated by body language until he understood. (LIT, 353-359, 431-441)

Leonard marks this incident as a turning point not only for the student's engagement with the content but also a turning point for his own recognition of the power, for good or ill, of his style in his classroom practice:

That was the turning point, that was where it started, But as it built, now we have real conversations. He actually speaks to me, we have real conversations. Here's a kid with tremendous talent. Now, he's got the top grade of everybody. I feel so ashamed. It's my fault that he didn't do that the first semester. I just didn't know. And it has happened with other students, G __, A __., and W __. I look over the years, now I know there have been a lot of P __ 's. (FGIT, 250-258, LIT, 456)

Although Leonard was elated by the connections he was making with the “wallflower” (LJ, p. 9) students, he didn't know how to respond to a new nuance that those connections seem to be engendering. A journal entry during the third week of the study traces the beginning of something he was reluctant to say out loud:

Perhaps it is my imagination, but this focus on my students...especially some of the quote “wallflower” individuals (defined by other people) has brought me closer to them, which I didn't think was possible. They appear to get on task faster, but they are taking liberties with me they didn't do before. I detect what I interpret as affection, perhaps, and it's like my students are looking after me which is kind of weird. This is not disruptive, but still out of my comfort zone. (LJ, p. 9)

Later, he explained the “liberties” that his students began taking:

They keep up with my mechanical pencil. I'm always laying it down and forgetting where. Now, they say, “Hey, where's Mr. __'s pencil.” They scramble and find it for me. (LJ, p. 9)

This small act of care threw Leonard off-guard. He was used to being “in control.” He asserts both a sense of being cared for and a sense of danger at being seen

as in need of help. He names these discomforts as part of the “*risk taking*” that mindfulness demands.

By the end of the eight weeks, Leonard was amazed at the turn of “*liberties*” his students were taking, and at the same time appreciative. The new “*liberties*” his students took had to do with vigilance in keeping track of expensive equipment in the lab:

When something expensive gets left out in the lab, they bring it to me and say, “Mr. ___, you better lock this up before it walks away.” In fact this year when things were missing the kids went out and policed it and got it and brought it back. I mean things like that are not supposed to happen. Like last year several expensive pieces from the lab, calculators and what not, turned up missing, and they never came back. But this year, it’s like they watch out for me. It’s unbelievable. Connection, there’s a new connection that wasn’t there before. It’s like a bond, it’s like getting to know your own son again. It’s like affection, I hope this doesn’t sound silly. But, it’s a mutual affection. There is a closeness that I’ve never had with students anywhere before. (LIT, 263-279)

Although, Leonard was reluctant to say or write the word “*affection*” as a way of describing his relationship with his students, his journal entries and assertions in the interview attest to the impact this mutual caring had on him. When he looked for an explanation for this appearance of “*affection*” on the landscape of his classroom practice, he gave this explanation:

I think its directly attributed to this study. You know, I’m here, now, I don’t have to be cool all the time. I can be, I can be kind of be more human. That’s it right there, I think I’m more human than I was before to the kids. You know I’m watching their faces now, watching their faces instead of, “Hey, I’m going to tell you this story whether you like it or not.” Now, if it isn’t working, then I’ll just pick up on that and move on. I’m more aware of that than I was before. You know, I’ve listened to seminars and I’ve heard all this before, “This will meet individual needs. That will meet individual needs.” And you go back to your classroom and you do it the way you have always done it because you don’t have time to make up four different tests, and all that. But watching their faces, it’s amazing to me, I just became more sensitive to their faces. (FGIT, 173-185)

Finding out that my style was a barrier sometimes, that sometimes it worked against me, that's the thing I found out, I think, and that alone makes this worthwhile. I hate to admit this, but there were certain barriers there before and that have not completely disappeared but certainly have been lessened. And those kids who weren't getting it and not just not getting it but not engaged, I never noticed that before. I've always been real popular with the verbal kids, with the cheerleader types, but those others, I never noticed they didn't engage. I would do my wild man act and do up my funny jokes and all that and that works for most of them, but not everybody, some of those kids were really overwhelmed by my personality, it was barrier, you know. (LIT, 283-285, 638, 654, 655)

Leonard further argues that the effects of mindfulness particularly changed the way students responded to the content of the course he was teaching. He states:

Now, it's different, I'm more aware and I'm paying more attention. I'm more tuned in to what they're needing and what they're trying to tell me. You know, your average kid, or the not so verbal kid, or the ones with marginal ability, they're the ones who've started working for me. The others always did, but these other kids have really started working for me a lot since this study happened. Which is literally amazing, you know, I think they're working up to capacity and that's all I could ask from anybody. They're working up to capacity and they're feeling good about it. (FGIT, 942-954)

Like this kid, H___. He has history of this macho thing. He doesn't take notes. He doesn't want the other kids to see him take notes "Cause I'm H___, I don't do, that's beneath me. The girl next door, she'll tell me, she's my scribe." But just today, I did these three problems and I gave them the answers. and I told them these are going to be our models, if these aren't on your paper it won't be graded, well, H___ said he wasn't going to write it down. I said, "Okay if you don't want to write it down don't." And just kept going. The bell rang, the other kids left, he hung around and grabbed a piece of paper and was writing the stuff down and this was right before lunch. He didn't during class, but he was getting it down right there before he left, blew me away, you know, I couldn't believe that. You know, before I would try to force them to write it down in a round about way. I would explain it over and over and say, "This is another method of learning and blah, blah, blah." Now, if they don't want to write it down I just go on, you know, I found out there are some auditory learners out there, they don't need to write it down. (LIT, 681-698)

Yeah, well, it blew me away and that happened just today. He's been the last one I think, coming on board really. You know, I mean, I finally got

him, you know they passed the thing about wearing hooded sweatshirts and of course they're not consistent with how they do that and I've been on him about taking it off and all this kind of stuff and the last three or four days he's actually come in, it's supposed to be in his locker, but he'll take it off and lay it in my lap. That's pacifying, that's, he's letting me know that that's as good as it's going to get with him. And I say, "Well that's okay I can accept that." (LIT, 722-731)

This is another “*risk-taking*” intersection for Leonard. He recognizes that along with an increased sensitivity to the possibility of his students knowing better than he does what they need, he experiences a sense of losing his balance, of losing control:

You know, I'm doing this and I'm thinking, "Oh, man, I'm going to lose control." Control, that's the big issue, that's the hardest thing for me. I'm doing this but it's risk-taking for a teacher to do this. I'm much more comfortable being dictatorial, but you know, its not as effective. I'm more flexible, and more kids are working for me than before. Man, it's like a mutual affection and it blows me away. (LIT, 745-752)

I can see this is helping my students and it's helping me. When my students do well, I feel good. It takes a lot less energy, and I'm getting better results. I'll tell you something remarkable. This is my thirteenth year as a teacher. This is the only time, since I've been a teacher that I did not have a single "F." We've just finished up a semester on the block schedule and I had some real low, but it came down to the final and not a single kid failed a class. And it's tremendous, it's just tremendous. (LIT, 807-813)

I just stopped thinking about my "act," modifying myself, taking the edge off to not be so radical on one extreme which is my normal personality. That's the biggest advantage to me, taking my mind off myself, I have been able to do a better job as a teacher with kids like P___. The class has really turned around for him and not just for him but a lot of other kids like that. The same thing has happened with G___, H___, A___, the marginal ones. I've been able to meet their needs. And it's tremendous. These are the kids that have really started working for me a lot since this study has happened. Which is literally amazing. You know, they're working up to capacity and they're feeling good about it. (LIT, 250-262)

Leonard also describes “*taking his mind off himself*” as a change in attitude about “*making mistakes*” in front of his students. He suggests that this concern with

making mistakes actually set him up to make “*the biggest mistake of all*” (Personal Communication):

Not paying attention to the students who didn't respond to my style. I was absorbed in giving a technically perfect performance before. The mistakes I might have made before, are little compared with the mistake of not paying attention to people who were overwhelmed by my style. (Personal Communication)

Leonard spoke both in his journal and in his interview of the physiological health benefits that he experienced during the study. He has chronic back pain. Early in his meditation time, he experimented with focusing on this pain and discovered that he could control the pain and even alleviate it. He says:

Maybe I'm all wet, I mean sometimes you get into stuff and ask yourself, "Is this really real or am I just kidding myself." But even if I'm kidding myself, it's still a benefit, my back didn't hurt as bad. I started focusing on the pain and it seemed to lessen. It wasn't like I was trying to ignore the pain, most of the time I ignore the pain, but I was becoming aware of the pain. It was still there, but it wasn't as intense as it was before. (LIT, 899-903)

Leonard began to use this focus to mediate the pain even when he wasn't meditating with similar results. He says:

I was able to bend over and pick up something, where before I would have to get on my knee to do it. You know that, well, it kind of surprised me, 'cause I wouldn't have believed that. (Personal Communication)

Summarizing his experience, Leonard says:

Looking back I thought I was doing a really great job, but, being wired, being a performer got in the way. Now, I'm becoming less of a performer. I don't really seem to have the need for that now. I can modify myself to not be so radical on one extreme, to be a little bit on the other end, to meet their [students'] needs. Before I thought they were really lucky to have a guy of my skill. In the study, I just kind of realized how blessed and lucky I am to be there. I'm the one benefiting from these kids more than they are from me. (LIT, 330-333, 582-588)

Watching the clock has never been a part of Leonard's style. He says the students have always had to remind him that the period was nearing its end:

I'm not that aware of time to be honest with you. I was even that way before, but even less so after I was doing this. In fact the kids would say, "Mr. ___ it's getting close, it's time for you to wrap this up." Whatever we are doing and the day just goes. It's just, I'm there and then all of a sudden[it's time to go]. (LIT, 525-532)

Mackensie's Experience

Mackensie's students range in age from three years old to five years old. She teaches in a private school dedicated to a "wholistic" view of education for children from pre-school to fifth grade. When she thinks of herself as a teacher, she seeks for a congruency between what:

I strive for and what I do everyday. Just to be genuine and present, and that's what this experiment taught me and that's the essence of it. To just be right where I am. Let go of all the conditioning...I mean just trying to be real, um and as honest as I can be. My actions speak, again I learned that in school and I came to believe it after I started changing how I interact with not just with children but people. What I do, how I act has so much more to do with, than with what the words say. And that's something that was hard 'cause I like words and I love, I like to try to explain things to people, children and adults. I've learned to be quieter and stand back and stay out of the way and let my actions or my demeanor or my almost my spirit speak louder and I think children especially respond to that. So, that's what I strive for. I just want each person to feel respected and valued too, even if I don't agree...to stay respectful and stay in my space and then also allow the children to do that as well. (MKIT, 98-135)

Mackensie reasons that her description of herself as teacher for this interview is only by degree different than one she might have made in the past. The degree of difference has to do with a sharper focus on the value of non-judgment of herself and others. This sharper focus comes in the form of:

Giving myself the freedom to maybe not do things perfectly. Being able to tell people I don't have all the answers or gosh I didn't get this done

today. I'll have it tomorrow. Just like with a child, so they didn't do something the way it was expected, its no big deal. Just do it the best you can. (MKIT, 224-232)

She points to her participation in the study as the impetus for this emphasis on postponing judgment in favor of accepting what can be done in the moment. She says:

I think a lot of it has been the process I went through with this project for you. I didn't do it at all the way I imagined I would. I just did it so poorly in my mind compared to the ideal I had back in August when we were talking and to realize I gained really valuable things from it. It enlightened me, it made me more aware. And by that I mean I realized some of the things are important in the classroom. It's not all what we're taught in school. (MKIT, 234-243)

When she begins to describe what mindfulness in the classroom was like for her she begins with the words, “*A huge dichotomy*” (MKIT, 275). She continues:

On the one hand, so enlightening and positive and on the other so frustrating because I had these, again, these expectations of what I would be like doing this project and it was nothing like that. It just didn't happen that way. That's to me the best part of it is to learn that it didn't matter. I think, I don't know if it's all adults, humans in this culture or what, but we make expectations so quickly. I do at least, formulate something of how I think it's going to be and then many times if it doesn't meet that I see myself as failing, I'm wrong, I'm bad. (MKIT, 275-285)

After you came out to school, and told us that the journaling didn't have to be everyday specific and encouraged us to just try to do it the best we could, so I got this really positive feeling of it was okay just to try. So, that's what I mean, it's moved more and more into a positive thing as I've started to reflect back on what changes I have made or how I have altered in not just my actions but my beliefs and my own perspective. And there have been shifts and I'm surprised, I didn't expect it. I didn't think it was happening. (MKIT, 294-305)

Her experience of mindfulness in the classroom, she argues made her more aware of just how often her attention was divided between two focuses. For example, she became aware of how often she would look up to scan the room while in conversation with a child. This awareness prompted her to the realization:

of how often we do that and how unconsciously I do it. Probably the last three or four weeks, I've been able to focus more on the individual child and I've had tremendous times with an especially frustrating child. I remember several times having to take a deep breath and re-center and just say, "What does this child need from me right now?" Just to be quiet and be here with him and have none of that pressure, that expectation, just be centered in myself in a calm, peaceful spirit. And just see what comes out of him. Like I just need to be right here with him and not worry about how well he's performing or me jumping in and fixing things or me doing the right thing to help bring him back, open up again. It helped me maintain a kind of separateness so I wasn't so much in it, you know with the emotions and feelings. I could be in a separate place and watch and be much more detached and yet present. I didn't notice time during those moments. Like time was a moot point, I just didn't think about time. (MKIT, 346-411)

Mackensie points to her new direction in positing a non-judgmental attitude toward herself and her students as the impetus for a new dimension in her thinking about expectations. She says:

The expectation I have for something or someone is based on all my experiences and my beliefs and my problems and fears. I don't know what yours are and that's where we get into limiting people by having expectation. When I'm being mindful, I trust that the best thing, that positive things are going to come of it. We're both going to be there and we're going to contribute and something bigger than both of us might come about. It's like just letting what is possible happen, whatever that is. (MKIT, 862-880)

Her Montessori training led her to trust the child. Mackensie suggests her experiences with mindfulness in the classroom during this project provided a “*vehicle*” for doing that:

But what this [the experience of mindfulness in the classroom] did is it gave me another really powerful pathway to get to that point and it helped solidify that. It helped get rid of some of my fear responses, pressure in the classroom. This gave me a very specific tool, a vehicle, back to that foundational belief in trusting the child, trusting what can happen between us. (MKIT, 933-940)

Mackenzie meditated for thirty minutes outside the classroom during the eight weeks of the study less than half the required five days out of every week. She suggests

that her inability to complete the meditation schedule, the journaling requirement or to be bring a mindful presence to her classroom practice more consistently were due to her own harsh criticism of her efforts. She explains it as a cycle that fed on itself. A cycle that she was unaware of until she began reflecting on her experience during the exit interview. She explains:

I was conscious of these false starts. You know I would feel like I would try do it and it just wasn't what I expected, it wasn't and that makes sense to me in hindsight, I wasn't meditating, so I was tapping into that part of me that is the critic. I had so many expectations, too much of that ego talking, saying, "You're doing it wrong." Too much frustration from that cycle. So, I guess that's what I have learned from this experience. I hope to let go of that. To be able to set a pattern of meditation for myself even though the study is over. Until now I hadn't realized the good I got out of trying or why I had such a hard time with it all. (MKIT, 1039-1045)

Sara's Experience

Sara teaches at a private pre-school-fifth grade school. Her students range in age from three years old to six years old. Her meditation, journaling and mindfulness practice for this study was sporadic. She characterized her participation as less than fifty percent. She described herself as a teacher in these words:

Patient, kind of goofy and funny, unorganized. There are a lot of times when I'm really present. I'm not condescending to the kids. (SAIT, 74, 92)

When asked to describe her experience of mindfulness in the classroom, she suggests that what was meaningful to her was taking the time to appreciate mindful moments in her classroom practice. She says:

You know, the main thing about this was for me, actually being aware of trying to be mindful. I mean like sometimes the mindfulness for me, was in realizing when kind of amazing moments would happen. I'd go, "That was really cool," or you know it was nice enough just to sit back and watch the children and watch what happened, but the thing is I

don't think I always appreciated it, so this was almost like a nice way to be reminded that that's a really amazing thing that I'm looking for or that it's almost like, in a way it almost sounds corny, but it's almost like a gift that you really shouldn't, that you just shouldn't toss away, that it doesn't happen all the time. (SAIT, 128-139)

She gives the analogy of a race car driver's sense of speed at 180 miles an hour versus 90 miles an hour as she seeks to describe her sense of time during a mindful moment in the classroom:

It's almost like you know you hear race car drivers talking about when they've driven the car for like 180 miles an hour and then they finally slow down to like 90, it almost seems like everything is in slow motion. Like you could just open the car door and get out. So, sometimes that's kind of that elasticity of something that I think I experience in the classroom in a mindful moment. In a certain sense, it's almost like you've got this little pocket of super slow, you know kind of, when we're looking at each other or here's what's going on and we're talking maybe it's like, you know only ten minutes elapsed but it seems like eternity and not eternity at the same time. (SAIT, 368-399)

She describes her relationships with her students during the eight weeks of the study as:

I felt pretty good about it actually. I think it helped in just having, maybe fewer expectations in a kind of loaded sense of the word for the children too. I'm just thinking, I haven't thought about this until you just asked me. But it's like these mindful moments are almost, I mean sometimes they're almost like collisions, like I almost think of like, you know, I don't know much about physics but I think of the notion when I've heard people talk about the chaos theory or think about like you know, neutrons or protons and electrons kind of crashing into each other. Sometimes that's what it's like. You know with the kids it's like the crash can either kind of either not really have anything happening, your paths kind of cross or like something amazing can happen. And so a lot of it is so random. I think it made me feel more freed up. I hope the children kind of consequently felt that too. (SAIT, 664-716)

I just feel like things are more balanced. Like, I'm not quite as aware of the teacher/student, teacher/child kind of relationships. The mindfulness reminded me that I'm just part of a much larger whole. (FGIT, 1381-1383)

During the focus group interview, Sara described an encounter with a young female child, a three year old, in which her initial “*quick, visceral reaction*” (FGIT, 646, 647) was a prejudicial rejection of the child. But, her participation in the project prompted her to make an on-the-spot adjustment, a dropping of assumptions and prejudices. The importance being that a connection with the child developed. She describes the incident:

We got a new child. She’s kind of like an almost “Good Ship Lollipop nice version of Shirley Temple.” Kinda sappy and sweet and everyone thinks she’s just pretty as a little angel, and she just kinda drives me bonkers. She’s kinda bratty and willful and I ended up having a couple of incidents with her. But after the second one, I stopped and made it a point for the next two or three days to just be with her. And this is a child I would have probably would have just said I didn’t like and leave it at that. And in a way that would have been not really fair at all. But, you know, it was kinda my quick visceral reaction, it’s like, “Oh, Lord. You know I can spend my time with kids who like me and who I like, why bother with this one. Those kids are a lot more fun and they like me too!!!” Of course, I wasn’t being fair to that child, and I wasn’t being fair to myself either. Because after spending time just being with her, she’s doing so much better. She’s already focusing and choosing words instead of hitting. So that would have been a lousy thing for me, just to, because of a stupid assumption or a prejudice that I had, just to kinda, you know, let that go. So I think, what is important and I hadn’t even thought about it before, until this conversation, is the notion of missed connections. The connections missed by placing assumptions in the game. (FGIT, 624-643)

As she thinks about the project and what the experience meant to her, she says:

I think it helped me personally. Like I think it helped me just dealing with my own life. And that was kind of the nice, like a nice by product you know. It just kind of helped calm me down like you know, even physical things like my headaches, or just appreciating the moments of your life. Like appreciating sitting there with your grandmother, just having a nice conversation and being conscious that you’re having a nice conversation or you know other kind of moments like that that we take for granted. And maybe I’m having an easier time focusing on things that matter hugely, and then trying to, just trying to deal with them. (SIT, 1385-1399)

I haven't had headaches in a long time. But you know when I'd go to the doctor before, she said they were pretty much probably tension or stress headaches, so that was like a really nice by-product that I don't have them as much. A couple of people at school even noticed so that for me it was kind of a two-fold thing. (SIT, 158-165)

I never hardly managed to get thirty minutes together at one time. What I found for me, fifteen was about the most I could string together in a chunk and so a lot of the time I found I would start doing it twice a day, or I'd do it in little bits, but I always made sure I got fifteen minutes. There were certain times I could only get in eight minutes. (SIT, 407-109; 474-479)

Jane's Experience

Jane works with a mixed-age group of three to six year olds in a private school serving students from pre-school to fifth grade. Her meditation, journaling, and mindfulness practice for this project was minimal, in her words, *"It kind of like trickled and faded"* (JIT, 146).

She describes herself as a teacher in these words:

I guess I'm loving and nurturing. I've never really been a leader. I've always been a follower. I don't think my self-esteem is the best. I'm pretty much the same this year as last year. (JIT, 88-90)

She describes her attempts to meditate, journal, and be mindful in the classroom during the study as:

Something that just fell apart. It's gone and it's like everything trickles down and those focuses aren't there. You want it too and you always go, "I'll start Monday. Monday's going to be fresh. Oh, we had a holiday. Oh, we're going to get it back." And it just doesn't get there. (JIT, 147-150)

Jane did want to mention times when she tried to be mindful in the classroom with her students. She describes one of those moments:

It's like sunshine. It's like a bright light. It would just be that I completely heard every single thing that that child said. Whether it was, "Look at my drawing." "I've drawn this box that looks like a house." I

mean it was like from start to finish. It didn't have to be, it wasn't special in the fact that what they were telling me, it just special in the fact that I wasn't, like "Oh, my gosh, I'm not listening to them." Or you know thinking about they're tugging on me constantly. It was like, they said it once, and I turned straight to them and it was just like there was a path, like the bright light and it's just you and me and nobody else. It was like there was a box, just like the quiet time and you're hearing only them or like a, you know how the music is on those pastoral things where the water trickles, it's like that. (JIT, 195-215)

Luanne's Experience.

Luanne works with a mixed age group of eight to twelve year olds at a private school serving students from pre-school to fifth grade. Her role in this position is more along the lines of a guidance counselor than a classroom teacher. She describes her role in these words:

It's more like teaching social/emotional development. I guess probably more like a guidance counselor would be but with a little less, whatever that dog is. The little funny dog that says, "Don't do drugs." McGruff. It's a little, toss out McGruff and make it more freelance. So, we talk about feelings and communication and roles we play and things that make us angry. (LUIT, 113-121)

She describes herself as a teacher in these words:

I am teacher as interpreter, teacher as facilitator, teacher as connector. I very rarely find myself imparting information like, "Yadda, yadda, da." It's more like teacher reflecting back to them what I see them doing, hear them saying. (LUIT, 371-376)

Her participation in this project was modified. Her modification of the thirty minute meditation took the form of listening to inspirational tapes. When asked to describe a mindful experience in the classroom, she states that the chaos of her working environment did not support the possibility of mindfulness as a practice:

It is so chaotic most of the time. I thought, "I wonder what it would be like to do this in a more consistent environment." (LUIT, 733-736)

During the focus group interview, she described her experience of mindfulness in the classroom this way:

What I noticed is that I didn't notice so much when I really was present or mindful as much as I noticed when I wasn't and it was very clear. It was like, "I'm so out there right now." And those are things that normally I think I would have just swept under the rug or justified as, "Well, it's been a bad day. I didn't get enough sleep." It was like, "No, I'm off the mark." So, for me, the mindfulness was more about really paying attention to my actions. Getting to almost see myself outside myself and not really liking some of what I saw. (FGIT, 313-330)

So being able to get a more accurate picture. You know I always saw myself for a long time as the counselor person. I was always the person that was nice, understanding. Well, that's not me all the time. That's crap. Like I can be exactly...like I can be the shaming, controlling, critical, my-agenda person. I come in with these great plans and you're gonna respond and you're gonna do it my way. And when it doesn't go my way, I'm offended. It's about my ego. (FGIT, 326-376)

And so, for me, that's where I've noticed the mindfulness more, and that I've had a clearer idea of the things I want to change or that I want to be different for me, and so that's been a good thing. (FGIT, 340-344)

Phyllis' Experience

Phyllis teaches geometry and pre-calculus in an predominately African American inner-city high school. Phyllis had problems in sitting still for longer than five to ten minutes, so her practice of sitting meditation was most frequently five minutes. She believes she may have a tendency for narcolepsy. Her mother has narcolepsy. Her journal reflects two instances of mindfulness during the eight weeks:

Mr. Turnock came in to evaluate me. I felt panic. So I took a couple of breaths and I calmed down. I don't remember any panic after that second. (PJ, p. 5)

Testing today—B_____ caused some problems—I took a few breaths and ignored her. (PJ, p. 19)

She describes herself as the teacher who is able to make adjustments, to be flexible. She says:

I am the teacher that can go into different situations and adjust. I may not be successful but I will have tried something. (PIT, 106-108)

In the interview, she gave an example of mindfulness in the classroom, which she said she did not think to include in her journal. She describes this incident:

During the second period, one boy, E___, got upset about his grade. I was trying to calm him down. The class was doing other stuff and I asked E___ to sit in front of me, and gosh I didn't even write that down. I just said, "E___, sit down in front of the overhead." And I was on the overhead and I said, "Here's the calculator and here's my calculator. Let's work together." And we did. I guess it was a much more advanced form of mindfulness, because it wasn't me breathing, it was just slowing down, taking him, who's all out of control, giving him all my attention, put him in front of the overhead and did every single problem and he was on the calculator. So, I gave him his pacifier(a calculator) and he was just punching. So, things have gotten better with him. (PIT, 403-422)

Candace's Experience

Candace is a recent university graduate. This is her second year at a private school serving students from pre-school to fifth grade. Last year, she worked in this school's after school program. Her position this year is her first position as a regular classroom teacher. In her early twenties, she is an artist and her previous work has included that of a pastel portrait artist and a T-shirt graphic artist. She describes her current assignment as, ***"I teach journaling and representational art. I work with all the five year olds through the twelve year olds"*** (CIT, 141-142, 150-151).

She positions her description of herself as a teacher in the context of the ***"discovery of me through my therapy...I have to go by what I see those around me see***

me as being” (CIT, 284-285). She elaborates this notion into a picture of herself as a teacher:

I'd say a lot of it would be high energy. I have a lot of energy and I get a lot of excitement. So I get really overly enthused and a lot of times my teachers around me have to say, "Candace, please take that to a 33 and calm yourself down. I'm not necessarily not wanting to hear it right now, but I'm in the middle of THIS." So, I get really overly excited. So, I really have to work on the calming and pulling back. And I'm getting there. There's been a change in the past few months, I used to be very very controlling, not so much anymore. Now, I have trouble with going to extremes. I'm trying to work on that. We're either totally this way or totally this way. (CIT, 284-285)

Now I'm more open with the kids and trust them more. And trust them with dangerous things and that would be like with construction tools, with the fire. So, I'm there, I don't hover over, controlling in that way. So, I want them to be able to do that (to work responsibly under supervision with construction tools and fire as in candles)...I just want them to do everything and you know get their hands on every single thing they can. So, I get a lot of excitement and energy that way. I'm probably a last minute person, but I know everything that's there. It's getting it to paper that's the hardest thing for me to do and that's why this [journal] isn't full. I work well under pressure, which is scary. I don't want to work well under pressure. I'm an extrovert. (CIT, 297-312)

I think I've learned more now. So, I have more understanding about why I'm doing what I'm doing now, not necessarily as in process that I'm introducing, but more of why I'm allowing the children to get to whatever. Last year, I think I was just more eager to learn why, now I want more depth to understanding why. (CIT, 324-328)

[Which means] *I want to be more wise about it. I want to not just know the surface quick answer to why we don't [do this or that as holistic educators]. (CIT, 333-335)*

[I want to know] *the why and what it means and I want to SEE it happen. It's [that] we've lived through last year and we've done all this, but this year, we've gotten to see some of those kids, [the effects of holistic education on them] to watch what they've learned. The results of what they've learned last year...I mean there's been a lot of good. (CIT, 341-346, 351)*

Candace describes mindfulness in the classroom:

Sometimes I would purposely go into being mindful, because that's a lot of what this is for, for you or for the child. I would find myself struggling with, and it's because I'm new at it, and it's a new philosophy, a new thing that I want to be with the kids. Struggling with being able to be completely there and not have any worry about someone walking by and seeing something that they don't understand and then that causing a reaction. That worried me sometimes. (CIT, 358-365)

But then, there are other times, just to watch, it's like B___ [a student at the school and also the son of one of the teachers at Roserock] today or last night. It was his birthday party and it's so exciting. I got him an army ammunition box, just cause there's some neat stuff in it and it's a fun little contraption to open. And he just loves that kind of stuff. I had some stuff inside of it and he was so excited and he got a compass and he was still excited when he came in today. And he said, "Candace, I just needed to know, you know...I just wanted to ask you, if I could take out my, you know, my army box, because if we get lost while we're on the nature trail, I think we could all work together and find our way back, you know, with the compass and would that be okay?" (CIT, 365-375)

Candace complains that for her the mindfulness of this moment was destroyed by the fact that the rule for the nature trail is, "*Kids can't bring their toys*" CIT, 378). In consultation with the other teachers it was decided that the rule should be enforced:

So, I said, "Let's ask Sara." And the answer became, "No." (CIT, 377)

I was talking to Mackensie [later], "That's why I don't always like rules, Candace, because it really messes with those important things in life and that's where you just get in your mindfulness with the child and then it gets messed up by some adult thing So, that's probably what I think about the mindfulness...you're as mindful as you can be and all the chopped up blocks of time....just messes it up. (CIT, 379-388)

[Like with B___, it] *died...They all begin positive, but they all end. I guess I'm thinking pretty negative today. I won't say they all end, it just always seems like another factor comes in and changes it.* (CIT, 491, 495-497)

Her experience of time in mindfulness moments was described as a time of excitement without the notice of time, "*I get excited. There's not a lot of focus on time,*" (CIT, 507).

Finding the time to do the meditation component of Miller's Model was difficult for Candace. She found that Sara's (also a participant in the study) insight into her own way of attempting to implement this component helpful:

"I do it in the bathtub, Candace." So I could learn how to do it. It was when you have to limit yourself to sitting down and doing it a specific way that it became too hard. But what I could learn to do is take opportunities of calmness and stillness, maybe it was during nap time where then I could do some focus on being with the child and calming myself. I did more of the center on thoughts, but I made sure the breathing was there. (CIT, 256-262, 267-268)

When Candace explains what was most difficult in setting aside the time for the vipassana as a thirty minute session five days a week, she points to the pressures of the assessment portfolios required for each student and to the absences of colleagues that are compensated for, not with substitutes, but with everyone else taking extra responsibilities in their absence:

And then, there's no substitutes for our school. If you're sick, your sick. There's nobody to fill in. (CIT, 79-81)

haven't been able to give enough time to...introducing new ideas because we're short of teachers. So when teachers are gone then, you can't do anything and...And so many [of the teachers at the school] I think, are in this negative, "I don't want to be here mode" that they think they can leave. And then the rest of us [have to do the work they were supposed to do besides our own responsibilities]. (CIT, 157-165)

I guess what I've been struggling with, with the school and getting down and being there with the child is that because lately it's been, probably at least a month, so many teachers and so many things going on, where people have to be absent, that you can't be right there with the child, you have to worry about what's going to happen in the next fifteen minutes over at this area and then how you're going to get from this area to this area and then sometimes the expectations of the administration...I mean it's like he says one thing sometimes and then he behaves in another. (CIT. 214-223)

You have to be really careful and what's really hard is to think about how careful you have to be, what aspects of your life you can share or not share. (CIT, 241-243)

So, a lot of people are stressed (CIT, 231).

And then this assessment stuff...[It] has been the most stressful, irritating, everything you can imagine in life and that's probably one of the main things. (CIT, 404-408)

I mean, one night, it's like Thursday night and [the administration] came in and said, "You guys need to have all of your assessments turned in tomorrow" (THIS IS THURSDAY EVENING!), another set turned in Monday!" They just rammed on us. And it wasn't even us. It was like other people [colleagues] that were having problems. The one who was supposed to be editing all of our things had been absent, out sick. It wasn't our fault that they [the assessments] were in late. She was sick all this time...The assessments are awesome and they're important and they're great, but these deadlines and maybe it's the way they come across and then it's like we don't have any block of time during the school day really.... We just need some set time, almost a set area where we can go an work [on the assessment portfolios]. (CIT, 408, 415-428)

Because we don't really have that or nor do we have a place to do that. (CIT, 432-433)

[What made it hard to do the meditation was] *time, giving myself time to do that. Giving myself time to do that* [when all the other things I have to do need to be done]. (CIT, 404-405)

Candace adds that in addition to the pressures of school, she also lives at home.

Her father's business has collapsed creating further pressures in an already entangled mesh of relationships. Her family has valued the work ethic to the extent that the philosophy she was raised under stressed activity in every waking minute. Even weekends at their lake retreat were scheduled with hour by hour productive activities. She argues that this approach to life is one she suspects she does not want to continue. She illustrates this with a description of a recent experience at the lake with her family and her new boyfriend, prefaced with her statement about the impact of her father's financial problems on her life:

Like this past month, my [dad's] business just totally fell and I'm living with that and dealing with all that with him. So, yeah, so that's another...But I'm also finding out that's a constant in my life, so I need,

my big deal right now is to figure out what I'm going to do in my life to not have these constants that don't allow me to have the time for calm, peaceful opportunities. Like, Owen [her boyfriend] and I went to the lake this weekend. It was the most wonderful time I've ever had at the lake, and it's beautiful there. I used to not get into the beauty of the lake. We're a fast paced [family], I grew up in a fast paced [family], work, work, work, get up at 7:30 and you're working on something. You may be raking leaves and burning leaves and then you're going to go paint this and then you're going to build that and I chose not to do that this weekend. (CIT, 446-458)

I got a lot of flak [from my family], "You said you were going to come, relax at the lake and help your father." And I said, "I am relaxing." I went fishing for the first time, in a tube you know, with little flippers and caught my first fish and it was the best time, I mean the best time I ever had. So, I need to do more of that. (CIT, 456-470)

As she considers her participation in this project and what she might say about it that she hasn't said, she emphasizes her uneasiness at coming to exit interview. This uneasiness was connected with her judgment of her participation as being less than what she felt was expected. Her decision to keep the appointment was based on her belief that what she had to say would be important to the study. That importance being a picture of what contemplative practice is like for someone like her as well as the realization that there is no such thing as a perfect standard against which contemplatives measure themselves. The latter realization being something she learned as a result of being in the study. She comments:

I wish I would have taken more opportunity to do it. I was scared to come [to the exit interview] for fear that I didn't do what was right, but then I also had to remember that all of the things that are going on with me are important to this study because it also tells you who's more able to do this right now or not or how to encourage a person to do it. So, that's some of the things I was thinking about that made me more calm about being able to come and talk with you. Regardless that I didn't complete anything [following the meditation, mindfulness, or the journal guidelines] to a perfect standard, which there's no such thing, which is another thing I have learned. That everything does effect it. (CIT, 647-658)

CHAPTER V

ANALYSES

The purpose of this study was the creation of narrative descriptions of teachers' perceptions of personal identity, classroom practice, the quality of teachers' subjective experiences of time and place, and relationships with students as these are affected by the implementation of a holistic model of classroom practice. Specifically, this study explored the implementation of a particular quality of attention known as mindfulness cultivated by the practice of vipassana theorized by Miller's (1994a) model of contemplative classroom practice. This study meant to give attention to the nature of a classroom practice as it is itself. This chapter provides analyses of the findings as they relate to the research questions and the conceptual framework in which the study is situated.

This study began with four research questions. 1.) How do teachers perceive themselves as a result of their efforts to establish a contemplative practice in the classroom? 2.) What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice on their classroom practice? 3.) How do teachers describe their subjective experiences of time and place in the classroom as they bring contemplative practice to their classroom practice? 4.) What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice on their relationships with their students? The four research questions proved to be overlapping with answers to any one having embedded within it threads of another.

Thus, as a participant spoke of experiences of relationships with students during the eight week study s/he could not do so without also speaking of changes in personal perceptions of oneself as a teacher, or perhaps, experiences of time and place or experiences of mindfulness as a classroom event. This ecological relationship is especially noticeable in the teachers' descriptions of their experiences of mindfulness in the classroom and their relationships with their students.

As was stated in Chapter III, the construction of the research questions, and subsequently the interview questions, was shaped by two major influences: The review of literature of contemplative practice and the goal of creating narratives in teachers' own words of the experience of contemplative practice in the classroom. The narratives in Chapter IV report in the teachers' own words their experiences of contemplative practice in the classroom and answer the second research question: What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice in their classroom practice? Miller's (1994a) model of contemplative classroom practice, Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow, and S. Kessler's (1991) concept of teaching presence were discussed in Chapter II. This chapter discusses the intersection of these works as they informed the construction and invitations of research questions one, three, and four, and presents the data answering each question.

Research Questions One and Four:

Research questions one and four were:

Question 1: How do teachers perceive themselves after the experience of attempting to establish a contemplative practice in the classroom?

Question 4: What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice on their relationships with their students?

The Intersections and Invitations of Questions One and Four

The intersection of Miller's (1994a) model of contemplative practice in education and the professions and Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) work with individual experiences of flow argued for the association of a sense of competency with these experiences. Miller (1994a) proposes that the experience of mindfulness in his model is comparable to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) descriptions of flow experiences. Specifically, flow is thought to influence the individual's sense of competence and well-being in a positive direction. After a flow experience, individuals feel "more together than before, not only internally but also with respect to other people and to the world in general" and flow experiences leave individuals "feeling more capable, more skilled" (p. 41). Flow experiences "transform life—to create more harmony in it and to liberate the psychic energy that otherwise would be wasted in boredom and worry" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 42).

Miller (1994a) argues that similar descriptions of competence and well-being are found in the journal entries of educators, his graduate students, as they attempt to implement contemplative practice during the semester in his classroom. A particular quality of attention known as mindfulness is central to Miller's model of contemplative practice for classroom practice. Training in mindfulness has been shown to have a significant positive influence on the ability to be more trusting of oneself and others (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness opens awareness to the experience of non-duality, "At the deepest level we may experience brief moments of communion with our students," (Miller, 1994a, p. 25).

S. Kessler (1991) presents the heart of her concept of “teaching presence” as the practice of mindfulness. She draws from her personal experience and her observation of teachers in the classroom, to argue that teachers with “teaching presence” demonstrate a sense of competency as well as positive relationships with their students. At the intersection of Miller, Csikszentmihalyi, and S. Kessler, the sense of positive perceptions of competency and well being, influenced the construction of the Exit Interview Question One and its sub-questions. This question and its probes were invitations for the teachers to tell the story of who they are as contemplative practitioners as it affects their classroom practice. The teachers’ self-descriptions in response to these questions create the text of their narrative experience of themselves as contemplative practitioners in the classroom. Exit Interview Question One included:

How would you describe yourself as a teacher to yourself? If you were to tell yourself who you are as a teacher, what would you say? Is this description different than one you would have given before the study? Why or why not?

Exit Interview Question Four was constructed as an invitation for the interviewees to describe the nature of their relationships with their students during the study and to express in their own words their perceptions of those relationships. Exit Interview Question Four and its probes were:

How would you describe your relationships with your students during this study? Is this different from your experiences of relationships with students in the past? What led to the changes?

Answers to Questions One

As each teacher storied into words the teacher they see themselves as being at the end of this project, there is a common thread of surprise. They discovered they were not always who they thought they were. These new definitions of self developed two themes. The first was a discovery that the vision they held of themselves did not fit what they saw actually happening in their classrooms. The second theme was a discovery of strengths they did not know they had.

Seeing what is actually happening. The participants began to perceive what was happening in their classrooms from a new perspective. They developed the capacity to notice when their attention wandered into thoughts ABOUT what was happening instead of staying focused on WHAT was happening. For many of them, their actual behaviors surprised them. These behaviors did not fit their pre-conceived visions of themselves as teachers. They were not who they thought they were in the classroom. In Leonard's case, his style of classroom interaction actually was a barrier to particular students' engagement in the class. The revelation was a surprise as he had always thought of his style as being a part of his identity as the successful teacher. In the study, he came to see his style filling his own need to be "cool" rather than meeting the needs of all his students. His description of himself at the end of the study, included a style that modified itself in response to what he actually saw happening between himself and his students.

For Sid, staying focused on what was actually happening gave him the opportunity to "catch" himself in the act of responding in an off-hand, indifferent manner to a student who had initiated an conversation with him. This indifference surprised him—he

believed himself to be the teacher who respected each student—but this indifference did not fit his personal definition of respect for another person.

In a similar manner, Mackensie caught sight of the tension she was feeling as she sat with a student who was having problems with a task. This tension surprised her as she recognized that it came from the expectations she had about her own role as the teacher and the expectations she had for the child in his role as a student. She saw herself as a teacher who trusted children and adults to be wherever they were—without preconceived expectations. Seeing herself holding expectations both for herself and the child while it was happening, she was able to momentarily let go of both sets of expectations. She explains herself now as a teacher who is more conscious of the dynamics of expectations as they actually play themselves out. This is in contrast to herself before as the teacher who was unaware that this was more of an intellectual position than an actual practice. Sara extended this idea of widened awareness. Sara explained herself as a teacher in a new way as a result of her participation in the study. She now describes herself as a person who is more often conscious of the experiences she is having and “appreciating those moments.”

Luanne found that mindful practice in the classroom disrupted the identification she felt with herself as the teacher who was “nice and understanding.” Keeping attention focused on exactly what was happening, she saw herself in situations in the classroom in which she was a “shaming, controlling, critical, my-agenda person.” She describes herself now as a teacher who is more often aware of what she is doing in the classroom and the effects connected to her actual presence.

Fay narrates a change in who she is now. She describes her former classroom practice as once crafted out of a stern personality, worn like a mask everyday in order to control her classroom. As she implemented mindfulness practice in the classroom, she discovered that she could just be herself and control was no longer an issue as she mindfully attended to each classroom interaction. She used the disciplined attention she was learning in meditation to address problems as they arose from a nonreactive position of calm and peace and then moved on to the next moment free of any residue that anger or frustration would have created.

Discovery of strengths they did not know they had. The participants reported that the experience of meditation and mindfulness made them aware of strengths, capacities and abilities that they either did not know they had or that they felt were strengthened during the study. The experience of meditation and mindfulness changed Laverne's description of herself from that of being "a natural worrier with little confidence" to one who could control her own sense of peace and calm with confidence in the classroom. This came about during meditation when she discovered that she could refocus her attention on her breath when worrisome thoughts came into her awareness. This capacity to move attention into a space of peace and calm at will was a stark contrast to her past feeling of entrapment in worrisome thoughts. Similarly, she discovered the judgmental thoughts she had of herself to be just that—thoughts—rather than some impossible standard that undermined her self-confidence. Mackensie found that the mindful practice in the classroom gave her "more insight and connection" with her students. This is a new dimension of herself that she now includes in her description of herself as a teacher. Max describes himself as "more thoughtful," "more tolerant," and "gentler" which is not a

description he would have used for himself as a teacher before his participation in the study. Amanda described herself as “amazing” in her capacity to meet adversity in the workplace, attributing this strength of character at least partially to her implementation of contemplative practice. Sid’s description of himself included being a person whose “patience comes just right,” a capacity he discovered in the study.

Three of the teachers described a new strength or ability they had discovered in themselves during the study as the capacity to control or live more peacefully with health problems. Sara found that the ability to focus attention had helped her control her frequent headaches. Leonard found he could control his chronic back pain by focusing attention into the area of pain. Laverne found that as an asthmatic she had always felt an alienation from her breath, but as a result of this study she now sees herself as someone who finds focusing on her breath as a comfort. Sid, Fay, Max, and Leonard described themselves as “more open” to students and to innovations and improvisations in their classroom as a result of their participation in the study. Laverne, Sid, Fay Max and Leonard noted that their descriptions of themselves as teachers would not have included references to being relaxed without a sense of tension at the end of the school day before they participated in this study. These five teachers noted that mindfulness practice in the classroom seemed to be a more energizing than energy draining way of practice.

The answers to question one follow Gunaratana’s (1993) definition of mindfulness practice, “. . . a process of self discovery, a participatory investigation in which you observe your own experiences while participating in them as they occur”, (p. 30). These experiences in mindfulness evoked a new level of well-being and competency, a new consciousness, leading to new perceptions of identity as described by

Miller (1994a) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Overall, the answers to research question one can be summed as expressing some perceived competency and/or sense of well-being.

Answers to Question Four

Mindfulness practice acted to heighten the connections the teacher felt with her/his students: connections to openness, connections to spaces that lacked the usual pressures of classroom dynamics, connections to seeing the dynamics of what was happening as it happened, connections made by students. These levels of connections were often spoken of in terms that suggest joy and pleasure. This did not mean that mindful practice eliminated the need for disciplinary encounters or that suddenly all the complexities of the classroom were transformed so that conflicts or mismatches between student and teacher, student and student, or student and content of the subject area no longer existed. Rather, mindful practice allowed events to be experienced without either affirmation or denial—just for themselves as they are—leaving experience free to move into the next experience without residue or baggage.

Connections of openness. The connections to openness were spoken of in many ways. The experience of mindful practice in the classroom engendered an openness for several teachers to a realization of being part of a greater whole in Sara's words, "the mindfulness reminded me that I'm just part of a much larger whole." Openness was spoken of as the capacity to be present, open to in Mackensie's words, "what is possible...whatever that may be," without in Sid's words, "baggage, without any expectations or memories, just an openness so I'm ready to respond." Openness was implicated in the statements made about particular insights, in Amanda's words, "And it

[openness] made me realize,” insights into the complexities of a particular student’s life. Openness was spoken of as the source of improvisations, in Fay’s words, “impromptu” solutions to classroom dilemmas, or needed on the spot innovations in a lesson presentation. The capacity to listen with more depth was often suggested as directly related to the teacher’s new sense of openness. Openness was spoken of as being in Leonard’s words, “more aware... more tuned in to what they’re needing and what they’re trying to tell me.”

Connections to spaces that lacked the usual pressures of classroom dynamics.

Each teacher spoke in his or her own way of the daily pressures and tensions of ordinary classroom interactions. Descriptions of mindfulness practice in the classroom included many connections to the dissolving of these pressures and tensions as they related to the relationships of teachers and students. Teachers spoke of the release of pressure when they came to their students with a mindful presence instead of in Sid’s words, a “technical” encounter or a focus on giving in Leonard’s words, a “technically perfect” performance in the classroom. When the space of the student/teacher encounter was crafted out of in Sid’s words, “Here you are, here I am, what’s going to happen,” the pressure of expectations and miscalculations was dissolved and teachers found themselves able, in Sid’s words, to “ask the right question so they start talking.” The tensions and pressures of an adversarial work place, a reality for some of the teachers in this study, were mediated by the teachers’ mindfulness practice so that the classroom was a place where the teacher did not take out the “brunt of [her] frustrations” on the students, as in Amanda’s case.

Connections to seeing the dynamics of what was happening as it happened. One effect of mindfulness practice is the increased capacity to see the dynamics of one's interactions while they are happening rather than after the fact. The advantage is that you can intervene on-the-spot rather than after the fact to make desired adjustments. Laverne had the experience during meditation of having her attention distracted from her breath to worrisome thoughts about the noise she heard her husband making in the next room. As she followed these worrisome thoughts, becoming more and more agitated, she remembered the meditation guidelines' advice to simply bring attention back to the breath when this happens. The simple act of refocusing her attention in this way was revelatory for her. This was the point at which she realized she could see the dynamics of her interactions as they were happening and then intervene to make desired adjustments. This knowledge was transferred into the classroom. Her practice of mindfulness there enabled her to see the dynamics of various situations, as in when she was teaching a phonics lesson and an outside interruption ignited a rush of anger. She watched this anger and connected what was happening to her there with her meditation experience. She refocused her attention on her breath and was able in just a few seconds to calmly and peacefully with clarity of mind return to the phonics lesson with her students.

In the midst of a conversation with a student, Sid caught himself responding with indifference. He stopped himself and looked directly at the student and realized the significant disrespect his indifference implied. This on-the-spot, clear perception of the dynamics of what was happening as it was happening gave him the option to change his response to the student right then and there. Similarly, Max caught himself in a tangle of emotions as he witnessed an altercation between a young man and a young woman which

involved the young man physically shoving the young woman. Max saw his emotions arise and could see the developing result, “I knew I was going to jump the young man... [with an] in your face kind of thing.” His mindful attention to what was happening both internally within himself and externally in his classroom gave him a panoramic view of the dynamics of the environment. He could not only see his own strong, visceral reaction but also the direction of action it was developing and make adjustments in-the-moment to change that direction. Max describes this process, “Before I jumped in, I did take a moment... I did go through the breathing and just tried to, you know, take myself out of the situation for a moment.” He then calmly spoke with both the young people at length and wrote the referral. He noted that “they went and SPOKE to the principal, then, instead of yelling off at the principal” and were able to get an in-school suspension instead of a three-day off-campus suspension, allowing them to keep up with their class assignments. This panoramic view of the environment was instrumental in developing a new depth of connection to the student and was spoken of by many of the teachers as a noticeable result of their mindfulness practice in the classroom.

Sid spoke of this depth as what “really connects the student to you, to the situation” or in Leonard’s words, “like a mutual affection.” This level of connection was noted in another way by Leonard in his discussion of his student H’s new habit of taking off his hooded-sweatshirt as he entered the classroom and giving it to Leonard. Hooded sweatshirts were against the school dress code. Leonard saw this gesture as a new depth of connection, as a closeness he had not experienced with his students before. Fay described it as “not just making eye contact, but that eye contact actually like something connecting... like a path between you and them,” or in Jane’s words, “it was just like

there was a path, like the bright light and it's just you and me and nobody else." Leonard spoke of witnessing the effects of his "wired" style of classroom presentation as he looked out over the classroom in mindfulness practice. He discovered his style to be a barrier. He learned to "back away, to tone things down, and let other things happen" and found that those same students now began initiating their own connections with the course content which was also reported by Max and Sid. Recognizing judgmental and prejudicial attitudes toward a student for what they are as they are happening, allowed Sara to let go of a quick, prejudicial "visceral reaction" and mindfully interact with a child establishing a relationship that was rewarding for both of them.

Connections made by students. Connections made by students came in two ways. A surprising finding was in the co-opting of the technique of using the breath to refocus attention by both very young students and older students. The second way students were effected by their teachers' contemplative practice in the classroom was in the reported academic connections that resulted.

Two teachers reported instances in which the students' observation of their teacher's use of the breath as a tool for re-centering themselves was co-opted by the students for their own use. In Max's high school classroom, two students who had been labeled ADD and ADHD asked their teacher to teach them the breath technique. These two students then began using this technique not only in his class but also in other classes to re-focus their attention to the task at hand. In Laverne's transitional first grade classroom, the students began reminding each other when they were off-task to re-focus their attention using the breath. They had seen their teacher use the breath to re-focus and she had shown them how to do it themselves.

Teachers reported students who had not shown an interest in the subject matter initiating connections with that subject matter during the study. Max said, “They’re making more of a connection with their instrument and with their experience of that instrument. They’re asking for methods books and want to learn performance techniques.” He noted an increase in the number of students who took their instruments home to practice. He felt that the new relationships he had with his students as a result of mindfulness practice precipitated these changes. Leonard noted that the marginal students, students who had not been successful in his class in the past, “really started working” for him. He suggested this was a result of the relationships he had been able to establish with them as he became more aware of their needs in mindfulness practice in the classroom and they began to change long-held habits that limited their academic achievement. For example, Leonard had one student who refused to take notes in class because this activity was outside his “macho” persona. During the study Leonard stopped making this an issue. Although the student continued to enact this persona in class, he began to scramble after class, after the others were gone to copy the notes from the board before he left.

The teachers’ reports of their relationships with their students in this study follow the literature on the experience of non-duality, the sense of separateness replaced with a sense of connectedness and harmony with others and the capacity to respond to experience rather than react (Epstein, 1998; Kessler, S., 1991; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Miller, 1994a). Their narratives describe increased capacities for innovations and improvisations in their classroom practices that surprised them in their enhanced abilities to meet individual needs. They report relationships with their

students that were reciprocated with greater interest on the part of the students in the subject at hand and with self-regulated behaviors that overall kept the class on an even keel. The teachers' fears that they would "lose control" (Leonard) of their classes by being more "humane," (Max) proved to be unfounded.

Research Question Three

Research question three was:

How do teachers describe their subjective experience of time and place in the classroom as they bring contemplative practice to their classroom practice?

The Intersections and Invitation of Question Three

The practice of mindfulness is central to Miller's (1994a) Model of contemplative practice in education and the professions. He posits that mindfulness in its immersion in an activity loosens the tight reins of time and place toward a complete loss of a sense of linear time or a fixed place. A common example is the loss of sense of time and place as a subjective linear experience when one is caught up in a compelling story. It is as if the moments are time/less and the place is space/less; as if all time and all space were in this one moment. Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1996) argues for this spaciousness of time and space in the experience of flow. Question three was constructed at the intersection of Miller and Csikszentmihalyi with its focus on the subjective experience of time and place during mindfulness. Exit Interview Question three invited the teachers to recall their subjective experience of time as a part of their narrative description of the experience of contemplative practice in the classroom:

How would you describe your experience of time in your classroom experiences of mindfulness during the study?

Answers to Question Three

The experience of time in mindfulness for these teachers is best described as spacious without excess or as a slowing down of events so that what is needed arises and fulfills each need as if in slow motion. Both the spacious experience and the slowing down experience were described as outside the usual experience of linear time. Linear time lost its relevance in moments of mindfulness.

Spacious without excess. Descriptions of time as spacious without excess came in phrases: “What needs to be done and the time seem to come out even... things aren’t hurried or they aren’t slow, they just seem right,” (Sid); “It’s exactly what you need,” (Laverne); “It was just an easy thing,” (Luanne); or “It’s a more nebulous space,” (Mackensie). Fay suggested that “what gets done seems just right... time has flown by.”

Slowing down motion. This description of the experience of time during mindfulness practice was spoken of by Sara as an analogy of the experience of race car driver. The idea is that if you are driving a race car at 180 miles per hour and then slow it down to 90 miles an hour, you have the sensation that everything is moving in slow motion. This is the sensation experienced in mindfulness practice. Another description of the slowing down of time in mindfulness practice was expressed by Phyllis as, “things get spread apart... put things further apart so that you can address each one of the things that come up.” Laverne had the sensation that, “It just slows way down and everything takes care of itself. Then everything just fits.”

Descriptions of Experience in Two Modes

The teachers who kept or exceeded the five day a week, thirty minute meditation schedule, overall, devoted more of their interview dialogue to descriptions of actual classroom encounters that were mindful, while the teachers whose meditation practice had not met the minimum five day a week, thirty minutes at a time spent more of their interview dialogue in descriptions of the value of mindfulness rather than explications of actual experiences. Various members of the latter group lamented the fact that they often forgot to practice mindfulness in the classroom. For example, Phyllis commented that her journal had few entries because she “just couldn’t remember to do mindfulness.” Each participant had a least one mindful experience in the classroom that stood out to them at the time of the exit interview. But, the members of the former group were more apt to speak of these experiences in the plural while the members of the latter group were more apt to speak of a singular experience. Moreover, members of the first group were more apt to speak of mindful experiences in the classroom by giving lengthy examples from personal experience that typically began, “It’s like this...,” while members of the second group were more apt to launch into lengthy academic discussions that typically began, “Mindfulness does [this], mindfulness does [that].” Specifically, members of the first group were eager to share personal experiences of mindfulness in the classroom, while members of the second group, most often spoke of mindfulness as if they had read about it in a book.

Overall, the findings in this study follow the literature on meditation as a support for mindfulness practice in everyday life. Meditation practice develops the capacity to focus attention mindfully and to notice when this quality of attention wanders from the

sensations of the present moment to thoughts about those sensations. The thinking mind is usually in control of attention, and it is the thinking mind that creates thoughts about what is happening. With meditation practice, awareness is trained to notice when the thinking mind is in control, to interrupt this activity and to move attention to the observing mind, the mind that witnesses the sensations given moment to moment without reacting to what is experienced. Further research might be designed that would focus on the relationship between a minimum meditation practice of thirty minutes a day, five days a week and the reported instances of mindfulness compared with the number of reported instances of mindfulness by those not keeping the regular schedule. Such research might follow the models that use pagers to randomly sample participants' engagement in the activity of focus during the study.

Difficulty of Contemplative Practitioner Model

Setting aside the time to meditate was reported by all the participants to be difficult. They cited the responsibilities of work, home, and family schedules as obstacles to a regular meditation regime. For two of the participants, additional reasons were for one, a tendency for narcolepsy, and for the other, a preference for movement. All the participants reported self-criticism as another deterrent to meditation. Those who reported the most difficulty with remembering to be mindful in the classroom were also those who did not keep the thirty minute five day a week meditation schedule.

Summary

This chapter provides analyses of the findings in this study. These analyses were presented as they related to research questions one, three and four as they were stated in Chapter I of the study. The first research question was: “How would do teachers perceive themselves after the experience of attempting to establish a contemplative practice in the classroom?” The teachers’ answers overall expressed in variety of ways a sense of well-being and competency as a result of their contemplative practice in the classroom and followed the existing literature on non-dualistic experiences. Research question three was: “How do teachers describe their subjective experience of time and place in the classroom as they bring contemplative practice to their classroom practice?” Time and place were experienced outside the usual linear experience, time and place as definitions became irrelevant as suggested by the literature on flow and mindfulness practice. Research question four was: “What are teachers’ perceptions of the effects of contemplative practice on their relationships with their students?” Teachers reported experiencing relationships with their students on a new level of connection, no matter what the level of connection had been in the past experience of teacher and student. These relationships put into motion new connections 1) by the teachers to innovations in meeting individual student needs and 2) by the students in enhanced connections to the subject matter at hand. Noted differences between the reports given by those who kept the thirty minutes, five day a week meditation regime and those who did not keep the regime were given. This chapter ended with a summary of the difficulty of implementing the contemplative practitioner model as reported by the participants.

CHAPTER VI

CONNECTIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

This study explored teachers' perceptions of personal identity, classroom practice, the quality of teachers' subjective experiences of time and place, and relationships with students as these are affected by the holistic model of classroom practice described by Miller's (1994a) model of contemplative classroom practice in order to provide rich text descriptions of the experience in teachers' own words. Miller's (1994a) concept of the contemplative practitioner is holistic in that it embraces the complexities and ambiguities that arise as teachers and students interact. These interactions are not neutral spaces but spaces crowded with the fantasies, needs, and desires of both the teacher and the student. And the messy mismatches between the best efforts of both to accommodate one another (Ellsworth, 1997). Through its cultivation of mindfulness, Miller's (1994a) model of contemplative classroom practice adds another dimension to the spaces of student and teacher interactions. This dimension is the "quality of Being or Presence" that the teacher brings to the classroom (Miller, 1994a, p. 21). The contemplative practitioner cultivates a depth of character or Being that infuses classroom practice with something more than disciplined technical proficiencies that understand teaching as a set of behaviors or roles (Aoki, 1992; Miller, 1994a). Although these proficiencies are seductive as "suggestions of simplistic and pragmatic usefulness [which are] uncannily correct," (Aoki, 1992, p. 27) the contemplative practitioner model seeks to step beyond

this understanding of teaching to bring into the dynamics of the classroom who the teacher “is.” Mindful practice understands proficiency as necessary but only a part of the essence of teaching. Teaching is more than the “doing” proficiency suggests. Miller’s (1994a) contemplative practitioner model takes classroom practice beyond proficiency to “Thoughtfulness as an embodied doing and being—thought and soul embodied in the oneness of the lived moment” (Aoki, 1992, p. 26). This something more includes the teacher’s capacity to be present in the classroom with a widened attention that views complexities and ambiguities as they arise but without the distortions of habituated responses formed out of past experiences, needs, desires, and fantasies. Dualistic perceptions are replaced with a sense of relatedness and openness and even ordinary experiences become satisfying in and of themselves.

In this study, the interview transcripts and journal entries of the teachers as data sources were a good fit for achieving the purpose of the study which was to create rich text narratives in teachers’ own words of their experiences as contemplative practitioners in the classroom. The construction of these narratives was complicated by the often ineffable nature of mindfulness practice in the classroom making these experiences hard to put into words. The teachers worked patiently and earnestly with the researcher to articulate their experiences fully and plainly. The collaborative efforts of the participants and the researcher were a hermeneutic endeavor “in which within everything said there is something unsaid,” (Smith, 1991, p. 194). The journey was the destination. It was an additional pleasure when the teachers each confirmed the final version of their narrative with a note of affirmation for the project. For example, Laverne wrote, “Everything was as intended. I do thank you.” I have felt the weight of responsibility in the analyses and

conclusions to do justice to their efforts. As such, these chapters are just a beginning. The richness of the experiences shared by the participants is beyond the capacity of this dissertation to fully explore—a life-time of research endeavors is anticipated.

Briefly, the findings indicate that an increased sense of well-being and competency was experienced by the participants as a result of their efforts to establish a contemplative classroom practice. The participants experienced time and space outside the usual linear temporal and spatial understandings of time and space. Their relationships with their students overall was enhanced and expressed as new levels of connections no matter what the level of connection had been in the past. The participants reported enhanced capacities to meet individual student needs and that students appeared to make connections with the content of the discipline more autonomously than before. In some cases, students appropriated the technique of using the breath to refocus attention on the task at hand for their own purposes relating to taking responsibility for keeping themselves on task. All participants reported difficulty in establishing a regime for meditation practice. There were differences in the number of mindfulness experiences reported by the participants—those who established the suggested meditation regime reported more mindfulness experiences than did those who did not.

This chapter presents the conclusions from the data as presented in Chapters IV and V. Each section will include implications inferred from the data and the suggestions for practice and further research. A short section containing final remarks will end this chapter.

Conclusions, Implications, Suggestions

Working Definitions of Mindfulness Practice

The narratives contain a variety of working definitions of mindfulness practice in the classroom. The following examples demonstrate this variety:

Opening up the space of my mind, so I'm there with the student, or with many students, but without baggage, without any expectations or memories, just an openness so I'm ready to respond (Sid)

Going into this, relaxed state, bringing yourself back to that state, you know, when you do feel anxiety or the pressures of your class. It means not only focusing on yourself, but still being aware of what is going on. It's being able to sit in the middle of it and still be your entity and still be a part of the overall. (Max)

It seems like it's perfect. It's exactly what you need and you're taking each step... you can just go right on to the next one because this one's been taken care of and you're comfortable with it. You don't have to look around, you don't have to be worried about anything else, you just take care of each thing as it happens and that's enough. It just makes everything fit. It just slows way down and everything takes care of itself. (Fay)

When I'm being mindful, I trust that the best thing, that positive things are going to come of it. We're both going to be there and we're going to contribute and something bigger than both of us might come about. It's like just letting what is possible happen, whatever that is. (Mackensie)

Being conscious that you're having a nice conversation or you know other kinds of moments like that, that we take for granted. (Sara)

Like being on vacation, a free feeling, like I'm kind of floating, a wonderful sensation. A real relaxation, right there in class with all the kids and everything going on. I was still there, but it was like I wasn't actually in the body, because my body felt so light, not heavy and tight. And I was so aware of everything I was doing, and they were doing, but all of it was easy not hard and tight. (Fay)

It's like sunshine. It's like a bright light... It was just like there was a path, like a bright light and it's just you and me and nobody else. It was like there was a box, just like the quiet time and you're hearing only them, or like you know, how the music is on those pastoral things where the water trickles, it's like that. (Jane)

The narratives show the implementation of contemplative practice as a creative act which uniquely fits the needs of the individual. They show the flexibility of contemplative practice. With minimal instruction, the practitioners worked out their own modifications to fit what they could do, to fit the particular nature of their classrooms. Their understanding of mindfulness practice was a synthesis of their meditation practice and their particular life experiences. The creative nature of meditation and mindfulness works in cooperation with each person's particular orientation in life to fit the refinement of awareness at a pace suited to the individual.

Further research might design itself to explore this model in the context of teachers sitting for the thirty minute meditation as a group before the beginning of the school day for the duration of the study and compare the effects with individuals who modify the practice to suit themselves over the same period of time.

Co-opted Practices

The use of the breath to refocus attention on the present was co-opted by the students of two teachers. Laverne's transitional first graders as well as Max's high school band students spontaneously used the breath as a way to refocus their attention back to the task at hand. In addition, two students in Max's class who had been diagnosed as ADD and ADHD spontaneously asked Max for details about using the breath and then began using the technique in their other classes as well as his.

This technique worked for both younger and older students and for both students who have and have not been diagnosed as ADD or ADHD. All groups found the technique helpful and seemed to have little difficulty implementing it on their own. Using the breath as a signal to the body and mind to bring attention back to the task at

hand could be taught to students at all levels. The current reforms in education have encouraged the inclusion of students with disabilities as much as possible in the regular classroom. Further research might be designed to explore the effects of introducing all students in a classroom to the use of the breath to control attention as this affects student to student relationships, student and teacher relationships, and/or individual student's perceptions of the practice as it affects all areas of their lives.

Seeing Differently and the Effects

The narratives give examples of the way contemplative practice changed the way the teachers looked at their students and at themselves. The teachers spoke of a heightened awareness of the way expectations and judgements about themselves and others was automatic and habitual. This awareness also included the sense that these expectations and judgments were like the thoughts that passed through awareness during meditation. The teachers began to regard the expectations and judgments about themselves and students in the same way they were learning to regard arising thoughts during meditation—simply phenomena that arise and pass away, nothing to be attached too. As they mindfully carried out the ordinary activities of classroom practice, they let go of judgments and expectations about themselves and their students as they noticed them arise.

The narratives document various effects as a result of the teachers regarding expectations and judgements in this way. Marginal students responded with increased interest and engagement in the subjects of their studies and spontaneously made extra efforts to increase their skills. The teachers reported a new sense of their presence in the classroom as a dynamic that opened their understanding of what was happening as it

happened. This experience was described in ways that parallel Minogue's (1997) description of mindfulness in the midst of activity as "attention rested in seeing, hearing smelling, tasting, feeling, and understanding what was going on in the immediate moment... enter[ing] a present tense that was both dynamic and timeless," (p.58). The teachers reported that their students responded to this presence spontaneously keeping themselves on task and noted that students seemed to ask more content related questions. Contrary to the fears of their teachers, the students did not respond to the teachers' efforts to be mindful rather than dictatorial with chaos. Rather, the students reciprocated with behavior that was respectful and controlled.

Discipline and classroom management are the subject of much of teacher education literature. The spontaneous self-regulation of behavior by their students reported by the teachers in this study suggest the need for re-thinking discipline and classroom management. Specifically, these narratives point to the need for questioning the understanding of disciplined students as those who are subservient to adult authority and supports Kohn's (1996) idea of discipline as a relationship of community rather than something that is done to the student. Might disciplined students be those whose responses to the environment emerge from the mutual respect between adult and student of the universal need of relatedness in each as suggested by Deci (1995)?

Other effects reported had to do with the teachers themselves. They reported feeling more relaxed and peaceful at the end of each school day. They reported more satisfaction with what happened in each class period and the sense that what had transpired was somehow exactly right. They reported the experience of being able to craft innovations in the midst of lessons as they sensed that what they had planned did not

fit the present need. They stated that mindfulness practice encouraged a sense of forgetting themselves and they felt spontaneous joy and connection in ordinary interactions with their students.

The participants reported experiencing relationships with others more often without attachment to expectations and judgments as a result of mindfulness practice in the classroom. In this practice, the teachers reported just being present with their students without any other goal. The experiences of the teachers and students in this study imply that this practice has potential for healing rather than alienating relationships in the ordinary classroom crowded with multiplicities of diverse needs, fantasies, and desires of its occupants. This practice opened relationships to the conditions for learning which had been blocked before. This points to the power of just being present with another person, just seeing her or him without judgment, without expectation, without trying to accomplish anything. This is in contrast to the often held assumption that teachers must have high expectations, goals, and clear objectives when they interact with students (Pressley & McCormick, 1995). The effects shown in this study of coming to human relationships initially free of expectations, just seeing the other person without judgment are strikingly similar to those recommended by Shainberg (1983) for health professionals and their clients.

Shainberg (1983), as a supervisor for psychologists and social workers in training, points to the clinical trainees' tendencies to begin their work with a client with expectations that they either do or should have the knowledge to "fix" the client's problems. They come to the relationship understanding their role as enacting "some form of *doing* [a] technique...on the patient who then will be *helped* (p. 163) (italics in

original). The trainees often feel a barrier between themselves and the patient that blocks any healing relationship between them. Shainberg's solution is to encourage the trainees to change the way they see and hear the client. To bring them to this point, she works to establish an understanding that:

[T]rue knowing is being able to observe and describe what is going on in the present in an accurate, concrete, and complete detail. This is different from wanting to change or get ride of or compare or assume a fixed meaning about what is happening. (p. 164)

Once the trainee's are able to be with their patients without any expectations or goals or objectives, they discover the mutuality of their common humanness and find the patient then ready to learn something new about their situation.

Shainberg's approach parallels Aoki's (1992) watchfulness and thoughtfulness, as well as, S. Kessler's and Miller's concepts of presence in mindfulness practice. The trainees and patients in Shainberg's essay like the teachers and students in this study experienced presence as a way for "human relationships to create a new sense of inner strength" (Shainberg, 1983, p. 164) on both sides of the relationship. This points to the need in teacher education programs for teachers who understand presence and can follow Shainberg's example for mentoring teachers in training into their own understanding of presence.

Do mentor/exemplary teachers already bring a mindful presence to the classroom? Further research might be designed to explore mentor teachers' experiences as they implement Miller's (1994a) contemplative practitioner model. Further research might be designed to compare the classroom practices of contemplative practitioners and non-

contemplatives through observations in addition to interviews and journal entries.

Another possibility might be to explore students' perceptions of their experiences in the classrooms of contemplative practitioners. One more possibility might be research designed to explore student self-regulated behavior in the classrooms of contemplative practitioners compared with self-regulated behavior in the classrooms of non-contemplatives. A final possibility might be research designed to explore the effects of contemplative practice by students on self-regulated behaviors.

Difficulty of Contemplative Practitioner Model

All of the participants reported difficulty in setting aside a time at least five days a week for the vipassana meditation practice. They cited the busy schedules of family and work responsibilities as two reasons for this difficulty. Two other reasons were unique to the individuals who stated them—tendency toward narcolepsy and a preference for movement. Another difficulty noted was the problem of letting go of criticism of oneself. The tendency to judge one's actions or performance is normal but debilitating for the novice contemplative practitioner. Another difficulty reported was related to remembering to be mindful in classroom interactions. Only six of the twelve participants were able to meet the thirty minute, five day a week meditation schedule during the study. Those five were also the participants in the study who reported remembering to be mindful in the classroom more often than the seven who did not establish the required meditation schedule. It is not clear in this study just why some participants persisted until they had established the required schedule of meditation

The practice of vipassana as a sitting meditation may not be possible for some people. The necessity of setting aside at least thirty minutes five days a week each week

for this practice was not possible for all of the participants. One participant persisted and met the requirement but was much more satisfied with a meditative practice that involves movement, Hatha yoga practice, a practice which she established after the study.

Further research might explore the other formal contemplative practices which cultivate mindfulness as suggested by Miller (1994a). For example, a project might be designed in which the participants chose a universal myth as an object of contemplation outside the classroom in conjunction with implementing mindfulness in the classroom. Another design might have the participants engage in Ruth Zaporah's (1995) twenty day workshop, "Action Theater: The Improvisation of Presence" in conjunction with implementing mindfulness in the classroom. Zaporah's (1995) awareness and performance training is situated in the theater but is a model for life in general—"Who we are, how we perceive our world, and how we respond to those perceptions are the same regardless of surroundings," (p. xxi). The essence of the training is the development of an attention that is free of habitual ways of seeing and reacting to what we see. Attention is trained to become more conscious of our moment to moment internal desires, needs, and fantasies as well as simultaneous awareness of the details of the external world. Zaproah describes her model as a "way to proceed" (p. xxi), meaning a model that lets go of those desires, needs and fantasies to open a clear space for an unobstructed back and forth response movements with life activities .

As has been suggested, the "to and fro" movement between the contemplative practitioner and the elements of experience, parallel Gadamer's reflections on play. As in play, so it is in contemplative practice too, that "those purposive relations which determine active and caring existence have not simply disappeared, but in a curious way

acquire a different quality” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 91). This different quality or mode of being in the motion of play “becomes an experience changing the person experiencing it” (p. 91). Curiously, this same difference in quality describes Kristeva’s (1987) conception of psychoanalysis as a play of language through free association that “may well effect that ludic metamorphosis that leads us, at the termination of treatment, to regard language as body and body as language” (p. 34). In contemplative practice, Gadamer’s play, and Kristeva’s interpretation of psychoanalysis, the habitual adaptations of memories, fantasies, and social conventions are transcended in favor of a psychophysical integration and orientation of body and mind toward the possibilities of the elements of experience—an accessing of the unconscious’ activity of creation and transformation. Further research might design inquiries that investigate the conditions in educational settings that encourage or discourage teachers’ capacities to access the unconscious as a quality of presence or that look at other modes of accessing the unconscious such as Ruth Zaporah’s (1995) work with the improvisation of presence or Miller’s (1994a) metaphorical identification with a universal myth as a contemplative practice. Another possibility is research that might be designed as inquiries guided by questions such as: What are the conditions in teacher education programs that encourage or discourage the development of mindful presence as a quality of a teacher’s classroom practice? What is the relationship between a particular practice of mindful presence and individual distinctions of culture, race, ethnicity, personality, gender, or other variables? How might the integration of Eastern and Western philosophies further inform teaching, educational research, and practice?

Final Remarks

My interest in presence as a quality of classroom practice was piqued by the extraordinary classroom presence of Dr. Judith K. Lepuschitz. Then, the impact of meditation and mindfulness as a practice in my own first grade classroom inspired this study. I am, now, deeply moved by the narratives of the teachers in this study. Their experiences and my journey with them has enriched my understanding of the “isness,” the presence of the teacher and leaves a trace on my own work as a teacher educator, as a researcher in teacher education. The light they have cast on presence further stimulates my thinking toward the possibilities of keeping teacher education efforts centered in “the light of the human face” (Levinas, 1987, p.2).

Here, I am thinking of presence as the life project of caring for the other, the practice of “concern for others” (Hwu, 1998, p. 32). And this project cannot be disentangled from the project of caring for self. I am thinking of presence which is not achieved by a calculated attempt to practice concern for others or concern for self. I am thinking of presence out of the wisdom of *wu-wei*—the attempt to move with events as they arise, keenly observing and letting action then be the complement to what is observed, embodied experience. Presence that both emanates “from the inside out, one moment nourishing the next, uncoiling itself” (Zaporah, 1997, p. 132) and from the outside in, dissolving boundaries just enough to make communion possible.

I have learned that presence and contemplative practice have very practical implications for and applications to classroom practice. It is a not so strange idea, a hedge against the danger of thinking others in our own image and only being what we see ourselves to be.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A—Letter

Letter of Solicitation and Sample Postcard

Dear _____,

When athletes are in the “zone,” they perform at their maximum and experience an afterglow of satisfaction and well-being. Athletes and others accomplish the zone experience by learning to narrowly focus their attention. Is there a “zone” for teachers in their classroom practice?

My name is Sharon Solloway. I am a doctoral candidate at Oklahoma State University. My research interest is in the exploration of a model of personal support for classroom practice and its potential for maximizing an individual teacher’s strengths and minimizing her/his limitations. This model involves practicing keeping one’s attention narrowly focused on what is actually happening in the moment. This practice is accomplished in two ways: 1) Outside the classroom: Learning to keep your attention focused on the in and out of your breath for a number of minutes (meditation), and 2.) In the classroom: Practicing mindfulness, which is the focus of attention on what is actually happening each moment. The study is to be conducted for eight weeks during the Fall 1998 semester.

The validity of the study lies in having teachers test the model in actual classroom practice. We will not know its potential without the feedback of teachers like yourself who test it in their classrooms. Your feedback about the model will be confidential.

Please indicate your interest in participating in the study on the enclosed postcard. You may also contact me:

Telephone: 405-749-8154

E-Mail: gsolloway@home.com

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Sharon Solloway

Sharon,

_____ Yes, I am interested in participating in this study.

_____ No, I cannot participate.

_____ I would like more information.

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Appendix B—Consent Form

Consent Form

I, _____, hereby authorize or direct Sharon Solloway, or associates or assistants of her choosing, to perform the following treatment or procedure:

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director.

I understand that this study requires my participation for 8 weeks, my practice of up to 30 minutes of meditation 5 days a week during the 8 weeks, practicing mindfulness in the classroom during the 8 weeks, keeping a journal record of the experience of practicing mindfulness in the classroom during the 8 weeks, and participating with the principal researcher in a taped interview at the end of the 8 week study. Journal entries will be collected by the researcher at the end of the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth weeks of the study

I understand that complete confidentiality of journal and interview responses will be respected. All journal and interview responses will be coded with a fake name. All journal and interview responses will be kept in locked files during analysis. After analysis, the list of codes will be destroyed.

The merit of this study for research lies in its innovative use of a holistic research methodology in concert with the exploration of a holistic model for classroom practice. Knowledge gained from this study will provide rich text descriptions of this model in classroom practices of elementary, middle, and high school teachers.

I understand this is done as part of an investigation entitled: Contemplative Classroom Practice

I understand that the purpose of the procedure (or treatment) is to explore teachers' perceptions of personal identity, classroom practice, the quality of teachers' subjective experiences of time and place, and relationships with students as these are affected by a holistic classroom practice that involves meditation outside the classroom and mindfulness in the classroom.

II may contact _____ at telephone number _____. I may also contact Gay Clarkson, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; telephone number: (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____ Time: _____ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed: _____
Signature of Subject

Person authorized to sign for subject, if required

Witness(es) if required: _____

II certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it."

Signed: _____
Project Director or his/her authorized representative

Appendix C—Meditation

Meditation Guidelines

In this sitting meditation, you will practice keeping your attention focused on the in and out of your breath. This meditation is known as insight or vipassana meditation. It has its roots in Eastern philosophies. Follow these guidelines:

- 1) Choose a straight backed chair in which, when you sit slightly forward on the seat, your feet are comfortably flat on the floor. Place it in a room where you will not be disturbed.
- 2) If possible sit away from the back of the chair so your head, neck, and back are aligned vertically. Sit with the chin slightly tucked in. It may be helpful to imagine a rod threaded down the back of your head, your spine, and ending at the tailbone. And then, to imagine a string attached to the top of the rod being pulled upward, aligning your head, neck, and spine vertically, tucking your chin in slightly. Your spine is self-supporting. You may rest your hands on your knees in a comfortable position.

The posture of the aligned head, neck, and spine is very important. The important thing to remember about your posture in meditation is to try to keep the back, neck, and head aligned as if they were all connected by one vertical line. Keep the shoulders relaxed, and place your hands in a comfortable position on your knees.

- 4.) Next, you bring your attention to your breath. Sitting with your eyes closed, you observe the in and out of your breath either feeling it at the tips of your nostrils or in the rising and falling of your belly (letting your belly drop into a completely relaxed position).
- 5.) After you have anchored your attention in the in and out of the breath, you may move part of your attention to any bodily sensations that arise or just keep all your attention focused on experiencing the feeling of your breath. Your breathing should quiet down to an inaudible movement of air on each in and out breath.
- 6.) Usually very quickly you will discover that your mind has many distractions for your attention. You will find your attention focused on some thought or picture that the mind has presented to you. When this happens, simply make a mental note, “wandering” and move your attention back to the breath and bodily sensations. Do this as often as necessary to keep your attention focused on your breath and bodily sensations.
- 7.) As you begin this practice, you may notice body sensations that prompt you to move. As much as possible, sit perfectly still. As you notice the desire to move arise, watch the sensation associated with it. It will arise and then fall away. Like an ocean wave that peaks and then falls away. And then arises again to fall away in the same way. Just notice this pattern.
- 8.) Be very gentle with yourself. Come back to the breath and bodily sensations without judging yourself for having wandered. Accept whatever happens as you sit in this way without judging it positively or negatively.
- 9.) Sit, observing your breath in this way for 10 minutes the first day, then add 5 minutes each day until you are able to sit in meditation for 30 minutes each time you sit.
- 10.) During the 8 weeks of the study, sit in meditation for 5 days of each week for at least 30 minutes each time if possible.

Appendix D—Mindfulness

Mindfulness in the Classroom Guidelines

In the sitting meditation, you practice keeping your attention focused on the in and out of your breath. You also move your attention to the physical experiences of your body as you are sitting. In this way you are keeping your attention focused on what is actually happening in the moment, in contrast to having your attention focused on passing thoughts of past or future events. Whenever your attention wanders from the breath or the bodily sensations, you gently pull that attention back without judgment. It is not necessary to scold yourself for wandering. IT IS IMPORTANT to just gently bring your attention back to the breath and bodily sensations. Whatever thoughts come up, let them pass without judgment. Just view them and let them go.

In everyday life this practice of focusing attention on what is actually happening in the moment is called mindfulness. Practicing mindfulness in everyday life activities like the classroom can be summed up in three basic steps:

- 1.) Anchor your attention in your breath, note whatever bodily sensations are present.
- 2.) Let some of your attention move to what is happening externally. Experience what is actually happening without judgment.
- 3.) When you notice your attention has wandered from what is actually happening in the moment, gently bring your attention back to the breath and again anchor your attention in the breath, noting bodily sensations. Now, you are ready to again move some of your attention out to what is happening externally. Experiencing what is happening simply as it is without judgment. Gently repeat this step as often as necessary to keep your attention anchored in the present.

In the classroom, the pace of activities often makes it difficult to be fully present with this kind of focused awareness. We feel pulled to fragment our attention among competing options involving judgments of one kind or another. When this happens we gently pull our attention back to what is actually happening in the moment. We do this by feeling the in and out of our own breath and whatever other bodily sensations may be present. After anchoring our attention in this way, we move part of our attention to what is happening externally. We let our attention rest on the person or activity without judgment. Whatever is happening becomes the focus of our attention. This is in contrast to having our attention focused on making a judgment about whatever is happening. If a student makes a comment, we experience it as it is, simply words spoken. We note our own body sensations, and respond to the words spoken without judgment, out of our own wisdom untainted by judgements and preconceived notions either negative or positive.

Appendix E—Journal Entries and Exit Interviews

Journal and Interview Guidelines

During the eight week study, you will be asked to keep a journal of your experiences of mindfulness practice in the classroom. You may make these entries as brief or as lengthy as you wish. All that is required is that you keep a record of your experience of mindfulness in the classroom.

Your journal entries will be collected by the researcher at the end of the second, fourth, sixth and eighth week of the study.

You will be asked to participate in a taped interview with the researcher at the end of the eight week study.

Appendix F—Exit Interview Questions

Interview Questions

- 1.) How would you describe yourself as a teacher to yourself? If you were to tell yourself who you are as a teacher, what would you say? Is this description different than one you would have given before this study? Why or why not?
- 2.) Tell me about your experiences in the classroom during this past eight weeks.
- 3.) How would you describe your experience of time and place in your classroom experiences during the study?
- 4.) How would you describe your relationships with your students during this study? Is this different from your experiences of relationships with students in the past? What led to the changes?

Summary Thoughts:

What haven't you said about this experience that you want to say?

Appendix G—IRB Form

IRB

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 08-24-98

IRB #: ED-99-014

Proposal Title: THE CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTITIONER: MEDITATION AS A PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR MINDFULNESS AS A CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Principal Investigator(s): Diane Montgomery, Sharon G. Solloway

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature

Thomas C. Collins

Interim Chair of Institutional Review Board
and Vice President for Research

cc: Sharon G. Solloway

Date: August 24, 1998

VITA

Sharon G. Solloway

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: TEACHERS AS CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTITIONERS: PRESENCE,
MEDITATION, AND MINDFULNESS AS A CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Woodward Senior High School, Woodward, Oklahoma in May, 1965; received Bachelor of Science degree in Education from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma in June, 1969. Completed the requirements for the Master of Early Childhood Education degree at the University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond Oklahoma in August, 1995. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in Educational Psychology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, July, 1999.

Experience: Fourteen years as an elementary school teacher.

Professional Memberships: American Educational Research Association