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AN INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH
EMBODIED MINDFULNESS

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Ph.D. Educational Studies
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AN INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH
EMBODIED MINDFULNESS

A DISSERTATION

Submitted by

Kristen Picard

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education

LESLEY UNIVERSITY

Terrence Keeney, Ph. D. (Chair)

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Abstract

The intention of this study was to increase understanding of how Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) teachers cultivate embodied mindfulness. Recent publications reveal that embodied mindfulness is an essential competency for teaching mindfulness-based interventions. However, there is a gap in the literature related to how MBSR teachers learn or develop this competency. A qualitative phenomenological study influenced by a constructivist paradigm was designed to uncover the essence of MBSR teachers' experiences of learning and developing embodied mindfulness. The participants were 10 MBSR teachers, defined as adults who received the designation of Qualified or Certified MBSR Teachers from the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data to address the overarching research question: What learning and developmental experiences, patterns, or processes associated with the embodiment of mindfulness do MBSR teachers report? Each interview was conducted in three segments. The first segment included open-ended questions about participants' experiences. The second segment included direct questions about experiences associated with the operationally defined qualities of mindfulness. In the third segment, participants shared—through creative expression—a significant turning point associated with the cultivation of embodied mindfulness. This segment was designed to allow participants to access internal and perhaps subconscious experiences in a way that did not require language. Interviews ranged from one to two hours in duration. The methodological framework used for analysis and interpretation of data was based in Interpretative Phenomenological

Analysis. Eight themes of learning and development were identified as contributors to the cultivation of embodied mindfulness: informational learning, experiential learning, learning through other, motivation, perspective change, spiritual learning, shifts in ways of knowing, and embodied transformation. This study expands upon research in Adult Learning and Development in that it reveals new information that can be helpful to those who deliver, design, or improve MBSR teacher training programs, those who mentor MBSR teachers or teachers-in-training, and those who teach new MBSR students. The processes and theories identified in the findings can subsequently promote enhanced dialogue, facilitate teacher growth, and contribute to program improvement.

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I would like to begin by offering thanks to my husband, Jason. This experience would not have been possible without him. I am deeply appreciative of his willingness to make significant changes in order to bring my dreams to fruition. His support has been unwavering. He was compassionate when I was at my worst, brought laughter when I needed it most, gently offered a perspective so very different from my own, and continuously served as my compass—showing the way when my thoughts or emotions averted me from what was truly important.

I would like to extend special thanks to my committee members. This study was more than a dissertation. As a result of this work, I am a changed person. Terrence Keeney, my advisor and committee chairperson, served as a source of great wisdom over the past four and a half years. He has been a teacher, mentor, therapist, and friend. He has influenced me in more ways than I can list here, and in ways that I know will continue to unfold as my life carries on. Lily Fessenden has shown me how to be true to myself and my calling as I pursue my dreams. Her constant attention to the importance of *voice* (both my own voice and the voices of others) has ignited a torch that I intend to carry through the remainder of my life. From its birth, Ulas Kaplan has been passionately dedicated to my ideas and the integrity of this dissertation. I am forever grateful for long discussions with him regarding the initiation and direction of my work, as well as for his patience and encouragement to continue with improvements until the final project met high expectations for quality and truly aligned with my intentions.

Although they must remain anonymous, I am tremendously grateful to the participants in this study. They gracefully offered not only hours of their time, but also contributed vivid and poignant accounts of life experiences in devotion to the mission of this work. My personal well of love and wisdom has vastly expanded as a result of the meaningful connections and rich conversations that transpired as part of this project.

I express deep appreciation to my parents, for cultivating my perpetual curiosity, for fostering a sense of positivity and resilience, for *always* supporting me no matter what, and for listening to me talk incessantly—for decades. I am eternally grateful for their love. I also offer heartfelt gratitude to my brother, for providing a steadfast example of courage and strength; because of him I know I have the ability to conquer seemingly insurmountable obstacles and I can blaze my own trail in life, regardless of what other people think.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

Mindfulness instruction programs are becoming increasingly prevalent in community and clinical settings, educational institutions, and in the workplace (S. Evans, Ferrando, Carr, & Haglin, 2011; Fjorback, Arendt, Ørnbøl, Fink, & Walach, 2011; Foureur, Besley, Burton, Yu, & Crisp, 2013; Rosenzweig, Reibel, Greeson, Brainard, & Hojat, 2003). According to Kabat-Zinn (1994), the developer of a mindfulness education course known as the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (p. 4). Mindfulness can be cultivated through participation in specialized learning experiences such as MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). This program is offered worldwide and is delivered through eight weekly courses. During the program, participants are exposed to mindfulness first-hand through experiential learning and begin to integrate mindfulness into their lives. Research has demonstrated that participation in MBSR programs has led to a reduction in stress (Astin, 1997; Carlson & Garland, 2005), depression (Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010; Kearney, McDermott, Malte, Martinez, & Simpson, 2012), anxiety (Hofmann et al., 2010; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992), and burnout (Cohen-Katz, Wiley, Capuano, Baker, & Shapiro, 2004; Goodman & Schorling, 2012). Participation in MBSR programs can also alleviate chronic pain (Jha, Krompinger, & Baime, 2007; Rosenzweig et al., 2010) and improve well-being for both physically ill and healthy individuals (Carlson & Garland, 2005; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Pradhan et al., 2007). Tens of thousands of people have completed MBSR programs worldwide, and enrollment has increased significantly in recent years (UMMS, 2015).

The above-mentioned benefits and high participant enrollment point to the positive and large-scale influence that MBSR programs have the potential to offer. For this reason, as well as the positive benefits I have personally recognized and attributed to my experience as an MBSR teacher and practitioner, I identify the MBSR program as one that is worthy of further investigation. Specifically, I have chosen to explore the learning and development of MBSR teachers in order provide new information that can contribute to the understanding of teacher development. This study has been designed to bring more clarity and understanding to the processes and theories that undergird the MBSR teacher training pathway and subsequently promote enhanced dialogue, facilitate teacher growth, and contribute to program improvement.

My personal experience with mindfulness practices stimulated me to investigate how one cultivates mindfulness, or an *embodiment of mindfulness*, as part of the developmental journey associated with becoming a teacher of mindfulness-based practices. I am aware of the changes that have occurred for me as a result of my mindfulness practice, but in the beginning, it was not entirely clear *how* such changes were initiated or *what* prompted some of the most significant shifts in my adult life. Over the past four years, I participated in several MBSR teacher trainings while also enrolled in a doctoral program with a specialization in Adult Learning and Development. As an MBSR teacher-in-training, I participated in experiences that I believe contributed to my personal learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness. As a doctoral student in the field of Adult Learning and Development, I was exposed to various theories in adult learning, human development, and psychology. Armed with information from these two areas of my life, I began to piece together some personal observations related to learning and development and attributed some of my most significant growth experiences to my mindfulness practice. I developed this study in a quest for additional

information related to the cultivation of embodied mindfulness, and to learn if others have had similar experiences. The intention of this study was to gain a greater understanding of how MBSR teachers cultivate an embodiment of mindfulness.

Embodiment of Mindfulness

For the purposes of this investigation, embodiment of mindfulness is operationally defined as described by the Mindfulness-Based Interventions—Teacher Assessment Criteria (MBI-TAC) (Crane, Soulsby, Kuyken, & Williams, 2012). An embodiment of mindfulness is the manifestation of two interconnected aspects: present moment focus and the seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness as presented by the founder of MBSR, Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990). The seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness are non-judging, patience, beginner’s mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go.

Embodiment of Mindfulness As a Way of Being

Mindfulness is regarded as a *way of being* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). For example, Cigolla and Brown (2011) conducted a study of psychotherapists who practiced mindfulness and found that aspects of mindfulness were “incorporated into the participants’ belief system, informing how they made sense of their lives and the world around them” (p. 713). Mindfulness involves a commitment to applying a specific perspective to the moment-to-moment experiences of daily life (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In discussions about MBSR pedagogy within the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Healthcare, and Society, mindfulness is considered a way of being that can be cultivated and developed (L. Koerbel, personal communication, September 23, 2016).

The conception of mindfulness as a way of being can be inferred from seminal texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita* (Easwaran, 2007), which dates back thousands of years, *The Heart of*

Buddhist Meditation (Thera, 2014) originally published in 1954, and Thich Nhat Hanh's (1996) *The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation*, originally published in 1975.

Mindfulness as a way of being has also been researched, supported, and implemented by contemporary scholars whose work spans decades (Schuster, 1979; S. Shapiro & Schwartz, 1999; Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2013; Todd, 2009; Wittine, 1989).

Current research has investigated the neuroscientific processes associated with mindfulness as a way of being. For example, based on an understanding of both neuroscience and mindfulness, Siegel (2007) theorizes that the initial intentional practice of mindful awareness can induce neuroplastic changes that lead to effortless mindfulness as a new trait or way of being. Some of the neurological studies related to mindfulness as a way of being identified in the literature include—but but are not limited to—an exploration of changes in self-regulation (Holzel et al., 2011), self-reference (Farb et al., 2007), and the default mode network (Brewer et al., 2011).

Significance of an Embodiment of Mindfulness in MBSR Teaching

Teachers who embody mindfulness offer a learning environment in which students can explore their own inner experience with freedom and a sense of safety. According to Crane, Kuyken, Williams, Hastings, Cooper, and Fennell (2012), embodiment of mindfulness is of paramount importance because it “communicates the essence of the potential which mindfulness offers on a level beyond the conceptual” (p. 80). The embodiment of mindfulness is so important to the teaching and learning process that teachers are required to develop and maintain their own personal mindfulness practice prior to engaging in mindfulness teacher training (Crane, Kuyken, Hastings, Rothwell, & Williams, 2010; Santorelli, 2014; UCSD, 2016).

Mindfulness-based teachers develops an embodiment of the qualities of mindfulness through

their own mindfulness practice (Crane et al., 2010; Crane, Kuyken, et al., 2012; van Aalderen, Breukers, reuzel, & Speckens, 2014). It is through teachers' personal understanding of their own internal experience (through mindfulness), that they are able to best support participants through the learning process.

Adult Learning and Development Context and Need for the Study

The phenomenon under investigation in this study is MBSR teachers' cultivation of an embodiment of mindfulness. I selected learning and development related to the cultivation of an embodiment of mindfulness as a central focus of this study. In order to make a significant positive impact on others when offering MBSR programs, MBSR teachers must be competent. As described in the previous paragraph, an embodiment of mindfulness is an essential competency for MBSR instructors who teach mindfulness. Teacher competency is a subject that bridges two major considerations associated with the study: 1) the situation of the study within the field of adult learning and development and 2) the need for the study. The subject of teacher competency as it relates to these two areas is presented in the following sections.

Learning and development associated with MBSR teacher competency. MBSR teachers are deemed qualified or certified to teach based on their demonstration of defined competencies. In order to best serve the needs of MBSR program participants, it is important that MBSR teachers be adequately trained and appropriately prepared to teach MBSR programs. MBSR teacher competence and integrity have become an area of focus in MBSR-related literature, with many publications and studies completed in recent years (Crane et al., 2013; Crane et al., 2010; Crane, Kuyken, et al., 2012; A. Evans et al., 2015; Piet, Fjorback, & Santorelli, 2016; van Aalderen et al., 2014). There is a growing body of work related to the pedagogy associated with MBSR teacher training, which includes the identification of effective

teacher characteristics (van Aalderen et al., 2014), essential teacher competencies, (Crane et al., 2010; Crane, Kuyken, et al., 2012), and the importance of high quality and thorough training programs (Piet et al., 2016; Woods, 2009). This work is important because it can be used to support the development and improvement of teacher training programs.

Core competencies for teaching mindfulness-based interventions have been outlined by Crane et al. (Crane et al., 2013; Crane et al., 2010; Crane, Kuyken, et al., 2012). These core competencies were used to develop the abovementioned MBI-TAC. The MBI-TAC is documented as a reliable and valid tool for assessing teacher competence (Crane et al., 2013). Many mindfulness training locations worldwide utilize the MBI-TAC to assess teacher competency. Some training sites that use the MBI-TAC include the University of Massachusetts MBSR teacher training program known as the Oasis Institute (UMMS, 2017b), the University of California San Diego's Mindfulness-Based Professional Training Institute (UCSD, 2017), multiple sites in the United Kingdom (Exeter, 2017; MAuk, 2017; MindfulnessUK, 2017), and the Mindfulness Training Institute of Australia & New Zealand (MTI, 2017). The core competencies proposed by Crane et al. include the following six domains:

1. Coverage, pacing, and organization of session
2. Relational skills
3. Embodiment of mindfulness
4. Guiding mindfulness practices
5. Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching
6. Holding the group learning environment

This study focuses on competency number three - the embodiment of mindfulness. This competency was selected for investigation because no studies have been identified that explore the processes of learning and development related to an embodiment of mindfulness. New information related to these processes can be helpful to those who design, deliver, or improve MBSR teacher training or supervision programs, those who mentor MBSR teachers or teachers-in-training, and those who teach new MBSR students. This information can be used to inform program development; make program improvements; and support the development of teachers, teachers-in-training, and general practitioners of MBSR.

The need for the study. Many researchers and authors have pointed to the embodiment of mindfulness as being essential to mindfulness-based teaching (Crane, Kuyken, et al., 2012; Cullen, 2011; A. Evans et al., 2015; Santorelli, 2014; van Aalderen et al., 2014). Adequate MBSR teacher training is important because the quality and integrity of a mindfulness teacher is likely to have a significant effect on individual program participants as well as on overall program outcome (Piet et al., 2016). Information related to MBSR teachers' experiences of learning and development can serve as the groundwork for future research that examines how to cultivate an embodiment of mindfulness.

The ultimate intention of this study is to expand upon MBSR research in order to reveal new information that can be used to help nurture and cultivate the teacher competency of embodied mindfulness and subsequently improve the beneficial impact of mindfulness programs worldwide. As both a researcher in the field of Adult Learning and Development and an MBSR teacher and practitioner who has experienced the benefits of mindful living, I am curious about the processes of learning and development that are associated with mindfulness practices and contribute to an embodiment of mindfulness. Through the proposed study, I intend to garner

new information that can be applied to improve the potential cultivation of an embodiment of mindfulness for MBSR teachers and teachers-in-training. Additional knowledge about learning and development related to the embodiment of mindfulness can be applied to enhance teacher training programs and can also enrich the personal practices of teachers and teachers-in-training through deeper understanding.

Research Problem

Meta reviews of hundreds of studies related to mindfulness-based interventions over the past 30 years have pointed to the beneficial nature of mindfulness practices (Baer, 2003; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Khoury et al., 2013). The extensive research supporting the beneficial nature of MBSR programs warrants an endeavor to better understand teachers' learning and development in order to ensure adequate teacher competency and maximize program outcomes. However, current literature on teacher competency associated with MBSR programs is limited (Crane et al., 2015). Specifically, there is a gap in the research literature related to the learning and development of MBSR teachers in regard to the cultivation of an embodiment of mindfulness. The recognition of this gap in the MBSR literature invites an investigation that utilizes teachers' direct experiences to gain a greater understanding of learning and development associated with embodied mindfulness.

Research Question

The following research question was developed to investigate the phenomenon of the cultivation of embodied mindfulness: What learning and developmental experiences, patterns, or processes associated with the embodiment of mindfulness do MBSR teachers report?

Research Approach

A phenomenological framework was selected to explore the cultivation of embodied mindfulness. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative research methodology, was chosen for this study because it offers a structure for data collection as well as data analysis. Additionally, a central focus of IPA is to explore participants' direct experiences and how participants make sense of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004). IPA offers a research approach in alignment with the intention of the study. The study was designed to bring clarity to a question that aimed to 1.) understand the essence of an experience or phenomenon and 2.) discover how both the participant and the researcher interpret the phenomenon. These two intentions are also central to IPA. The IPA approach was identified as particularly applicable to this study because it brings additional understanding to the phenomenon at hand. IPA involves both *giving voice* to the participants as they report their experiences and *making sense* of the experiences reported (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

Participants' reports of experiences of learning and development were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Theories and concepts from the field of Adult Learning and Development and Psychology were used to understand participants' experiences. Interpretation and analysis of data was largely based upon a constructivist paradigm (Dewey, 1910, 1933, 1938; Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivism describes the type of learning that emerges through the active creation of knowledge by the knower (Mezirow, 2000a). The use of a constructivist paradigm in this study is explained in Chapter Three.

Clarification of Terms

Embodiment of mindfulness: The manifestation of two interconnected aspects (Crane, Soulsby, et al., 2012): present moment focus and the seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness as

presented by the founder of MBSR, Kabat-Zinn (1990). The seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness are non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go.

Mindfulness: Paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 4).

Vipassana: a type of Buddhist meditation that involves the cultivation of an intentional awareness of what is happening in the moment.

Organization of the Dissertation

This study was designed to utilize first-person accounts of MBSR teachers in order to explore their experiences of learning and development related to an embodiment of mindfulness. Chapter One of the dissertation provided the background, structure, and purpose of the study. Chapter Two offers a review of current literature as it pertains to the phenomenon under study – MBSR teachers' cultivation of embodied mindfulness. Chapter Three presents the implemented method of research, including an explanation of data collection, coding, and analysis. Chapter Four describes and organizes the findings. Lastly, Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings and how the findings connect with the literature, as well as limitations, final remarks, and recommendations for future research in this area.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter offers a framework to explore learning and development associated with MBSR teachers' embodiment of mindfulness. To begin, I present selected definitions of learning and development, as well as my view of the relationship between these two terms. Next I offer an overview of an integration of learning and development, and make the claim that the MBSR training pathway offers both learning and development as well as an integration of these two processes.

Learning and Development

In the previous chapter, the idea of embodied mindfulness as a *way of being* was presented. The conceptualization of embodied mindfulness as a way of being suggests that it is not merely a skill that can be acquired as a result of enrollment in a traditional educational program where the student receives new information through written or verbal mediums or as a result of the repetitive practice of particular skills or activities. While these methods of learning are likely important influences on the development of embodied mindfulness, they alone are not sufficient to cultivate a new way of being. In order to realize the development of a new way of being, one must take part in learning that is as Kegan (2000) states, “aimed at changes not only in *what* we know, but changes in *how* we know” (p. 49, emphasis in original). In this study, *learning* describes a change in what we know, and *development* describes a change in how we know. The following paragraphs present a clear distinction between learning and development. These two types of growth are presented as integrated processes later in this section. For the purposes of this study, learning is defined as the acquisition of skills, knowledge, or information. Development is defined as transformation, or as a change in the way that one makes meaning. In

developmental psychology, learning and development have been referred to as horizontal growth and vertical transformation, respectively (Cook-Grueter, 2004).

Learning. Based on the human development perspective provided above, learning (or horizontal growth) can take place in many ways, for example in schools, training programs, and through life experiences. The acquisition of skills, knowledge, or information—known here as learning—does not include a shift in the learners’ meaning-making structures or in the way they make sense of their individual realities.

Mindfulness as a source for learning. Mindfulness activities such as those supported in the MBSR program (e.g. sitting meditation, walking meditation, and yoga) allow practitioners to develop new skills and provide them with the opportunity to explore and discover new knowledge about themselves. For example, practitioners have reported enhanced attention as a result of meditation (Brefczynski-Lewis, Lutz, Schaefer, Levinson, & Davidson, 2007; MacLean et al., 2010; Tang et al., 2007). The ability to develop enhanced attention can be interpreted as skill acquisition. Additionally, through meditation, practitioners cultivate self-awareness (Herwig, Kaffenberger, Jäncke, & Brühl, 2010; Pagis, 2009; Raffone, Tagini, & Srinivasan, 2010), which can be considered learning about one’s self. Also, studies have revealed that participants can learn emotional regulation (Goldin & Gross, 2010; Ortner, Kilner, & Zelazo, 2007; Robins, Keng, Ekblad, & Brantley, 2012) through meditation. Emotional regulation can be considered both a skill and an increase in knowledge about the self. These studies are just a few of the many that offer evidence of meditation as a source for learning.

Development. In contrast to the concept of learning described above, development (also referred to as vertical transformation) is less common and involves a shift in the very way that

people process their life experiences. The definition of development (as used in this study) is presented from an educational viewpoint through the perspective of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000a) and from a psychological viewpoint through the perspective of developmental constructivism (Kegan, 2000).

The definition of development used herein is comparable with Mezirow's (2009) transformational change, a concept from the field of adult learning and development. According to Mezirow, transformational change was influenced by Kuhn (1962), Freire (1970), Gould (1978), the Frankfurt School of German philosophers, and later, the work of Habermas (1984). Transformational change is described as "learning that transforms...frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 22). To break this definition down further, *frames of reference* are described as the "structures of assumptions and expectations on which our thoughts, feelings, and habits are based" (p. 22). A *frame of reference* includes two components, a *habit of mind* or set of assumptions, and the resulting expressed *point of view*, which comprises the "immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgments – that tacitly direct and shape interpretation and determine how we judge, typify objects, and attribute causality" (p. 18). Mezirow (2000b) explains that transformative learning can occur through one of the following four ways: "by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind" (p. 19). These changes can manifest as a result of a sudden significant insight or experience—referred to as *epochal transformations*; or over time with smaller shifts in thinking that lead to changes in points of view—referred to as *incremental transformations*.

Mezirow (2000b) presents the following 10 states of learning as potential precursors to the transformative learning process. The 10 phases of transformative learning include a disorienting dilemma; self-examination; the critical assessment of assumptions; recognition of a connection between discomfort and the process of transformation; exploring options for new roles, relationships, and action; planning for action; acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan; trying on new roles; building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships; and a reintegration into life based on new perspectives. A person does not need to experience all 10 steps for transformative learning to occur (Mezirow, 1994).

The term development is also viewed as synonymous with aspects of Kegan's (1994) developmental constructivism, specifically the "evolution of consciousness" (1994, p. 9), which includes changes in ways of "organizing experience that are not simply replaced as we grow but subsumed into more complex systems of mind" (p. 9). Kegan (1982) presents (with no specific citations) constructive developmentalism as having originated mainly in Piaget's seminal work in this area, as well as in Freudian psychology and Erikson's psychosocial approach to development, but other scholars have influenced his thinking as well. Kegan combined these philosophical constructs to create a new framework that describes how individuals grow and develop over time and in response to interactions between the person and the environment. Constructive developmentalism implies that the process of change is both constructive—in that it refers to how one constructs meaning—and developmental—in that it indicates shifts in the way in which one makes meaning.

Kegan's (1994) framework describes developmental shifts as changes in the way in which we perceive ourselves and our positions in the world around us—these shifts are similar to

the new frames of reference constructed through Mezirow's transformative learning described previously. However, Kegan's approach differs from Mezirow's in that Kegan considers developmental shifts as stage-dependent and presents and describes the shifts based on changes in subject-object orientation. The subject-object relationship is the internal division between self and other, where self is the subject and other is the object. From the individual's perspective, the subject is fixed and cannot be changed, while the object is flexible and can be changed in order to meet the needs of the subject. The subject-object relationship can be used to describe how people think about and understand themselves and their experiences at particular developmental stages in life. According to Kegan's perspective, the internal subject-object relationship manifested by individuals will shift based on experiences throughout their lifetime.

In order to organize, discuss, and understand subject-object shifts, Kegan (1994) developed a model known as the orders of consciousness. Each order of consciousness describes the way in which people make meaning of themselves, their relationships, and the world around them. When people experience specific types of shifts in their subject-object orientation as a result of their life experiences, they evolve to a higher order of consciousness.

Mindfulness as a source for development. There is very little research that examines mindfulness through the lens of adult learning and development theory. No research could be located that investigated the effects of MBSR practices specifically on adult development. However, ancient Buddhist texts reference meditation-induced changes that can be equated to adult development. For example, the type of meditation practiced within the MBSR program is based on Vipassana or *insight* meditation, which is a Buddhist form of meditation that involves bringing focused and non-judgmental awareness to the experience of the present moment.

According to the Buddhist viewpoint, this type of awareness is important because it offers meditation practitioners an opportunity to bear witness to the reality that has been constructed based on their personal experiences (Bodhi, 2013). In the space of awareness, individuals are able to access an alternate perspective of reality, one that allows them to see their reality as one that is actually *constructed*. In the identification of this perspective, the practitioner identifies (and in some cases, releases) judgments or opinions about their experience of reality. According to Buddhist philosophy, it is through the dismantling of constructed beliefs and subsequent reconstruction of a new understanding that an individual can experience a reduction in discontent or suffering. This perspective suggests that it is possible for meditators to experience shifts in meaning-making structures through an increased understanding of their own sense of reality.

Some current literature presents connections between general meditation practices (not MBSR) and development. For example, the interdisciplinary area that examines an integration of mindfulness (or contemplative) studies and constructive-developmental theory has been explored in recent research (Dow, 2009; McGarvey, 2010; Silverstein, 2012). These studies examined the effects of mindfulness on development in the lives of therapists, leaders, and students. To summarize these three studies briefly, Dow (2009) developed a model that described the stages of mindfulness experienced by mindfulness-oriented therapists, McGarvey (2010) explored the ways in which mindfulness catalyzed emotional development among leaders, and Silverstein (2012) identified a correspondence between the type and duration of contemplative practices implemented by student participants and their developmental level.

Shapiro, Brown, and Astin (2011) offer an example of current literature that is suggestive of a connection between general meditation practices and adult development. These scholars touched upon development in their report of key research findings related to meditation in higher

education. They found evidence suggesting that meditative training offers an effective means to develop qualities related to human development such as self-knowledge, openness, and flexibility. Self-knowledge, openness, and flexibility are described by Mezirow (2000a) as necessary components of developmental change, specifically transformative change. He states that transformative change “refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference...to make them more inclusive, discriminating, [or] open...so that they may generate beliefs...that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (pp. 7-8).

Finally, in his book, *Integral Spirituality*, Wilber (2006) identified a connection between development and meditation. Wilber proposes that meditation may incite development in the following way:

...Every time you experience a nonordinary state of consciousness that you cannot interpret using your present [meaning-making] structure, it [meditation] acts as a micro-disidentification...(or [in other words,] the subject of one...stage becomes the object...of the next). (p. 140)

The subject-object change reported by Wilber is quite like experiences reported by others in mindfulness meditation literature. There is a general understanding that is often presented during guided meditation—under certain conditions an individual can shift from viewing something (a physical sensation, emotion, or thought for example) in one moment as subject, to perceiving it in the next moment as object. For example, Bodhi (2013) explains that meditation “makes the objective field ‘present’ to awareness...to make the objective field clearly available for inspection” (p. 25). Shapiro et al. (2006) use the word *reperceiving* to describe this moment of perspective shift in meditation; they explain, “rather than being immersed in the drama of our personal narrative or life story, we are able to stand back and simply witness it” (p. 5). It can be

inferred from these statements that the changes in subject-object perception described by Wilber, Bodhi, and Shapiro in some cases, might be equivalent to a developmental shift.

The integration of learning and development. I maintain the perspective that an embodiment of mindfulness can be cultivated through learning and development, as well as an integration of both learning and development. Earlier in this chapter, the work of Cook-Greuter (2004) was provided to make a distinction between learning and development, which the aforementioned author presents as horizontal growth and vertical transformation. Cook-Greuter's (2013) work is based upon previous work in the field of human development put forth by Graves (1970), Loevinger (1966), Kohlberg (1969), and others. She explains that many researchers use the image of a spiral to depict human growth. Cook-Greuter (2013) describes the representation of a spiral as it relates to horizontal and vertical growth in the following way: as people experience life, they move about the spiral in different directions from a center point, or a center of gravity, within the spiral. As human beings mature, they learn additional skills, information, and knowledge—also known as horizontal growth, that expands laterally upon the horizontal axis, widening the spiral outward. Growth can also extend in the upward direction when vertical growth is achieved. Cook-Greuter explains that vertical growth is “transformation, growth to new stage, [or development of a] new perspective” (p. 7). While this model helps to demonstrate a distinction between learning and development, it also illustrates the integration of learning and development. Each stage of vertical growth incorporates the previous horizontal knowledge into a larger and more complex way of being.

The integration of learning and development associated with the cultivation of an embodiment of mindfulness can be understood through this model. In the MBSR training

program for example, horizontal growth includes the informational learning of skills (for example, sitting meditation, yoga, and mindful walking) as well as knowledge acquisition through increased understanding that can result from self-exploration through the aforementioned practices, dialogue, reading or listening to literature, or from informational presentations. Vertical transformation includes larger shifts in perspective or meaning-making that can occur as a result of contemplation during meditation or other mindfulness practices that might be incorporated into daily living. For example, researchers have examined the connection between mindfulness and increased attention (Brefczynski-Lewis et al., 2007; MacLean et al., 2010; Tang et al., 2007), awareness (Herwig et al., 2010; Pagis, 2009; Raffone et al., 2010), or emotional regulation (Goldin & Gross, 2010; Ortner et al., 2007; Robins et al., 2012). Increased attention, awareness, and emotional regulation can be considered skills (learning) that may catalyze a new way of being (development).

In addition to being informed by the work of Cook-Greuter (2013), I have constructed my assumptions regarding the role integrated learning and development in the cultivation of an embodied mindfulness based on principles of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000a) and constructive developmentalism (Kegan, 2000) described previously. To reiterate the concepts of transformative learning theory and constructive developmentalism, I provide succinct definitions as follows. Transformative learning involves exploring, critically examining, and reframing problematic meaning-making structures (Mezirow, 2000b). Constructive developmentalism implies that the change process associated with development is both constructive—in that it refers to how one constructs meaning—and developmental—in that it indicates shifts in the way in which one makes meaning (Kegan, 1982).

Examples of an integration of learning and development. In this section, the claim that learning and development are integrated processes is presented using elements of transformational change theory. Examples of experiences from the MBSR teacher training path put forth by the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness are provided to demonstrate some of the ways in which the MBSR teacher training path offers an integration of learning and development. For the reader's reference, a diagram of the MBSR teacher training path is provided in Figure 1 below. This diagram is a simplified version of the outline provided on the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Oasis Institute website (UMMS, 2017a). The path presented in the figure below was the effective progression for teacher training at the time this dissertation was written.

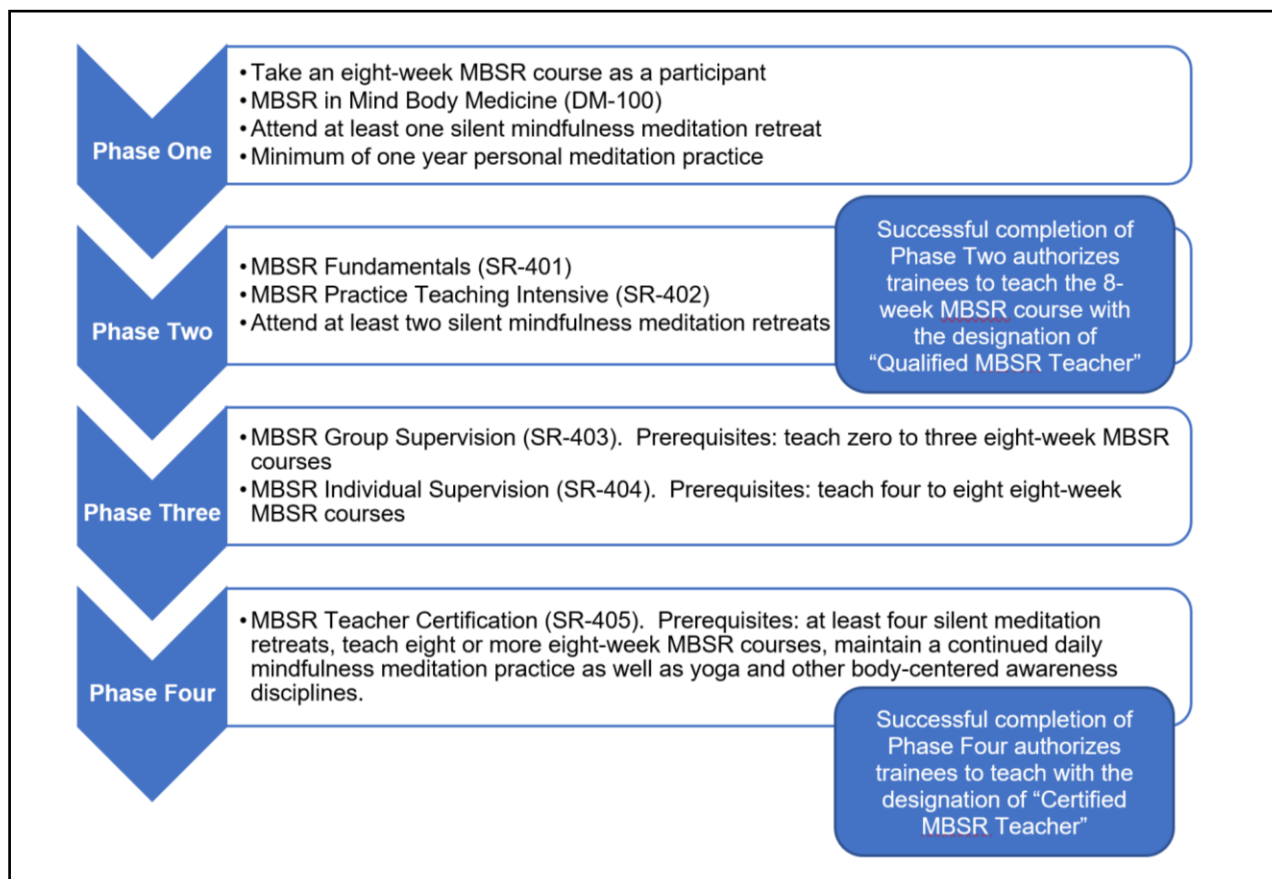


Figure 1. University of Massachusetts Medical School's MBSR Teacher Training Path

No information could be found in the literature that links specific steps or phases of the MBSR teacher training path to learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness. However, Crane et al. (2010) cite the work of Crane (2009), Kabat-Zinn (1990, 2003), McCown and Reibel (2009), and Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (2002) in support of the statement that, “the pedagogy of mindfulness-based approaches places considerable emphasis on the paramount importance of the teacher embodying the spirit and essence of the meditation practices being taught” (p. 77). It is assumed that the MBSR teacher training path was designed to facilitate learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness among participating teachers or teachers-in-training.

Mezirow and Taylor (2009) present several essential elements that can be implemented by educators to nurture the development of transformational change in a learning environment. They propose the following elements as common to most transformative educational experiences: *individual experience, critical reflection, dialogue, holistic orientation, awareness of context, and an authentic practice*. It can be inferred that one way to integrate learning and development is to stimulate transformational learning (or *development*) while *learning* by introducing these six elements to an educational environment. It should be noted that according to Mezirow and Taylor, the essential elements must be applied with a knowledge of transformative learning theory as a foundation for practice; otherwise, the teaching hangs in an indeterminate state with no direction or focus.

Each of the six core elements are described in the following paragraphs, along with examples of how each element appears in the MBSR teacher training program. Specifically, each core element will be connected with at least one aspect of the MBSR teacher training path.

Several references will also be made to the Authorized Curriculum Guide for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Blacker, Meleo-Meyer, Kabat-Zinn, Koerbel, & Santorelli, 2015), which will be referred to throughout the remainder of the dissertation as the MBSR Curriculum Guide.

Individual experience. An individual's experience consists of a combination of both the learner's existing experiences—including the well of knowledge associated with the experiences in addition to new experiences elicited by the educator in the learning environment. The more extensive the learner's prior life experiences, the more information the learner can draw upon for reflection internally as well as for reflection and engagement with others through dialogue (another core element of transformative learning presented in an upcoming paragraph). Taylor (2009) comments on the significance of the immediate learning experience and how it can affect subsequent development: "Research has revealed that value-laden course content and intense experiential activities offer experiences that can be a catalyst for critical reflection and can provide an opportunity to promote transformative learning" (p. 6).

Mindfulness practices themselves are inherently experiential in that they involve bringing awareness to the current experience. A mindfulness practitioner will often choose to practice mindfulness because there is a perceived value to the practice (value-laden content) or historically positive personal experiences (intense experiential activity), both of which serve to promote transformative learning according to Taylor's (2009) statement in the previous paragraph. The MBSR teacher training program is largely experiential. For example, during the training programs, much of the class time is designated to practicing various approaches to mindfulness. Also, there is a heavy focus on the importance of a daily mindfulness practice outside of the training courses through both formal mindfulness activities (such as sitting

meditation and yoga sessions) as well as informal activities (such as mindful eating and mindful dialogue). An example of the emphasis on individual experience is evident in the requirement to attend experiential training programs and can be noted in Phases One, Two, and Four of the MBSR teacher training path (indicated in Figure 1), which include bullet points that indicate the requirements of a personal meditation practice and participation in silent mindfulness meditation retreats.

Critical Reflection. Brookfield (2000) supports Mezirow and Taylor’s claim that *critical reflection* is a key element in the transformational process. Brookfield presents the relationship between critical reflection and transformative learning in the following way: “Transformative learning cannot happen without critical reflection, but critical reflection can happen without an accompanying transformation in perspective or habit of mind” (p. 125). He explains that in order for reflection to be critical in nature, the learner must examine previously uncritically integrated assumptions. For example, people might explore their position on ideologies associated with their culture, thoughts associated with the politics or economics of their community, or beliefs associated with their religion or upbringing. Emotional reactions and feelings can also be critically examined as they might have been socially acquired. It is the exploration of these uncritically assimilated assumptions that opens the door for new perspectives to emerge.

While the MBSR teacher training path does not overtly require critical reflection, the approach of critical reflection aligns with the Buddhist philosophy at the core of the MBSR curriculum—Vipassana or *insight* meditation. Epstein (1988) explains, “insight practices seek to uncover the elementary particles of the ‘I’ experience...exposure of these representations

through the non-judgmental light of mindfulness permits a simultaneous dis-identification from and integration of self-images that have often been unquestioned assumptions” (p. 65). In other words, insight meditation (presented through the MBSR teacher training program) offers an opportunity for critical reflection through an exploration of the self-experience. There is an opportunity for explorative reflection during the MBSR teacher training courses outlined in Figure 1, as well as through personal mindfulness practices, and attendance at silent meditation retreats.

Dialogue. In this study, the concept of dialogue for transformative learning refers to dialogue with self and dialogue with others. *Dialogue* offers a medium through which experience and critical reflection can be shared or exercised. In order for relevant dialogue to take place, some specific conditions must exist. These conditions include but are not limited to safety, freedom to speak openly, and equality (Taylor, 2009).

The above-mentioned conditions are emphasized in the MBSR Curriculum Guide (Blacker et al., 2015). On multiple occasions, I witnessed the manifestation of these conditions during the MBSR teacher training courses I attended (indicated in Phases One and Two in Figure 1). For example, the senior teachers begin each course by establishing guidelines for safety and confidentiality, and trainees were often reminded of the guidelines throughout the duration of each program.

The type of dialogue that encourages shifts in meaning-making does not have to be analytical in nature, but does stimulate learners to explore the limits of what they know (Berger, 2004). In MBSR, dialogue is a significant aspect of the curriculum. For example, the following statement was taken from the MBSR Curriculum Guide (Blacker et al., 2015) in reference to

exercises that help students identify habitual patterns expressed when participating in difficult communications:

...dialogue and inquiry during these exercises allows a heightened awareness of habitual patterns and behaviors, not only in the realm of interpersonal communication, but also in one's intra-personal life. It is essential to pause and reflect together on these experiences and to notice how relational patterns are externalizations of internal mind and body states (p. 30)

In the MBSR teacher training courses, a significant amount of time is designated to helping teachers cultivate their ability to facilitate dialogue with and among students as this is a significant part of the traditional eight-week MBSR program. Various options for practicing dialogue are presented throughout the teacher training programs. For example, in the *Practice Teaching Intensive*, indicated in Phase Two in Figure 1, teachers-in-training practice dialogue while teaching in one-on-one arrangements, small groups, and large groups.

Holistic orientation. A *holistic orientation* to learning offers an experience that taps into the whole person as learner (Taylor, 2009). A holistic learning experience can be cultivated through offering non-rational ways of knowing such as affective knowing (through an awareness of feelings and emotions), or expressive or presentational knowing which can involve music, dance, movement, or the arts. Expressive and presentational ways of knowing allow the learner to be present as an “affective, intuitive, thinking, physical, spiritual self” (Yorks & Kasl, 2006). Taylor (2009) reports that these types of experiences provide an opportunity for learners to conduct a deeper investigation of their beliefs, increase awareness of their meaning-making positions, and solidify experiences through expressive representation.

MBSR teacher training programs offer a holistic orientation to learning in various ways. Holistic learning can be stimulated through non-rational ways of knowing. One example of how this type of learning is presented in the MBSR training programs is through meditation (guided by a senior instructor) followed by reflection and journaling. Another example is evident in required attendance at extended silent meditation retreats where the whole body is immersed in meditative practices for multiple days. Another way this type of learning is presented in MBSR teacher training programs is through creative course closure sessions. These sessions are offered at the end of teacher training courses such as *MBSR Fundamentals* and the *Practice Teaching Intensive* indicated in Figure 1. During these sessions, the program's teachers and teachers-in-training gather as a community and all attendees are provided with the opportunity to offer a performance (through an outlet of their choosing) to express something related to their training experience. These approaches allow learners to explore their experiences through nontraditional (and not necessarily rational) means.

Awareness of context. The element known as *awareness of context* is key when considering the transformative learning environment. Various factors can contribute either positively or negatively to the learning experience. Some of these factors include “the surroundings of the immediate learning event, the personal and professional situation of the learners at the time (their prior experience), and the background context that is shaping society” (Taylor, 2009, p. 11). In some cases, the surroundings, experiences of the learners, and context of society can be ripe for stimulating change among learners. While at other times, change can be stifled by conditions related to their surroundings, experiences, or societal context. As described previously, MBSR programs offer a safe environment for exploring whatever might arise for a student.

A personal example supports the beneficial nature of MBSR teachers' application of contextual awareness in an MBSR setting. When I attended a weeklong residential MBSR teacher training (*MBSR in Mind Body Medicine*, indicated in Figure 1), a terrorist attack occurred elsewhere in the country. The teachers shared the news with attendees during an early morning meditation session, and attendees were offered the invitation to hold the news of the tragedy with mindfulness. I remember feeling safe and I was able to examine the situation more deeply than if I were in my home environment. While my personal perception of the experience was not alleviated through the application of mindfulness (as that is not the intention of mindfulness) and was likely intensified, I had a spiritual experience associated with processing the tragedy. As a result of this experience, I was able to access an inner resilience accompanied by deep compassion that had been previously unknown to me. During this training I (a teacher in training) learned about awareness of context in two ways: 1) I witnessed the senior teacher's words and actions as a remarkable example of contextual awareness and 2) I experienced first-hand, a strategy that induced personally significant and rich learning.

To offer another example of how awareness of context appears in MBSR teacher training, the MBSR Curriculum Guide (Blacker et al., 2015) requests teachers be consistently aware of their internal context in regard to whatever happens in the classroom experience, as this approach has a significant impact on the immediate experience of the students. An example is provided to bring clarity to this statement. It is common for an MBSR student to share an emotional situation with the class. A skillful MBSR teacher will be aware of her own internal experience while also offering the student the opportunity for self-exploration. Kabat-Zinn (2011) states that there is no particular map that an MBSR teacher can navigate when an MBSR student presents the opportunity to explore an immediate emotional experience. The teacher will have a

general knowledge of the Buddhist dharma (or teachings) as a result of her training and she can access that knowledge to guide the student, but she will also have to negotiate her own internal map, remaining consistently vigilant of the pull of her own desires to realize particular personal goals. Kabat-Zinn explains:

...some of this will naturally be thought-based, but a good deal of it will be intuition-based, more embodied, more coming out of the spaciousness of not-knowing rather than out of a solely conceptual knowing. This can be quite challenging unless the formal dharma maps are deeply engrained in one's being through practice, not merely cerebral and cognitive. (p. 297)

The statement above indicates the importance of an MBSR instructor's personal practice (and subsequent deep internal understanding of the dharma) for successfully navigating the context of the classroom. The cultivation of an *awareness of context* is reinforced in the MBSR training path through the requirement to maintain a personal mindfulness practice throughout the path (indicated in Figure 1).

Authentic relationships. The significance of *authentic relationships* in transformational learning is evident in the literature. In a review of research related to transformational learning, Taylor (2007) found that positive productive relationships with others were a key factor in transformative experiences. Taylor (2009) explains, "Authentic relationships...allow individuals to have questioning discussions, share information openly, and achieve greater mutual and consensual understanding" (p. 13). Cranton and Caruseta (2004) explain that educators who manifest authentic relationships exemplify self-awareness, awareness of the needs and interests of students, an ability to be genuine and open with others, awareness of how context shapes the

learning experience, and the know-how to engage in critical reflection and self-reflection.

Authentic relationships create fertile ground for transformative change by providing conditions for awareness, critical inquiry, and reflection.

Authenticity is an essential component of MBSR teaching (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). In the following explanation, Kabat-Zinn describes the importance of teachers' individual experiences with mindfulness and how these authentic experiences can affect the student-teacher relationship as well as influence the student's learning:

...What is involved in mindfulness practice is ultimately not merely a matter of the intellect or cognition or scholarship, but of direct authentic full-spectrum first-person experience, nurtured, catalysed, reinforced and guided by the second-person perspective of a well-trained and highly experienced and empathic teacher. Therefore, MBSR was grounded in a non-authoritarian, non-hierarchical perspective that allowed for clarity, understanding, and wisdom, what we might call essential dharma, to emerge in the interchanges between instructor and participants, and within the meditation practice of the participant as guided by the instructor. (p. 292)

Authenticity is so highly valued in the training of MBSR teachers that it has been included in mindfulness-based teacher assessment tool described previously—the MBI-TAC. The MBI-TAC is used to assess MBSR teachers-in-training during Phase Two and Phase Four of the MBSR Teacher Training Path (indicated in Figure 1) for Teacher Qualification and Teacher Certification, respectively. The developers of the MBI-TAC (Crane, Soulsby, et al., 2012) describe mindfulness-based teacher authenticity in the following way:

The teacher is honest and open in their relationships with participants. They relate in a way which is naturally aligned with how they are as a person. One can sense that instead

of being caught into habitual, automatic reactions, the teacher's words are conscious responses based firmly on an awareness of what is internally perceived and sensed, so conveying authenticity and congruence to participants. There is a sense of ease, naturalness and presence – how the teacher presents within the teaching feels like the person they are. There is a sense of honesty about who they are, so there isn't much to 'figure out' about them as a person. In a large part this sense of authenticity is conveyed by the teacher being thoroughly at home within the teaching. (p. 15)

In MBSR teaching, it is the teacher's authenticity, including his or her authentic relationship with learners, that not only offers a safe space for learning to occur, but also portrays an example of embodied mindfulness.

It should be noted that the above described core elements are not fixed but instead are considered part of an evolving list that is expected to grow and change as additional research is performed. Taylor (2009) presents another important notation regarding these elements; they do not stand alone, but instead they are interrelated. Taylor explains that, "it is the reciprocal relationship between the core elements and the theoretical orientation of transformative learning that provides a lens for making meaning and guiding a transformative practice" (p. 5). These core elements for transformative change proposed by Mezirow and Taylor provide some evidence that current scholars believe development can be cultivated by educators in learning environments. Additional supporting evidence is provided in the following paragraph.

Multiple researchers have used Mezirow's transformative learning theory to examine the development of participants in various educational or learning programs. Literature reporting on these types of programs suggest that transformational change is possible as a result of

involvement in such experiences. Some examples include D'Amato and Krasny's (2011) study that revealed that participants reported aspects of Mezirow's (2000b) transformational change after completing an outdoor adventure education program. In addition, Christie, Carey, Roberston, and Grainger (2015) conducted a review of specially designed professional education workshops that yielded transformational changes in alignment with Mezirow's (1991) theory. A third study that exemplified transformational change associated with an educational experience is presented by Brock (2010), who found that undergraduate business school students reported examples of Mezirow's (2000b) transformational changes and precursors to transformational change.

In addition to the consideration that Mezirow's transformational change, thought of here as *development*, can be achieved in a specific environment, Kegan posits that development can be stimulated through specially designed educational channels. Kegan (1994) asserts that development is possible, but "this kind of learning...[occurs] only through transformational education, [which offers] a 'leading out' from an established habit of mind" (p. 232). Kegan and Lahey (2009) developed an Immunity to Change program that promotes a *leading out* of patterned thinking and directs participants towards a cultivation of enhanced developmental competencies. The Immunity to Change approach is used to help professionals overcome their limitations through a process of identifying beliefs that prevent them from reaching their goals. This program has been applied to help professionals in areas such as financial services, technology companies, railways, unions, medical and educational institutions, and government agencies (Singer, 2012).

With the work of these theorists and scholars in mind, one can assume that the processes of learning and development as well as an integration of learning and development can be stimulated through educational experiences. One can also infer based on examples provided from the MBSR teacher training path (in previous paragraphs) that the training path offers a platform that supports learning and development, as well as an integration of learning and development, related to an embodiment of mindfulness. In this study, I explore the many ways in which learning and development contributed to the cultivation of an embodiment of mindfulness among MBSR teachers.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter was developed to present the differences between—and the integration of—learning and development for the purposes of this study. Literature was provided to support the assumption that both learning and development are possible through mindfulness-based programs. Lastly, a claim is made that learning and development can be integrated processes, and that the MBSR training pathway offers both learning and development as well as an integration of the two processes.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The intention of this study was to gain a greater understanding of how MBSR teachers cultivate an embodiment of mindfulness. With this intention in mind, a qualitative phenomenological study was designed bring to light the essence of MBSR teachers' experiences of learning and development related to the embodiment of mindfulness. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data to address the following overarching research question: What learning and developmental experiences, patterns, or processes associated with the embodiment of mindfulness do MBSR teachers report?

This chapter describes the methodology used to conduct this study, and includes the following sections: 1) Rationale for Selecting a Qualitative Research Design, 2) Overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, 3) Data Needed for the Study, 4) Sample, 5.) Participant Recruitment, 6.) Data Collection, 7.) Data Analysis, 8.) Qualitative Trustworthiness Evaluation Markers, 9.) Limitations, and 10.) Chapter Summary.

Rationale for Selecting a Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research involves an investigation into a phenomenon, process, or concept (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013a). This research approach attempts to access and explore the experiences and views of participants to increase understanding of the topic of study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013a). The decision to design this study using a qualitative research approach over quantitative or mixed method approaches was based on an assessment of various factors. Consideration of the following three criteria significantly contributed to the selection of a qualitative research design: the nature of the research problem, my personal worldview and experiences, and the intended audience of this dissertation (Creswell, 2009). These criteria are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Nature of the research problem. Qualitative research is exploratory and can be applied to gain a greater understanding of a concept or phenomenon when little research has heretofore been conducted to investigate it (Creswell, 2009). This study was developed to address the current limited understanding of learning and developmental processes experienced by MBSR teachers as they come to know an embodiment of mindfulness. Since there is very little research related to learning and development associated with embodied mindfulness, a qualitative approach was selected to pursue increased understanding in this area.

Additionally, the research question presents an investigation into experiences, patterns, or processes – concepts that are difficult to understand through application of quantitative approaches such as surveys, experiments, or database analytics. The qualitative approach offers the opportunity to utilize various data collection methods, such as interviews, observations, and documents to gain greater understanding of participants’ perspectives, meaning-making, and viewpoints. These methods are likely to elicit relevant information from participants related to their personal experiences of learning and development.

My personal worldview and experiences. The decision to conduct this research using a qualitative approach was heavily influenced by my constructivist worldview. The constructivist paradigm assumes knowledge and meaning are socially constructed based on lived experiences. From this perspective, a person’s reality is the result of meaning-making that occurs through interactions with others and is influenced by history and culture (Creswell, 2013). Rather than attempting to identify one singular truth about how people make meaning, the constructivist researcher aims to discover multiple constructions of meaning and knowledge (Mertens, 2010). This study was designed to meet my intention to explore multiple realities associated with the cultivation of an embodiment of mindfulness. Conclusions drawn from this investigation were

influenced by both my personal perspective and the perspectives of the research participants. The goal of this study was not to identify an empirical truth associated with learning and development related to an embodiment of mindfulness, but instead to bring greater understanding to participants' growth in this area.

I am an MBSR practitioner and teacher with a strong curiosity regarding my own experiences of learning and development, and I see that information related to the cultivation of embodied mindfulness has the potential to be helpful to others as well. I have experienced the positive benefits of a mindfulness practice. For example, I attribute healing from previously diagnosed depression and anxiety to my mindfulness practice. Additionally, the research presented in Chapters 1 and 2 provide evidence that MBSR has been beneficial to others. I see an opportunity to continue to expand and enhance the reach and efficacy of MBSR programs worldwide through an increased understanding of learning and development associated with embodied mindfulness. For this reason, I have selected a qualitative design to more deeply understand the essence of this experience.

Intended Audience

It is likely that the audience of this dissertation will include general MBSR practitioners; MBSR teachers and teachers-in-training; as well as mentors to MBSR practitioners, teachers, and teachers-in-training. In alignment with the qualitative research approach, the intention of the study is not to generalize the results to a larger population, but instead, to offer the audience an opportunity to transfer the information presented in the study to their lives, thereby allowing a greater understanding of their personal experience with learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness. Additionally, audience members who are MBSR teachers

and mentors will likely be able to draw from the multiple perspectives and experiences presented in the findings of this study, allowing them to better assist mentees and students on their own developmental journeys.

Overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The study was designed using a methodological framework based in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA is a qualitative research methodology. The central focus of IPA is to explore participants' direct experiences and how they make sense of those experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004). IPA is an appropriate research approach when answering research questions that aim to: 1.) understand the essence of an experience or phenomenon and 2.) discover how both the participant and the researcher interpret the phenomenon. It involves both *giving voice* to the participants as they report their experiences and also *making sense* of the experiences reported (Larkin et al., 2006). Traditionally, IPA involves an inductive bottom-up rather than deductive top-down approach to analysis (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). An inductive approach uses data to identify a new idea or ideas, rather than beginning with an idea (such as a theory or hypothesis) and using the data to confirm or refute the idea. This study honored the traditional inductive bottom-up approach of IPA. However, because of the personal connections I have drawn between my mindfulness experiences and the theories and processes I have been exposed to from the field of Adult Learning and Development and Psychology prior to this study, these theories and processes provided a loosely held lens through which the data were examined. These frameworks offered potential resources from which themes could be drawn, but they were not rigid in the sense that the data were forced to conform to specific constructs. Space was allowed for additional and new ideas to surface.

The most common form of data collection in IPA occurs through semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In IPA, it is the responsibility of the researcher to organize and simplify complex experiential accounts by maintaining attention and curiosity during interviews, as well as through a rigorous and systematic analysis (Reid et al., 2005). The interview is a collaborative process, where the researcher and participants work together to identify and interpret essential aspects of the phenomenon. Following the interview, a thorough analysis includes the transcription of interviews and an examination of the transcripts to identify participants' perspectives and experiences. It is the responsibility of the researcher in IPA to conduct analysis using verbatim excerpts. The excerpts are examined for significant phrases, which are clustered into themes. Themes are recurring elements evident during the interview. Themes are likely to clarify aspects of the experience that are significant to the participants. In a review of IPA research studies, Reid et al. (2005) found that the number of reported themes per study ranged from one to 10, but it is suggested that this figure not limit the presentation of additional themes if more are identified. Shared themes among participants are documented and discussed as part of the research findings. However, it should be noted that the intention of IPA is not to identify shared themes, but instead to document each participant's individual themes that can be subsequently compared and contrasted with other individuals' themes to show commonalities (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In order to maintain this commitment to the IPA methodology, cases were explored individually until conclusions were drawn for each. Only after scrutinizing each case did I move on to analyze the next case; each subsequent case was analyzed using the same approach. After all cases had been individually examined, they were then reviewed collectively for commonalities.

An IPA methodology was selected to explore experiences of learning and development associated with the embodiment of mindfulness in MBSR teachers for multiple reasons. First, mindfulness experiences are highly personal and individualized, which makes it difficult to use other methods of research, such as quantitative methods, that rely upon the discovery of measurable items for statistical analysis or comparison. Second, the origins of phenomenology stem back to Husserl (1999), whose work in the early 1900s focused on the importance of the individual's personal exploration and meaning-making associated with the immediate experience. This personal exploration and meaning-making of the immediate experience is in alignment with a central process of mindfulness or Vipassana (*insight*) meditation. Vipassana meditation comes from tradition of Theravada Buddhism and emphasizes the importance of placing bare attention on the current experience and maintaining nonjudgmental awareness regarding one's individually constructed reality (Bodhi, 2013). Third, experiences related to both the embodiment of mindfulness and adult development can be difficult to put into language. IPA provides a framework for exploration through meaningful and reflective communication during interviews. The interview transcripts provided rich data for analysis and the subsequent identification of findings.

Data Needed for the Study

This study was designed to explore experiences of learning and development related to embodied mindfulness among MBSR teachers. In order to gain a holistic perspective, data were collected to cover the following four sources of information: contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical. A description of the data collected from each of these information sources is provided below. In addition, Table 1 shows an overview of data needed for the study.

Contextual information offers me (the researcher) and the audience a view of the system from which each participant lives and operates (Patton, 2002). This type of information is important because it can influence interpretation by providing a stronger understanding of each participant's behaviors and meaning-making. Context includes the setting that surrounds each participant; in other words, the "physical, geographic, temporal, historical, cultural, aesthetic – within which action takes place" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 41). In this study, an emphasis is placed on physical/embodied, geographic, temporal, historical, and cultural contexts.

Perceptual information includes aspects of the phenomenon that participants perceive as facts. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) describe perceptual data as "neither right nor wrong; they tell the story of what participants perceive to be true" (p. 106). In this study, perceptual information includes participants' descriptions of experiences as well as the artistic expression of their experiences through the presentation of a creative piece.

Demographic information includes personal details about each participant. The intention of this type of data is to both describe the sample and help the audience of the study situate the perspective of the participants based on their personal characteristics or backgrounds. In this study, demographic information included age, gender, ethnicity, level of education completed, years of teaching MBSR, years of teaching general mindfulness-based activities, years of personal MBSR practice, and years of personal practice in general mindfulness activities.

Theoretical information provides justification for the choice of research approach, offers a foundation for the research question, and also supports interpretation, analysis, and conclusions drawn by the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Theory informed the decision to use a

qualitative research design based on the need to explore a phenomenon. Additionally, IPA theory supports an analysis that reveals the essence of the phenomenon under study. Lastly, frameworks and theories from the field of Adult Learning and Development as well as Psychology provide a foundation to describe experiences, patterns, or processes reported by participants, which provides a foundation for answering the research question.

Table 1

Data Needed for the Study

Type of Data	Information Needed	Method
Contextual	Physical (condition or experience of the body), geographic locations and travels, timing of experiences related to learning and development, historical background and experiences, and culture.	Interview, Questionnaire
Perceptual	Participants' perceptions and expressions of experiences.	Interview, Presentation of Creative Piece
Demographic	Age, gender, ethnicity, level of education completed, years of teaching MBSR and general mindfulness-based activities, years of personal practice in MBSR and general mindfulness-based activities.	Questionnaire
Theoretical	Theoretical perspectives associated with qualitative inquiry and IPA to support the decision to use a particular research approach.	Review of Literature
	Essential aspects of the phenomenon under study.	Interview
	Experiences, patterns, or processes common to Adult Learning and Development theory and Psychology.	Review of Literature

Sample

Participants were MBSR teachers. An MBSR teacher is defined as an individual who has received the designation of *qualified* or *certified* MBSR teacher from the University of

Massachusetts Medical School's Center for Mindfulness (UMMS, 2017b). A qualified MBSR teacher is one who has completed SR-401 *MBSR Fundamentals* and SR-402 *MBSR Practice Teaching Intensive*. A certified MBSR teacher is one who has completed the following courses: SR-401 *MBSR Fundamentals*, SR-402 *MBSR Practice Teaching Intensive*, DM-100 *MBSR in Mind-Body Medicine*, SR-403 *MBSR Group Supervision*, SR-404 *MBSR Individual Supervision*, and SR-405 *MBSR Teacher Certification*. It should be noted that prior to December 31, 2018, DM-100 *MBSR in Mind-Body Medicine* could be completed at any time prior to teacher certification. However, after December 31, 2018, this course will be a prerequisite to the *MBSR Fundamentals* (SR-401) course.

This study limited participant inclusion specifically to MBSR teachers because of their involvement in the phenomenon under exploration (the cultivation of embodied mindfulness). In order to be designated MBSR teachers by the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Center for Mindfulness, teachers-in-training are assessed by a senior teacher and determined to demonstrate the capacity to embody mindfulness. The only additional selection criteria for the study was that all MBSR teachers must be adults (or over the age of 18) because this is a study in the field of Adult Learning and Development. Participant selection was not rigid in order to maintain alignment with a key feature of phenomenological research—flexibility. The application of flexibility is important because it allows space for unanticipated information to surface during data analysis (Smith, 2004). Additional selection criteria would likely limit the diversity of participants, thereby limiting potential data gathered. Table 2 presents a summary of participant demographic information.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Summary
Age Range	26-60
Gender	7 Female 3 Male
Ethnicity	1 Japanese 1 Mixed (Caucasian Canadian/Guyanese) 1 Hispanic 1 Caucasian Canadian 1 Caucasian American 5 Did Not Identify Ethnicity
Level of Education Completed	1 High School Diploma 5 Bachelor's Degree 3 Master's Degree 1 Doctoral Degree
MBSR Teacher Designation	1 Certified MBSR Teacher 9 Qualified MBSR Teachers
Years Teaching MBSR	
<1 Year	6
1-4 Years	2
5-8 Years	2
Years Teaching Other Mindfulness-Based Activities	
1-10 Years	8
10-20 Years	2
Years Practicing MBSR	
1-5 Years	7
5-10 Years	3
Years Practicing General Mindfulness	
1-10	3
11-20	7

Participant Recruitment

In alignment with the IPA approach, the research sample was small. It is typical for phenomenological studies to have fewer than 10 participants (Smith, 2004; Turpin et al., 1997). However, according to a review of IPA literature, Reid et al. (2005) claim that the mean number of participants in IPA studies through 2005 was 15. A small sample size is important so as to offer the opportunity to conduct a detailed analysis of participants' accounts of their experiences. In an effort to maximize the amount and diversity of data but also maintain a manageable sample size, 10 individuals were selected for participation in this study.

Research participants were recruited through personal communications. Eight of the 10 participants were acquaintances who were introduced to me within the past two years through participation in MBSR teacher training programs. Two participants were connected with me through other acquaintances. Each participant received an overview of the study via email and an Information Gathering Questionnaire (see Appendix A) to complete prior to the interview. Within this same email communication, participants also received a copy of the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B), which included a description of informed consent and a summary of participant responsibilities and expectations.

Participants were informed of a unique confidentiality matter associated with one part of the interview – the presentation of a creative piece (designed by the participant prior to the interview). It was explained that the creative piece might reveal participant identity in some cases. For example, a participant's face or voice might be revealed in a photograph or song, respectively. Since the data gathered during this segment of the interview would likely be helpful to the audience in understanding the study's findings, participants had the individual opportunity to decide whether or not they would like to release their creative piece for public

presentation or publication through completion of the Release Creative Data Form (see Appendix C). The form was provided with the Informed Consent Form at the outset of the study. However, participants were asked to complete the waiver at the time of the interview. With this approach, participants made a decision about releasing their creative data based on their completed work.

Participants were informed that they could elect to discontinue involvement in the study at any time, with no negative impact to them. Participants were also informed that public confidentiality would be maintained through the assignment of pseudonyms and that presentations or publications related to this research would reference them using pseudonyms. It was communicated that participants' identity would be revealed to the public only through presentation of their creative piece if their creative piece revealed their identity *and* they elected to release confidentiality on the Release Creative Data Form. Only I had knowledge of the association between the pseudonym and the participant's name.

Data Collection

Prior to the interview, each participant completed the Information Gathering Questionnaire (see Appendix A), Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B) and a Release Creative Data Form (see Appendix C). All 10 participants released their creative data for public presentation and publication.

Interviews were conducted in May of 2017 in the United States and Canada, and were scheduled according to participants' availability and convenience of location. The specific locations of the interviews included participants' homes, their places of work, Lesley University, and a boat house within a private community. At the time of the interview, the Informed Consent Form and Release Creative Data Form were reviewed with each participant to ensure

understanding of consent as well as roles and expectations related to involvement in the study. Interviews ranged from one to two hours in duration. Each interview was conducted in three segments: the Open Learning and Developmental Interview Segment, the Directed Learning and Developmental Interview Segment, and the Creative Piece Interview Segment. These three segments were included in the study in order to use three different approaches to facilitate discussion with participants related to learning and development associated with the embodiment of mindfulness. All interviews took place in person. All segments were audio- and video-recorded to allow for transcription of the interview and any other potential interpretation of verbal or nonverbal communication. Each participant's creative piece was either collected or recorded through audio or visual capture, as appropriate. The three interview segments are described in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

The first segment, the Open Learning and Developmental Interview Segment, was a semi-structured interview guided by pre-developed interview questions (see Appendix D for interview guide) and subsequent natural conversation related to the questions. The purpose of this interview was to promote the spontaneous emergence of themes regarding learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness.

The second segment, the Directed Learning and Developmental Interview Segment, was also a semi-structured interview guided by pre-developed interview questions (see Appendix D for interview guide) and subsequent natural conversation related to the questions. However, the purpose of this segment was to directly question participants about their experiences of learning and development related to the qualities of embodied mindfulness according to the operational definition used in this study.

The third segment, the Creative Piece Interview Segment, included discussion related to a creative piece prepared by the interview participant. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to think of a time when they experienced a turning point or achieved a significant insight that they believed to be related to their development of embodied mindfulness. Participants were directed to present a creative representation of that experience (for example, a musical compilation, photograph, dance, painting, illustration, poem, or any other form of expression).

The Creative Piece Interview Segment was guided by two pre-defined questions (see Appendix D for interview guide) and also included conversation related to the interview questions with a focus on the creative piece. The intention of the Creative Piece Interview Segment was to provide a medium through which participants could attempt to initially access their internal—and perhaps subconscious—experiences related to learning and development of embodied mindfulness in a way that did not require language. This interview segment was important to the study because development specifically is not always revealed through discursive language. The design and presentation of a creative piece offered a bridge through which the participant could put language to an internal experience that might have been difficult to describe at the outset. It was noted during the developmental phases of this study, that not all individuals would be comfortable with the development of a creative piece. For this reason, participants had the option to deliver a written or verbal narrative as their creative piece. Three of the 10 participants elected to deliver a written or verbal account of their developmental experience for this segment of the interview.

Each interview was transcribed verbatim within two weeks of the interview date. The video recordings of the interviews were reviewed against each transcribed file and notes were made to the printed transcriptions to describe non-verbal communication when relevant body

language, movement, felt energy, or sounds were identified. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and applied to interview transcripts, my researcher's journal, and in the labeling of audio and video files. All data were stored in password-protected files.

I made journal entries periodically throughout the study. Entries included notations regarding my experiences and meaning-making throughout the project. In alignment with mindful living and being, I attempted to examine my own construction of meaning in relation to the study whenever possible, noting judgments and personal assumptions. These insights were noted in the journal.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using Colaizzi's (1978) approach. I reviewed each transcribed interview several times to become familiar with the conversations and interactions. *Significant statements* were identified and I developed *formulated meanings* to categorize the statements. A summary report containing the significant statements and formulated meanings for each interview was created and emailed to each participant. The summary reports were emailed to participants for fact-checking and comments. The intention of this activity was to ensure significant aspects of participants' perspectives and experiences were appropriately identified and captured. Changes reported by participants were included in the findings. As an additional measure to maximize accurate reporting of participants' perspectives, members of the dissertation committee served as critical colleagues during the data analysis process.

The formulated meanings were examined from Adult Learning and Development and Psychology perspectives for connections or relationships with existing concepts, processes, or theories from these fields of study. Themes were created to categorize concepts, processes, or theories demonstrated in the data.

Qualitative Research Trustworthiness Evaluation Markers

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) present three criteria that can be used to establish the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. The three criteria are *credibility*, which indicates that there is confidence that the findings represent what the participants reported, *transferability*, which means that the findings can be applied in other contexts, and *dependability*, which denotes that findings are consistent with the data collected. In the development of this study, every effort was made to address these criteria for trustworthiness.

Credibility. In order to maximize confidence that the findings are an accurate representation of the essence of the experiences offered by participants, the following practices were implemented. Member checking was conducted during the interview process and during data analysis. During the interview process, I often repeated a phrase or the description of an experience back to the participant to ensure I had accurately understood the information. Participants also received a summary report of the significant statements and formulated meanings extracted from their interviews to verify that the analysis was correct. Edits to the findings were made as necessary based on participant feedback.

I took several actions to minimize my personal impact on the findings. In alignment with IPA, the practice of *bracketing* was implemented. Bracketing involves putting aside (but not disregarding) my own assumptions and preconceptions (Smith & Osborn, 2003) in an effort to see or identify the essence of the experiences as reported by participants (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Additionally, analyses were grounded in participants' verbatim conversations. I also utilized my own mindfulness practice in an attempt to maintain consistent awareness regarding my positionality and personal construction of reality. Notations regarding potential biases and recognition of the impact of my personal construction of reality were documented in my

researcher's journal. This approach was taken in order to identify potential biases throughout the duration of the study.

Transferability. The findings of this study were intended to be transferable to other settings or contexts. While the individual experiences related to the development of embodied mindfulness varied extensively among the research participants, it is likely that the audience and readers of this study will identify with the experiences or aspects of the experiences reported by the participants. In an effort to help audience members and readers decide if the findings can be transferred to their personal lives, data has been presented in the form of poignant phrases or narratives and examples of the participants' creative pieces.

Dependability. Every effort was made to ensure that findings were consistent with the data collected. A detailed description of how the study was conducted and how data were analyzed was documented in an audit trail. Verbatim transcripts were used to conduct analysis, and changes that evolved during the interpretation process were tracked. Additionally, members of the dissertation committee served as critical colleagues during the data analysis process. The intention of these actions was to ensure that the data supports the findings.

Limitations

Limitations of this study are listed below.

- 1.) The sample size might have limited the findings of the study. While in accordance with traditional IPA studies, 10 participants is a small sample size. Additional participants would likely have brought more diversity to the study.

- 2.) Only one interview was conducted per participant. Each participant's mood, energy level, or life situation might have influenced the communication during the interview and the information revealed. Additional interviews would have provided an opportunity to elicit new information or more details. Also, time between interviews would have offered an opportunity for participants to reflect upon what was discussed initially, allowing for the stimulation of new or additional information. The single-interview design might have limited the breadth or depth of data collected.
- 3.) The sample consisted of mostly qualified MBSR teachers (nine participants were qualified teachers and one was a certified teacher). While this strategy was purposeful in order to collect relatively recent experiences that led to the initial development of an embodiment of mindfulness, the inclusion of more certified teachers might have had led to the collection of more diverse information during the interviews.
- 4.) Only MBSR teachers were interviewed. While these teachers came from various backgrounds and practiced various traditions of contemplative practices, it is possible that they all maintained a similar understanding of embodied mindfulness as a result of their MBSR training. A more varied sample might have brought forth different findings.
- 5.) Researchers bring their own experiences and views to their study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013b). I interacted with participants and interpreted the data through a personal lens. As described previously, steps were taken to maintain a neutral stance and reduce bias; however, I made sense of the phenomenon at hand through my own personally constructed reality. My subjectivity might have limited—and certainly

influenced—my interactions with participants, the data analysis and interpretation processes, and subsequent meaning-making associated with the phenomenon under study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive description of the methodology of this dissertation. A qualitative IPA approach was selected to explore the phenomenon of MBSR teachers' experiences of learning and development related to the embodiment of mindfulness. The participant sample consisted of 10 MBSR teachers from the United States and Canada. The data collected included demographic information, MBSR and general mindfulness training experience, MBSR and general mindfulness teaching experience, interview responses, and creative pieces developed by each participant. Data analysis followed a traditional IPA format. I extracted significant statements and developed formulated meanings that were reviewed and edited as necessary by participants. Themes were created to categorize the reported experiences.

The qualitative markers for trustworthiness were taken into account through the following actions: journaling, member checking, peer debriefing, and portraying the participants experiences through rich and poignant phrases or descriptions as well as through examples of their creative pieces. The intention of this study is to expand upon MBSR research in order to reveal new information that can be used to enhance teacher and practitioner understanding of the learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness, subsequently providing knowledge that can be used to improve the beneficial impact of mindfulness programs worldwide.

Chapter 4: The Findings

Introduction

This study was guided by the research question: What learning and developmental experiences, patterns, or processes associated with the embodiment of mindfulness do MBSR teachers report? To address this question, I analyzed participants' verbatim interview transcripts using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method. The steps of Colaizzi's method are presented in the following paragraphs.

The following steps describe how I applied Colaizzi's (1978) process for phenomenological data analysis: 1) Each interview transcript was read and re-read in order to obtain a sense of the content. 2) For each transcript, significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon under study were extracted. Significant statements were selected by asking the question, "Is the participant describing an experience or thinking related to learning or development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness?" If the answer to the question was affirmative, the statement was considered significant and was recorded in a separate document. If the answer to the previously posed question was negative, the statement was not considered significant to the current study and was not recorded. 3) Meanings were formulated from the significant statements. In order to develop formulated meanings, significant statements were initially clustered into categories based on the repeated appearance of particular words, concepts, or experiences. 4) Formulated meanings were further sorted into themes that were common across participants' transcripts. In order to generate themes that were in alignment with the intention of the research, I examined each formulated meaning by asking the research question in the following way: What learning and developmental experiences, patterns, or processes associated with the embodiment of mindfulness do MBSR teachers report [in this formulated

meaning]? The answer to this question became the theme title. Each subsequent formulated meaning was classified as a theme based on one of the following three paths: a) The formulated meaning was determined to be represented by a previously existing theme title and was categorized under that theme title; b) The formulated meaning called for a modification of an existing theme title, and the theme title was modified to encompass the new formulated meaning as well as the previous formulated meanings within that theme; or c) the formulated meaning called for the development of a new theme title, and a new theme title was created to describe the formulated meaning. This process was repeated until all themes were developed. To validate theme development, I reviewed the 209 significant statements to ensure each was properly represented by the theme under which it was categorized. I also reviewed the original transcripts to determine if relevant experiences had been overlooked during theme development. As an additional validation step, the theme titles were reviewed to ensure they do not propose experiences that were not implied in the original transcripts. 5) An exhaustive description of the phenomenon was provided—the themes offer an exhaustive description of the phenomenon of learning and development associated with the embodiment of mindfulness. This chapter presents the exhaustive description as eight themes. Colaizzi's sixth step was modified to fit the organizational scaffolding of this study. According to Colaizzi's method, step six would be performed as a separate step: 6) the fundamental structure of the phenomenon was described. However, in this study, the fundamental structure of the phenomenon was not presented as a separate entity. The structure of the phenomenon was described through the presentation of the eight themes and the significant statements that support those themes.

A final step presented by Colaizzi (1978) includes validation based on a review of findings from the research participants in order to compare my descriptive results with their

experiences. In the current study, instead of performing this step as a final act in the analysis process, the step was performed when significant statements were extracted and formulated meanings were developed. I took this approach for two reasons. First, I felt it was imperative that my preliminary understanding of significant experiences be confirmed when the significant statements and associated meanings were in the form of raw data (coming directly from the interviews) or near raw data (in the initially created formulated meanings) to lay the groundwork for a more precise analysis. Second, the intention of the study was to identify learning and developmental processes from the fields of adult learning and development and psychology related to the phenomenon at hand, but it was known that not all participants had extensive experience in these areas. It was not likely that all participants would be familiar with the applied theories and processes. With this consideration in mind, I decided that participants would be asked to review the verbatim statements and formulated meanings rather than the final theory-based themes to confirm validity.

This chapter presents the key findings obtained from 10 interviews. Findings are presented as themes. Examples of significant statements are provided to support the development of each theme. The themes addressed the research question.

Themes

Eighteen formulated meanings were obtained from 209 significant statements extracted from 10 interviews. The formulated meanings were further condensed into eight themes: 1) Informational Learning, 2) Experiential Learning, 3) Learning Through Other, 4) Motivation, 5) Perspective Change, 6) Spiritual Learning, 7) Shifts in Ways of Knowing, and 8) Embodied Transformation. See Figure 2 for a visual representation of the number of significant statements that were categorized under each theme. Table 3 displays the themes represented by each

participant as well as a count of how many significant statements were categorized under each theme and by each participant.

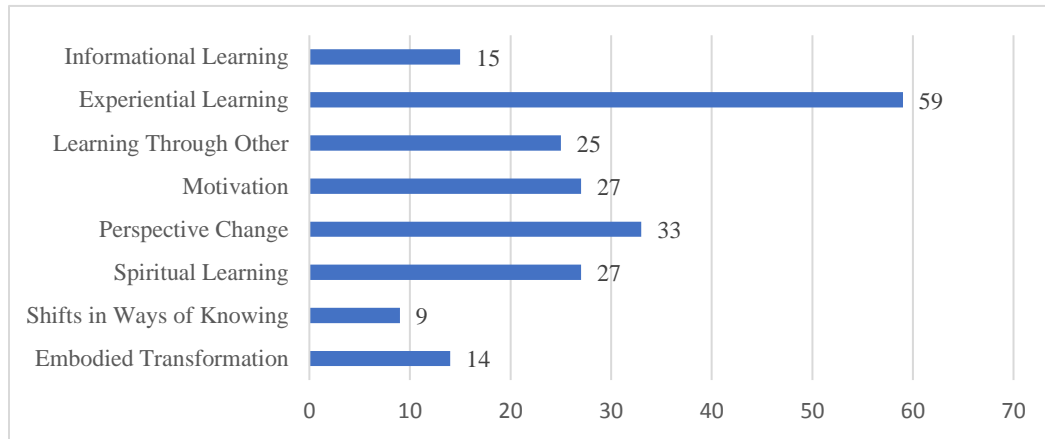


Figure 2. Number of Significant Statements by Theme

Table 3

Themes by Participant

	Informational Learning	Experiential Learning	Learning Through Other	Motivation	Perspective Change	Spiritual Learning	Shifts in Ways of Knowing	Embodied Transformation	TOTAL
Brandt	2	5	5	4	1				17
Burton		9	2	2		7	1	1	22
Iboc		8	1		3			4	16
Karuna	1		5	5	6	4			21
Kurt	2	7		2	2		2		15
Marion		3	3	5	7	5			23
Mary	3	5		1	5			1	15
Mary Ellen	2	9	2	2	3	5		4	27
Sunny	4	9		2		2	2	3	22
Susan	1	4	7	4	6	4	4	1	31
TOTAL	15	59	25	27	33	27	9	14	209

The sequence in which themes are presented in this chapter is not random. I chose to present the eight themes in an order that may represent increasing complexity. This approach was selected because some themes build upon concepts presented in previous themes.

In the sections that follow, a brief description of each theme is provided, followed by a table of select examples. The select examples include significant statements that I determined to be prototypic of each theme. It should be noted that the connection between each select significant statement and the associated theme might not be immediately apparent to the reader because the context is not always included. However, the connection between the significant statements and the themes under which they are categorized will be clarified in Chapter Five. In the next chapter, the select significant statements are used to support additional discussion of each theme.

Theme 1: Informational learning. As shown in Table 3, a total of 15 significant statements from seven different people were categorized as *Informational Learning*. This theme includes examples from participants that reflect the integration of knowledge transmitted through instructional or written presentation of philosophy, principles, concepts, ideas, or skills. Kegan (2000) explains that this type of learning is “aimed at increasing our fund of knowledge, at increasing our repertoire of skills, [and] at extending already established cognitive capacities into new terrain” (p. 48). Select examples are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Informational Learning Select Examples

Participant	Significant Statement
Karuna	<p>[Karuna] I was raised in a family where there were a lot of judgments. So for me,...[the teachings were] a big part...because...I thought it [the judging] was natural...[it] is something you do...I was raised in that.</p> <p>[Kristen] So you think the teachings were necessary?</p> <p>[Karuna] ...For sure...For me, yes.</p>

Brandt	[There was]...a huge...quarrel...with my...wife...and I started reading <i>The Power of Now</i> ...And...things just sort of changed...I was like oh...maybe there's something...I can do...more consciously, and change the way that things are happening...with me. And...from there...it was more a conscious decision.
Iboc	...I have a teacher, then another teacher, and when I have the third teacher...I start reflecting two teachers back and things start to make sense...Suddenly, it's like a flashlight that gives you light on things that you learned before.
Sunny	...Teachers...I've really connected with are the ones who give me some kind of scaffolding to work with...[Information] on which I can hang what I'm experiencing...and go, "Oh, okay, that's what's happening. Now I get it."
Kurt	I think [changes in the way I connect with others]...started with an intellectual understanding of the concept,...a cognitive appreciation, but then it became an embodied one. I think the embodied one...comes from what I talked about [previously] – Vipassanas [retreats] and daily practice...I think...in my case, it's a...mix of both. It's understanding how it works and actually having the physical rewiring.
Kurt	In all my readings of psychology, I never heard [about <i>leaning into</i> what I am trying to accept]...It's...really been through the mindfulness readings that I learned that this is a critical element in truly rewiring your life.

Theme 2: Experiential learning. As shown in Table 3, a total of 59 significant statements from nine different people were categorized as *Experiential Learning*. This category contains examples of life events or situations that demonstrate learning through doing. In other words, experiential learning describes the ongoing meaning-making that occurs through informal life experiences as well as through formal education settings (Fenwick, 2003). Select examples are provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Experiential Learning Select Examples

Participant	Significant Statement
Burton	...There were these experiences...that were pointing towards...a deeper way of being in the world...As I began to learn more about mindfulness and drawing some of these elements more formally into my day-to-day life, it became clear that I could operationalize...[the day-to-day experiences] as well...So when I play music, when I do [mindfulness] sessions, and when I take a shower, I'm gonna be mindful every time I do those things...Sometimes you do it and sometimes you don't, but over time, that becomes a foundation [for living].
Iboc	<p>Iboc explained her creative piece. A link to a segment of her creative piece (a vocal improvisation performance) is provided here:</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B99ehEpiC9BiY1hyei1iVIM4d2M/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>I was trying to express...that...moment...[when] you feel like your world is crumbling around you. And you just take a breath...[and then there's] a space between... before and after.</p>
Kurt	When I'm there [attending a silent mediation retreat], I don't feel it [the change]...The Vipassana [retreat] is not fun...but I'm realizing these are necessary passages.
Marion	Marion explained that the experience of reflection upon her mother's recent death brought clarity to the impact of her mindfulness practice over the years, "My mom's death allowed me...to see the power of the practice...for...the last decade."
Brandt	There is something to be said about how time led to an eventual point where I was actually ready to be aware of what was going on inside of me...Then, more and more learning was possible, almost at an uneven or increased pace.
Iboc	When somebody's rude, it helps...[to] take a breath; it's not personal. Maybe you take two minutes just to concentrate on your breath and then you move on. And it helps.
Mary Ellen	...It's in the face of crabby moments...[or] in the grit of hurry...It's...when those pieces of grit get in the machinery, that's...the opportunity for patience to arise ...If there's impatience, you can...feel the non-truth of it, "I feel like I need to fly out of my body," says the mind.

Theme 3: Learning through other. As shown in Table 6, a total of 25 significant statements from seven different people were categorized as *Learning Through Other*. This theme was developed to categorize examples of learning and development that were influenced by mentors, dialogue, or groups. While the type of learning categorized as *Learning Through Other* can easily be categorized within the *Experiential Learning* theme, it has been separated in order to draw attention to the details of learning and development associated with social interactions and human connection. Select examples are provided in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Learning Through Other Select Examples

Participant	Significant Statement
Brandt	During the TDI [MBSR training]...it was a big group...[and] there was a lot of...intense sharing and...I was not part of the sharers (<i>both laugh</i>) ...I didn't feel...I had something important to share, or it was less intense and so...maybe not as helpful...And...taking the leap...and trusting that it would be okay [to share]...within this group of people who [were]...sharing [a]...similar intention. [Trusting] that it would...be okay...for me to go there and be vulnerable in the group...And I did [share]...That was...a big turning point, actually.
Susan	In regard to a fellow student: "I learned so much from him...just from his way of being. That was really powerful and I appreciated having him in the class...He had this...delightful way...that was really joy-filled, even as he was...talking about...difficult things...Sometimes...[the internal exploration in the class] was a little scary...literally uncomfortable in the body...Like if you take that apart, you are just completely dismantled." Susan was able to apply her fellow student's playful curiosity to her own challenging experiences during the class. Modeling the approach of her fellow student, she explained that she would say to herself, "...Ooo. What <i>is</i> here? What <i>is</i> going on?"
Burton	I realized that there is something immeasurably powerful about the group dynamic and that, when you bring people together to share this experience, something takes place that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Brandt	[My] sangha meeting...[is] becom[ing] something...so important...We meet every week...[as a group of] MBSR instructors...Moments...are so rich...We can be together[,]...share things together[,]...[and experience] moments of connection.
Brandt	<p>There's something...in the presence that I can have...in the presence of someone else...that can...impact...that person's... [and] my transformation...[we] transform together.</p> <p>Brandt's creative piece (a poem) helps clarify his statement:</p> <p>"The Beauty That Endures"</p> <p>From my heart to yours From your heart to mine A margin is passing in between lives</p> <p>From the deepest recess to the outskirts of breath this margin secures our shared passage through myth</p> <p>I unveil this beast You can permit yours My mirror reflects A beauty that endures</p> <p>From my heart to yours From your heart to mine This margin keeps passing in between lives</p> <p>So that your heart may open With the key of my own so that your love can deepen From the seeds I have sown</p>

Theme 4: Motivation. As shown in Table 3, a total of 27 significant statements from nine different people were categorized as examples of *Motivation*. Motivation means “to be moved to do something” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). In this section, the selected phrases

exemplify ways in which the participants' drive, or move to do something, contributed to their development. Select examples are provided in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Motivation Select Examples

Participant	Significant Statement
Marion	I got the news that I had a...degenerative illness...and...I got really angry...So out of...this anger, I decided to go and learn something...that would...not only transform my body...but...change the whole thing.
Sunny	...I was driven about my career...[as well as] my number one hobby, which was playing...classical piano...During a particularly stressful time at work, my wrist...completely gave out on me...[it was] a...repetitive strain injury...I couldn't use my hands for two years...It was this wake-up moment, "What the hell am I doing with my life?" ...No career or amount of money or prestige...seemed worth that...And that's when I...started looking into...studying Buddhism...more seriously.
Brandt	...I recognized...a way to...be better...Not wanting to go back... (<i>laughs</i>) and seeing that this could be a potential way to...change.
Susan	...The value of...[the] MBSR class is...having...the class that you pay for and the commitment and...the homework...You really start to develop your practice...You [are] seeing the benefits from it and then wanting to do more...That's...how it evolved for me.
Marion	...I take that moment [to meditate] and...I'm so happy. And then I just keep going...

Theme 5: Perspective change. As shown in Table 3, a total of 33 significant statements from eight different people were categorized as *Perspective Change*. This grouping offers examples of the ways in which participants experienced shifts in perspective related to thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Shapiro et al. (2006) use the word *reperceiving* to describe these types of perspective changes: "Rather than being immersed in the drama of our personal narrative or life story, we are able to stand back and simply witness it" (p. 5). Also, Kabat-Zinn (1990)

explains that a central tenet of mindfulness practices includes the exploration of current patterns of thinking, feeling, or being. Awareness and internal exploration can lead to potential changes or shifts in these patterns. It should be noted that the phrases presented in this section do not demonstrate shifts in meaning-making structures or ways of knowing (which will be covered in a future section), but instead illustrate changes in thought, feeling, and behavior patterns. Select examples are provided in Table 8 below.

Table 8

Perspective Change Select Examples

Participant	Significant Statement
Marion	Marion offers an example of an in-the-moment perspective change during a stressful conversation: "...there was a little knot [sensed in my body] and...I said, 'yeah, I can see that,' and then the knot...was undone."
Karuna	One thing I have to work [on], it's not easy, it's self-compassion...This is hard...I'm hard on myself...But now, I can see it.
Mary	I used to become attached to others' suffering but now I have learned to keep it separate from my own body.
Mary	My...perspective of myself has been changing over and over and over, almost daily it changes...
Susan	Now...when I interact with my family[,]. I...see the patterns and...the ruts of communication. And...what used to be...normal...is so not normal anymore.
Mary Ellen	Honesty's big. Not like I was a big liar before...but...stoic silence was the family strategy that I grew up with. So, to be able to speak out...that's big...
Karuna	I'm more respectful [now]...[In the past I would say,] "...you have to do this like this." It was really...like a captain...That's how the women in my family were...My grandmother and my mother,...that's the model I had. So, I thought it was like that. But now...I'm...cutting those models for my daughter.
Susan	...This is the part of MBSR that I've...loved,...this reintegration of the body and the mind, of not having this hierarchy or prioritization of body over mind...This...return to embodiment...I think for women and myself, it was really challenging to...love the body, love the mind. You know, this quality of gentleness, of compassion, of empathy for the self.

Theme 6: Spiritual learning. As shown in Table 3, a total of 27 significant statements from six different people were categorized as *Spiritual Learning*. In this category, statements exemplify spirituality as a contributing factor to participant learning or development. In this study, spirituality is not the same as religion, a differentiation made clear by Tisdell (2003) in the following statement:

Religion is an organized community of faith that has written doctrine and codes of regulatory behavior. Spirituality, however, is more personal belief and experience of a divine spirit or higher purpose, about how we construct meaning, and what we individually and communally experience and attend to and honor as the sacred in our lives. (p. 29)

This definition of spirituality, along with some of Tisdell's (2003) assumptions about the nature of spirituality, guided the selection of examples for this category. Additional assumptions include the following: "spirituality is about an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things[,]. . . is fundamentally about meaning-making[,]. . . constitutes moving toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self[,]" and "spiritual experiences most often happen by surprise" (pp. 28-29). Select examples are provided in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Spiritual Learning Select Examples

Participant	Significant Statement
Marion	"[For] two years – I've [been] moving and traveling and...coming back to a place where it's not my home...I've never done that in my life...The practice really...showed me...that my home is...within."

Burton	The following is a line from the lyrics of Burton's creative piece (a song): "...the weight of the world brought me to my knees. Until one day, I remembered my song, and I found the courage to sing along. Now I believe in harmony. The spirit of the music set me free."
Burton	<p>Burton explained the development of his creative piece, "There was no thinking behind it...There was the music and then...the words...The meaning that I took from it after hearing those words...[comes from] trusting in the moment...The lyrics are pretty clearly...in the world of mindfulness...The...genesis of the song is from there...It just kinda came up...[The song is about] making sense of the fact that I was an individual human being with my own mind and heart and desires and thoughts...and...there was this larger...rhythm...I was...unconsciously dancing to..."</p> <p>A video of Burton's performance is provided at the following link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B99ehEpiC9BiNGs4a01DZ0MzRUE/view?usp=sharing</p>
Mary Ellen	<p>...I had...[what] some spiritual traditions...call...an audition...I was [working] in my last big paycheck job and I had gone off to do my...silent retreat...[When] I got back to my desk [at work,]...I...was straining against the fabric of the retreat...Finally...[I] shut my door and...cleared my desk and I just sat there like this (<i>head in hands, breathing heavily</i>), "I don't know if I can do this."</p> <p>And...when I got quiet enough, the message that came in...[was] not in English or any kind of verbal language, but the feel of it translates like this[,]...this big voice was...calling down[,]... "Inappropriate use of the resource." (<i>both laugh</i>)...That's perspective changing...to get a message that clear.</p>
Burton	<p>...One of the things...I learned...that has really stood out for me...is recognizing how...[the MBSR teachers] were able to create this environment and this experience...[where] there was a lot going on...When you're...looking back [on the experience]...and recognizing the impact of it, it's like whoa, something was happening there that was totally different than what I actually thought was happening...[What we were doing was] for some...other reason that is way deeper and way more profound. And if we tried to start there, it's unlikely that people would have naturally found their way into it and it would have felt too artificial...</p>
Mary Ellen	<p>Mary Ellen describes the moment reflected in her creative piece:</p> <p>...I had a <i>satori</i> [sudden enlightenment] while I was lying...in my bed at Omega [training institute]...[I experienced] a level of beginner's mind I have not experienced since...or had prior. But it informs what I understand about the idea of beginner's mind...literally not knowing anything...Embodied not knowing...[There was] this...maybe like 20 seconds of...tabula rasa. Blank slate...Being not knowing...And then... sort of coming back into form...and saying to myself...<i>that's</i> beginner's mind.</p>

A photograph of Mary Ellen’s creative visual depiction of this moment is provided below.



Theme 7: Shifts in ways of knowing. As shown in Table 3, a total of nine significant statements from four different people were categorized as *Shifts in Ways of Knowing*. This section includes examples that indicate participants experienced shifts in ways of knowing, also known as ways of making meaning. Select examples are provided in Table 10 below.

Table 10

Shifts in Ways of Knowing Select Examples

Participant	Significant Statement
Sunny	I...[initially] shaped my life based on very conventional societal norms of what success looks like...a good salary,...a prestigious job...I...also...absorbed what my parents...wanted for me, in terms of what success looks like. And it was killing me...[Now I] live, confidently and proudly, a life that is my own choosing... I don’t have to feel ashamed about having stepped off the track that other people say defines success.

Kurt	<p>[Kurt] ...Wealth [to me] before, was the traditional wealth[,]...the acquisitions...[and] the social prestige...Now it's much more...It's...my ability to define myself by my own standards, not social standards.</p> <p>[Kristen] And where do you think this came from? The ability to relate in that way?</p> <p>[Kurt] (<i>inhales deeply and sighs</i>) ...It's embodying, or getting a much more visceral understanding that...wealth is beyond financial wealth...To live it...[For example,] letting go of my...house in the suburbs[,]...selling off my...sports cars[,]...and realizing that each time I shed something...I'm actually feeling lighter and...better...I had to do it to see what impact it had on my body and my mind.</p>
Mary Ellen	<p>[Regarding] my perspective on work...When I decided to do the [MBSR teacher] training... I was still...working in corporate operations...I gave my notice and...I banked a bunch of money so that I could spend a year...teaching MBSR...[It] changed my idea of what a profession feels like. [It] doesn't have to feel like...drudgery. I don't have to...compromise my ethical standards.</p>
Susan	<p>As I've been in the process of...deconstructing automatic, habitual ways of functioning...There's...a feeling of...things lying in pieces....If I were in my previous mindset, I would have had this...project management hat on where things would be happening...in a step-wise fashion with a plan...But now...[I'm] finding a new way...that involve[s]...letting things emerge...Sometimes I feel like I'm not getting as many things done...[I'm] not...in the head, forcing, [and] ignoring the body...That's been deconstructed...The reconstructing is still happening...There are times when I feel like... (<i>sighs</i>) is this really the right thing? ...But...[I'm] letting go of things that were not helpful or useful or that caused dis-ease...physically or emotionally...It's a new way forward that feels much healthier... It's not meeting...certain expectations that were held in the past. And so, there's this adjustment...</p>
Susan	<p>Every day...[I reflect upon] my body and body image...A...few years ago, I lost...20 pounds...there was a rigidity to it...a sense of forcing...Being super thin...is really rewarded in our culture...[There's] shaming of women's bodies that are...normal bodies...There's this whole cultural force of...looking a certain way...It's a radical thing to accept...a non-perfect body or body image. And...that's something...I really...struggle with...Moving to...healthiness in the mind and the body...That's tough because we...get so many rewards from...being a certain way...But that's...not always...the healthiest thing for the mind and the body.</p>


Burton	...Sitting there in silence...That's been...a valuable touch point as someone who...is [working] in a...fast-moving...corporate [environment]...Everybody wants to...be...moving...[But when I sit in silence, I'm] still holding onto that root... and still staying engaged...even when the whole room...is ready to just barrel out of there.
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Theme 8: Embodied transformation. As shown in Table 3, a total of 14 significant statements from six different people were categorized as *Embodied Transformation*. Statements in this group offer examples of the body as a source of knowledge. This perspective is in alignment with traditional definitions of embodied or somatic learning (Clark, 2001; Freiler, 2008; Gustafson, 1999). It should be noted that in the literature, somatic learning and embodied learning are often referenced either interchangeably or with little or no distinction between the two (Clark, 2001; Horst, 2008; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), and are used interchangeably throughout this study. The statements in this category imply that as a result of new body-based wisdom through embodied or somatic learning, participants *also* experienced a shift that is in alignment with Mezirow's characterization of transformative change. Mezirow (2000a) explains that transformative change "refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference...to make them more inclusive, discriminating, [or] open...so that they may generate beliefs...that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (pp. 7-8). The examples in this category suggest that there was a shift in a participant's meaning-making structures or way of knowing in relation to learning through the body. Select examples are provided in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Embodied Transformation Select Examples

Participant	Significant Statement
Kurt	I'm realizing that the next step is not cognitive. That my body has... acquired knowledge and beliefs and false beliefs and...that...is a whole new door that's open to me.
Susan	...A lot of my practice and healing has been around the body...I think particularly... 'cause women are...denigrated in Christianity for leading men astray, for causing the downfall of all humanity with Eve,...[for] taking men away from their spiritual pursuits. And so...[there's] this remembering, this...physical,...metaphorical re-membering of the body...putting the body back together that happens with the practice of meditation...[and] with mindful movement...This threading together again of the mind and the body, and the body being...a place...of wisdom.
Sunny	Sunny described a shift in how she makes meaning based on her understanding of sensed signals in the body: "...I can now sense when...my ego jumps in...we call it <i>selfing</i> ...creating a self. And...whenever there's even the subtlest...emotional impulse that comes up...where the ego wants to speak up, the self wants to insert itself into the process...there's a very subtle movement of energy in my body that I can sense." Sunny explained that communication with others, "involves being aware of... my personal energy and the energy of the world coming back at me, and that interplay, that dance."
Mary	...[I live with] MS...a chronic illness...caused by stress...I have problems sometimes with my eyes and my cognitive thinking isn't always clear, but I haven't seen...many exacerbations [recently]...Mindfulness is about the...mind-body connection...[I'm] taking care of my body in a different way...When...I feel...tension...or stress in my body...I have the resource [to manage the tension or stress]...Without that knowledge...the body tenses up."
Susan	Susan created a mandala as her creative piece. She described the piece as "...a representation of my being, which has been shaped and transformed by mindfulness." She indicated that mindfulness offers a different way of being related to her relationship with herself and "in relationship to all other beings in the world." Changes related to the body are depicted in the blue circle of the mandala. She explained that this circle "represents the fluidity of experience in the body...[such as] breath and sensations of the body, the mind...[or] thoughts and emotions, and sounds, and the experience of riding the waves of sensations inside and outside the body." A photograph of Susan's mandala is presented below:

	
Mary	[Last year] I was...striving to get everything done...and then... [I broke my leg and] I was halted. I was...in a [wheel]chair, not even...able to walk...The humbleness that I've found, the gift of...people showing up at my house in the morning with tea and helping me to get dressed...and bathe and everything...The waiting;...I couldn't be striving. And it was a blessing...I'm so grateful that I had this...experience because it's slowed me down...I just need to <i>be</i> ...I had to go through it.
Burton	...Increased trust in the moment...resulted in an increased trust in myself. And [trust] that the things...I was feeling, whether or not the mind felt comfortable with them...were of value...It's like the little indicator light that pops up on your dashboard when your tank is running low...I gotta fuel up or else the car's gonna break down...later...Being able to tune into those indicators...has been an immeasurably valuable resource...[This insight] moves into a bunch of different situations in a bunch of different ways.

Non-Mindfulness-Related Influences on Learning and Development of Mindfulness

There was an observation not made clear in previous presentation of findings—several examples of learning and development were not mindfulness or MBSR-related. Based on the participant reports, these experiences had an influence on learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness and for that reason, were included as significant statements and categorized into one of the eight themes. Some examples of non-mindfulness related reports of learning and development are provided below.

Marion described an insight that resulted from a near-death experience. This experience impacted her deeply: “There was something much bigger than our tangible life. That’s what I learned through my near-death experience.” Also, Brandt reported that:

There’s been...[learning experiences] other than meditation...Psychotherapy and all the process that...I’m doing [in] my PhD [work] in psychology...My internships...have...confronted me...and... encouraged me to...know myself more and to figure out what...kind of things are...happening in me.

Karuna referred to the natural aging process as a potential contributor to the cultivation of non-judgement related to an embodiment mindfulness: “[I’ve learned to practice] more self-care....Before, I was...turning towards...others,...[asking], ‘What people will think?’ ...Maybe it’s the age also, but...now is the time [to care for myself]...It really brings me a...freedom of being.”

The Role of the Creative Pieces

As described in Chapter Three, the Creative Piece Interview Segment was designed to elicit discussion around a creative piece developed by each participant prior to the interview. Participants were asked to share a creative piece that represented a time when they experienced a turning point or achieved a significant insight believed to be related to the development of embodied mindfulness. The Creative Piece Interview Segment was intended to provide a medium through which participants could attempt to initially access their internal—and perhaps subconscious—experiences related to the development of embodied mindfulness in a way that did not require language. The development of a creative piece offered a bridge through which the participant could put language to an internal experience that might have been difficult to

describe at the outset. Participants' creative pieces served as data that helped bring additional clarity to the phenomenon of learning and development related to an embodiment of mindfulness. The creative pieces also elicited conversation that served as data in the form of significant statements that were later extracted from the interview transcripts and further organized into formulated meanings and themes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings in the form of themes and examples of supporting significant statements. The themes were used to organize 209 significant statements from 10 interviews. In the following chapter, further discussion of the findings will be offered and additional influences on learning and development related to an embodiment of mindfulness will be discussed. Limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research will also be provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, a final discussion of findings offers additional insight in response to the research question: What learning and developmental experiences, patterns, or processes associated with the embodiment of mindfulness do MBSR teachers report? In the following sections, all eight themes will be discussed and supported through the application of theory from the fields of adult learning and development or psychology. Additionally, four of the eight themes that stood out as particularly significant will be discussed in greater detail. Supplementary influences on learning and development related to an embodiment of mindfulness not covered under the eight themes will be considered. Lastly, limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research will be provided.

Discussion of Eight Themes - Theories and Examples

This study offers some answers to the question: What learning and developmental experiences, patterns, or processes associated with the embodiment of mindfulness do MBSR teachers report? The eight themes presented in the previous chapter provide a response to the research question. It should be noted that the organization and categorization of experiences reported by participants is not intended to offer a checklist of processes for MBSR teachers to execute as they develop or deliver MBSR programs, but instead, the intention is offer some experiences or processes that some people have reported to yield growth. It is hoped that MBSR teachers and general MBSR practitioners who wish to cultivate their own learning and development or that of their students can use this knowledge to intentionally participate in or offer similar experiences in order to stimulate growth. The eight themes can be viewed as important elements for consideration during the design, improvement, and offering of MBSR

programs. The presentation of this information offers MBSR teachers and other practitioners of MBSR a paradigm by which their own processes of learning and development along with those of their students or mentees can be discussed, explored, and enhanced.

In the following sections, a connection is made between each of the eight themes and previously established theories in both adult learning and development and psychology. Examples of significant statements from Chapter Four are provided to enhance the reader's understanding of the relationships between the findings and theories presented.

Theme 1 - Informational learning. This particular category isolates examples of learning to include only those integrated through instructional and written words. As a result of this restrictive approach, examples from this theme contribute significantly to the cognitive realm of development. With this observation in mind, cognitive learning theory is presented in order to bring clarity to the theme of *Informational Learning*. It should be noted that in some cases, informational learning was identified as a contributor to learning in areas that are not strictly cognitive, and this observation will be discussed in greater detail in a future section. However, cognitive learning theory was selected to provide additional clarity related to informational learning because the data provided a significant and distinct connection between informational learning and cognitive learning theory.

There are various cognitive learning perspectives, but all focus on the mental processes associated with learning (Merriam et al., 2007). According to Yilmaz (2011), the cognitive school views learning as a process that includes active acquisition, integration, and reorganization of knowledge and cognitive structures on the part of the participant. Yilmaz explains the significance of this type of knowledge assimilation in the learning process, "The

cognitive approach focuses on making knowledge meaningful and helping learners organize and relate new information to prior knowledge in memory” (p. 205). A statement by Iboc presented in Table 4 offers an example of how her learning evolved through the integration of new information with prior knowledge. Iboc explained that sometimes she will have a series of three teachers before she reflects upon the learning from the first teacher and, “suddenly, it’s like a flashlight that gives you light on things that you learned before.”

The importance of a knowledge foundation in the learning process is emphasized in a statement from the work of Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian (1978). In an introductory statement to the book, one of the authors (the specific author is not referenced) states, “if I had to reduce all educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows” (p. iv). This statement calls attention to the importance of building a base of knowledge for future growth. A knowledge foundation is referred to in cognitivist literature as a cognitive structure. Cognitive structures provide the framework for an adult to think and reason (Piaget, 1972). It can be inferred that the learning experiences discussed in this category were integrated into the participants’ cognitive structures and likely provided a basis for the development of embodied mindfulness. A conversation that exemplifies this type of learning was provided in Chapter Four. During my interview with Karuna, I asked whether written or verbal teachings offered during trainings contributed to changes in her mind and body. She responded with an explanation regarding changes in her familial patterning related to judgmental thinking, this example is presented in Table 4. Karuna explained that she was “raised in a family where there were a lot of judgments” and that the teachings about non-judgement were a big part of her learning and development. She expressed that the teachings were needed in order for her to see that there was another way—a non-

judgmental way. The new information shaped her preexisting understanding of how she could be in the world and provided a new foundation for future thinking and behavior.

Merriam and Bierma (2014) explain that when learning is not connected to an existing cognitive framework, it is quickly forgotten. The following example, previously presented in The Findings, brings to light the importance of personal context as it relates to informational learning. As described in an overview of the phenomenological research steps provided above, I conducted member-checking following the interviews. I asked participants to provide feedback regarding the categorization of significant statements into formulated meanings. Brandt responded, and his comment suggests that personal context can greatly influence the impact of informational learning experiences.

Brandt's comment during the member checking process was related to a statement made during his original interview (presented in Table 4) which was categorized as an example of *Informational Learning*. He had originally stated that during a difficult time in his relationship with his girlfriend, he had read Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now* which inspired him to live "more consciously." Brandt commented that there was more to his reading experience than a simple integration of new information. He explained that the assignment of the title *Informational Learning* in this example felt "understated." He described the example presented as a "very emotionally charged...conflictual situation." He explained that the emotional context of his life at the time contributed to the growth he experienced. The emotionally charged, conflictual situation provided Brandt a meaningful motive to integrate written information into his foundation of knowledge.

Theme 2 - Experiential learning. Experience as a source for learning has been explored for decades, with some of the earliest contributors being Dewey (1938) and Lindeman (1926), and more recent investigators and theorists including Freire (1970), Knowles (1970), Schon (1983), Kolb (1984), Mezirow (2000a), and Boud, Cohen, and Walker (1993). One of the central assumptions of andragogy is that adults accumulate an ever-increasing well of experience which serves as a resource for learning (Knowles, 1970).

Dewey (1938) put forth two key components of experiential learning. He stated that in order for learning to take place, the learner must 1) be able to connect new information to existing knowledge, and 2) actively interact with the environment and test new information gained from that interaction. Referring back to a significant statement presented in Table 5, Burton described an example of his growth related to an embodiment of mindfulness that captures the essence of these two components of experiential learning. He explained that he connected new information related to mindfulness to previously well-understood experiences such as showering or playing music. Additionally, he stated that he was able to test or “operationalize” newfound insights related to mindfulness by applying them to his day-to-day experiences.

Multiple variations of experiential learning were identified in the transcripts. Two of the most common participant examples were labeled with the following formulated meanings: 1) experiential body wisdom and 2) reflection on experience, which contributed to making meaning. Experiential body wisdom appeared 16 times in the transcripts, and was reported by seven participants. Reflection on experience was evident in 29 examples from nine participants. Examples of these types of learning are presented in the following paragraphs.

Many participants reported experiences when knowledge or understanding was gained through the physical body. This type of learning is in alignment with the concept of body as a source of knowledge (Clark, 2001; Freiler, 2008; Gustafson, 1999). As mentioned in the previous chapter, somatic learning and embodied learning are often referenced in the literature either interchangeably or with little or no distinction between the two (Clark, 2001; Horst, 2008; Merriam et al., 2007). In alignment with this approach, I consider somatic and embodied learning synonymous. For the purposes of this study, both embodied and somatic learning refer to a type of experiential learning that involves the body as a source for learning.

In embodied experiential learning, not only is a bodily condition or sensation identified, but there is also an awareness that the body is offering wisdom or insight through the experience. In the example provided, a participant reported that bodily wisdom served as a valuable resource that informed the immediate experience, as well as additional situations that had occurred since the original experience. In reference to an example provided in Table 5, Iboc provided an example of a time when she had had an immediate realization of the value of her mindfulness practice. She performed a vocal improvisation during the creative piece segment of the interview that represented a time when her mindfulness practice helped her navigate fears associated with delivering a speech. She explained that through the implementation of mindfulness techniques, she created a pause where she could observe that she was nervous and fearful of speaking. Her creative piece performance demonstrated a heightened sense of agitation followed by peace and serenity. She explained that by focusing on her breath, she is able to identify the “space between” fear and ease.

Participants also reported that reflection on previous experiences helped them make meaning, and the experiences even supported or affirmed their mindfulness practices. Reflection

on experience is one of the most common paradigms used to understand experiential learning (Fenwick, 2003). Through reflection or processing and evaluating an experience, people can integrate new information that supports their foundation of knowledge or they can alter their existing knowledge constructs to create new understanding or knowledge. A central tenet to this type of learning includes the understanding that individuals will construct their own understanding of a particular experience, a notion that challenges the positivist assumption that there is a singular or absolute truth.

In Table 5, statements from Kurt and Marion were offered to provide examples of experiential learning. Here they are presented as examples of a specific type of experiential learning—learning through reflection. Kurt shared that reflection upon his silent meditation retreat experiences helped him make meaning of his personal development related to an embodiment of mindfulness. He explained that while he is attending a silent retreat, he is not aware of any particular changes. However, upon reflection, he becomes aware that the retreat are “necessary passages.” Marion shared a powerful description of reflection that occurred while she was writing a book. As part of her writing, Marion reflected upon the relationship she had had with her mother who passed away while Marion was writing the book. Marion explained that the reflection process brought clarity to the impact of her mindfulness practice over the years, “My mom’s death allowed me...to see the power of the practice...for...the last decade.”

The example of experiential learning from Brandt offered in Chapter Four was specific to the type of experiential learning designated in this study as learning through reflection. During the interview, Brant expressed the belief that reflection helped him make meaning of his mindfulness practice as being beneficial. Some of the examples Brandt offered included positive experiences related to the embodiment of mindfulness during interactions with his young

daughter, his wife, members of his sangha (community) discussion groups, and his psychotherapy patients. Brandt also provided some interesting feedback regarding growth that resulted from a specific type of reflective experiential learning—learning that was specifically related to *readiness*. He explained that when more or deeper learning occurred, there was a level of *readiness* required to receive new information that contributed to the new growth.

Learning as a result of readiness is supported by Brookfield (2005), who presents readiness as a requirement for *critical reflection*, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, but can be applied to provide clarity here. Brookfield explains, “Until life grants us enough diverse experiences to provide the comparative data for critical reflection, we are unable to judge the accuracy of rules and perspectives learned in childhood” (p. 271). Boud, Cohen, and Walker (1993) also comment on the significance of the learner’s experience as it relates to readiness. Individuals are more likely to construct and reconstruct their personal foundation of experience when they are “willing to explore their expectations and predispositions” (p. 12). Both of the examples from the literature support Brandt’s observation that experiences and a willingness to commit to self-exploration can influence growth.

Theme 3 - Learning through other. A situated cognition perspective has been selected to describe the type of learning that was organized within this theme. Situated cognition is also often referred to as contextual learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). From the situative perspective, knowing and learning take place in the environment or social situation in which the learner participates (Fenwick, 2003). Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that in this type of learning, individuals gain new knowledge by engaging with others in a particular activity—while steeped in the assumptions and perceptions of the community and while using tools such as language, objects, and images. The assimilation of knowledge and action are one and the same.

In an example from Table 6, Brandt described how a community of MBSR teachers provided the unspoken support he needed to embody mindfulness, which subsequently resulted in a deeply influential moment during a time of intimate sharing. He explained that during an MBSR teacher training, he initially did not want to participate in the verbal sharing sessions. However, because his fellow teachers were all “sharing [a]...similar intention,” he trusted the group members, and allowed himself to be “vulnerable.” This experience of sharing was described as “a big turning point.”

MBSR trainings and meditation groups offer learning environments such as the one described above, which can be referred to as *communities of practice*. Susan provided an example (presented in Table 6) of a time when she was in an MBSR training (or community of practice) and felt a sense of trust in embodied mindfulness through the example of a colleague. She explained that there was another participant in the training who was an experienced Buddhist, and even though she was certain he had interacted with the philosophical material before, he approached quite sensitive topics with a beginner’s mind. She explained, “he had this...delightful way...that was really joy-filled, even as he was...talking about...difficult things.” She explained that she learned from his “way of being.” Her colleague’s example allowed her to open up to experiences that were scary, such as internal exploration and the deconstruction of pre-established thoughts and beliefs—activities that are common in MBSR teacher trainings. She was able to apply his playful curiosity to her own experience in the moment. Modeling the approach of her fellow student, she would say to herself, “...Ooo. What *is* here? What *is* going on?” She expressed that there was a lightheartedness to her new experience that was fun.

Another significant statement (presented in Table 6) demonstrated that there appears to be a type of learning that is unique to group environments. Burton shared that “there is something immeasurably powerful about the group dynamic.” He explained that in his past experiences with group learning and sharing, “something takes place that is greater than the sum of its parts.”

The identification of learning and development that was influenced by others is supported by the work of Palmer (2007), who is known for his development of teacher renewal programs called Courage to Teach (CTT). These programs were developed in order to help teachers remember the original intentions that motivated them to teach. Palmer states that by pursuing information “openly and honestly, alone and together, we can serve...more faithfully, enhance our own well-being, make common cause with colleagues, and help...bring more light and life to the world” (p.8). Brandt leads weekly sangha (community) group meetings because he has seen the positive benefits of connection among colleagues. In an example (presented in Table 6), Brandt explained that his sangha meetings provide a time for connection and rich learning.

Brandt presented another example of *Learning Through Other* as part of his creative piece. During an MBSR class that he recently taught, Brandt had a moment of insight regarding what he described as a special connection with others that became possible through the manifestation of embodied mindfulness. He developed a poem to represent this moment. Brandt explained that his sincere focused attention or “presence” (and the presence of the person with whom he is interacting) can greatly impact both “that person’s... [and] my transformation.” He stated, “[we] transform together.”

Theme 4 - Motivation. Knowles (1970), a seminal scholar in the field of adult learning, claims that “individuals are motivated to engage in learning to the extent that they feel a need to learn and perceive a personal goal that learning will help to achieve” (p. 56). Statements from Marion and Sunny (presented in Table 7) point to their individual motives to learn about mindfulness practices in order to enhance health and well-being. Marion was motivated to learn meditation after being diagnosed with a degenerative illness, and Sunny described a strong motivation to study Buddhism following a health crisis.

In the examples from Marion and Sunny above, the motivating factor related to the pursuit of mindfulness was related to a need for health and well-being, but other motivating factors might not be as obvious. This draws forth discussion regarding the source of motivation. For example, Mary Ellen explained that her initial draw towards meditation was not completely clear. She explained, “...I wanted that quality of knowing that I was picking up from the people whose books I was reading.” She noticed that the authors had a quality that she was interested in cultivating herself. This attraction towards development can be explained through a description of Maslow’s (1943) concept of *self-actualization*, which has roots in humanistic psychology. A major assumption associated with the humanistic perspective is that “human beings have the potential for growth and development and that people are free to make choices and determine their behavior” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 29). Maslow (1943) believed that behavior is determined largely by internal motivation. His work was based on the premise that people have innate human needs that must be met for survival. Maslow applied the requirement of human needs to his model of motivation known as the *hierarchy of needs*. He posited that human behavior can be motivated by external factors but is more strongly driven by internal needs. The hierarchy of needs depicts these needs through a pyramid diagram with basic physiological needs

such as hunger and thirst at its base, safety needs (security and protection) appearing one level higher, followed by social needs (belonging and love), esteem needs (self-esteem and accomplishment), and lastly self-actualization (achieving one's full potential). In order for a person to meet higher order needs, the preceding needs must first be met. Mary Ellen's example above appears to be consistent with Maslow's self-actualization, otherwise described as "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (1943, p. 382). Brandt offered a statement from Table 7 that is also potentially in alignment with Maslow's self-actualization. Brandt commented on his motivation to achieve more of what he is capable of achieving. He spoke of his desire to learn about meditating to be a better person. He did not want to return to old ways of being that did not serve him. He identified that mindfulness meditation provided "a potential way to...change" for the better.

Another theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), brings additional understanding to participants' motivation to pursue an embodiment of mindfulness. In SDT, different types of motivation are defined based on the reasons or goals that lead to particular actions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT makes a basic differentiation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci explain that intrinsic motivation refers to when one takes part in an activity for enjoyment or satisfaction in the activity, while extrinsic motivation refers to when one takes part in an activity because the activity results in a specific outcome. It should be noted that there are four different variations of extrinsic motivation, each having different degrees of self-determination. The forms of extrinsic motivation include external regulation, introjected regulation, identification, and integrated regulation. External regulation is related to action based on rewards or punishments. Introjected regulation is associated with behavior based on an avoidance of guilt or anxiety, or to preserve self-esteem. Identification is a more self-determined

form of extrinsic motivation, and it describes action taken when the individual understands that there is some value associated with the action. In this case, people might not necessarily desire to participate in an activity, but they participate because they understand that the activity has value. Even more self-determined is the form of external motivation known as *integrated regulation*, which describes the drive to take a certain action because the outcome of the action is truly valued by the individual. These forms of motivation are different from intrinsic motivation because, as mentioned previously, in intrinsic motivation action is taken for direct enjoyment of or satisfaction with the activity.

Based on the definitions provided above, both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation were represented in participants' transcripts. Of the 27 examples of motivation, extrinsic motivation (integrated regulation only) was evident in 12 significant statements provided by six participants, and intrinsic motivation was present in 15 examples from nine participants. The following statements have been previously offered in The Findings as examples of *Motivation*, but here they are separated into specific examples of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

The form of extrinsic motivation known as integrated regulation was evident when Susan described the way the MBSR class structure initially motivated her to integrate mindfulness into her life (presented in Table 7). She explained that enrollment in the MBSR class required a commitment to daily mindfulness practices on the part of the participants as well as the completion of homework. The class requirements helped her develop her practice. She shared that through the home practices, she started to see the benefits of the practice and wanted to do more on her own. Susan made the decision to participate in an MBSR class in order to learn something that she knew would be beneficial to her. This example does not demonstrate intrinsic motivation because she did not take the class for immediate satisfaction.

Marion expressed intrinsic motivation to practice meditation. For example, in a statement from Table 7, Marion explained that a moment of pleasant meditation can propel her forward in her day, "...I take that moment [to meditate] and...I'm so happy. And then I just keep going..."

Theme 5 - Perspective change. Perspective changes can occur through various processes. Two processes were particularly common in the data; they appeared in 31 of 33 significant statements. The first process is subject-object reframing, which is defined for the purposes of this study as a shift in perspective from subject to object in the experience of the participant as it relates to thinking, feeling, sensing, or behaving. Twelve examples of subject-object reframing appeared in the transcripts. The second process presented is *critical reflection*. Critical reflection involves a detailed examination of thoughts, beliefs, or values that were previously uncritically assimilated (Brookfield, 2005). Thirteen examples of critical reflection were identified in the transcripts. Six additional examples were identified as *either* subject-object reframing or as critical reflection, but a distinction could not be made between the two without additional communication directed at determining the source of the perspective change. A statement from Mary, presented in Table 8, provides an example that demonstrates how it can be difficult to determine the difference between a switch from subjective to objective thinking related to perspective of self (subject-object reframing) or critical reflection upon previously acquired thoughts about self: "My...perspective of myself has been changing over and over and over, almost daily it changes." In this statement, it is unclear if Mary changes her perspective of self from subjective to objective at various moments throughout each day, or if she critically reflects upon her perspective of self on a daily basis.

Kegan's (1982) subject-object shifts, introduced in Chapter Two, can be applied to participants' experiences associated with perspective changes. To reiterate, the subject-object relationship is the internal division between self and other, where self is the subject and other is the object. From the individual's perspective, the subject is fixed and cannot be changed, while the object is flexible and can be changed or examined. Subject-object orientation directly influences how people think about and understand themselves and their interactions with the exterior world.

The concept of a subject-object relationship can be used to bring understanding to the theme of *Perspective Change* identified in this study. Kegan draws attention most prominently to subject-object shifts in a person's meaning-making structure. However, in mindfulness philosophy, rather than focusing on subject-object shifts in meaning-making structures only, there is also a focus on these types of shifts in regard to thoughts, feelings, or sensations that occur in a particular moment as part of the mindful experience (Bodhi, 2013; Shauna L. Shapiro et al., 2006). When practicing mindfulness, an individual might shift from viewing something (a thought, emotion, or physical sensation, for example) in one moment as subject, to perceiving it in a future moment as object. Bodhi (2013) explains that meditation "makes the objective field 'present' to awareness...to make the objective field clearly available for inspection" (p. 25).

In Table 8, an example was provided from Marion who experienced in-the-moment subject-object reframing during a stressful conversation. She noticed the manifestation of a physical "knot" in her body that existed as part of her emotional response to her discussion with a colleague. Once she noticed the knot, the sensation as well as the emotion no longer governed her and dissipated. In this example, the knot was initially experienced as *subject*, but once it was identified it can be said that Marion re-perceived it as *object*. Karuna offered another example,

provided in Table 8, regarding an area of her life where she reported discontent. She explained that mindfulness has helped her identify moments when she was hard on herself, bringing these moments (and the associated inner dialogue) to light as an objective experience. In reference to these moments, she explained that she can now “see” when the old thought patterns surface and she can subsequently attempt to shift her thoughts or actions in ways that more positively serve her. Karuna was aware that objective identification of this challenge was a necessary step in the change process. A final example of subject-object reframing from Chapter Four comes from Mary, who explained that in the past, she used to feel personal pain as a result of her relationship with the suffering of others, but that changed after she began practicing mindfulness. Prior to developing a mindfulness practice, she would experience the suffering of others subjectively, and now she holds the suffering of others as an objective experience.

The other process associated with *Perspective Changes* evident in participants’ transcripts was critical reflection. The process of critical reflection involves examining previously uncritically assimilated beliefs, views, or values (Brookfield, 2005). These uncritically assimilated constructs are often embedded in the social or cultural systems in which we live, and for that reason, they can be difficult to identify. While the term critical reflection is not overtly referenced in Vipassana meditation literature, it is present. However, it is described using different language. A significant activity associated with Vipassana meditation involves bringing focused and non-judgmental awareness to the experience of the present moment. According to the Buddhist viewpoint, this type of awareness is important because it offers meditation practitioners an opportunity to bear witness to the reality that has been constructed based on their personal experiences (Bodhi, 2013). In the space of awareness, people are able to access an alternate perspective of reality, one that allows them to see their reality as one that is

actually *constructed*. From this perspective, practitioners identify (and in some cases, release) judgments or opinions about their experience of reality. According to Buddhist philosophy, the identification of constructed beliefs can be an initial step towards the reduction of discontent or suffering. The process of critical reflection can be equated with the identification of previously constructed beliefs. Experiences reported by participants are used to support the presence of critical reflection in the following paragraphs.

Due to a lack of detailed conversation with participants related to the topic of critical reflection (a topic that was not identified until after the interviews), it could not be confirmed which participants had practiced critical reflection as defined by Brookfield (2000). However, the significant statements categorized under this formulated meaning are closely aligned with Brookfield's definition of critical reflection. Brookfield states that critical reflection includes "some sort of power analysis of the situation or context" (p. 126) on the part of the reflector, and the "identification of assumptions that...are actually destroying their sense of well-being and serving the interests of others" (p. 126). The statements provided are examples of participants' reflections upon old ways of being or previously held belief systems that no longer serve them.

In Table 8, statements from Susan, Mary Ellen, and Karuna were provided to demonstrate perspective changes related to familial behavior patterns. In the current chapter, these statements have been further categorized as examples of critical reflection. These three participants provided comments that suggest they examined uncritically integrated behavior patterning. Susan explained, "Now...I...see the patterns and...the ruts of communication." Mary Ellen described a change in the way that she communicates with others. Her new ways of communication were different from previously learned behavior patterns. Karuna explained how her action to de-construct old family patterns provides new options for her daughter.

Theme 6 - Spiritual learning. For the convenience of the reader, the definition of spiritual learning as it is used in this study is reiterated here. In order to be categorized under the theme of *Spiritual Learning*, statements were required to exemplify spirituality as a contributing factor to participant learning or development. In this study, spirituality is not the same as religion, but instead aligns with the definition and assumptions offered by Tisdell (2003), “Spirituality...is...[about] personal belief and experience of a divine spirit or higher purpose, [it is] about how we construct meaning, and what we individually and communally experience and attend to and honor as the sacred in our lives” (p. 29). Additional assumptions by Tisdell include the following: “spirituality is about an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things[,]...is fundamentally about meaning-making[,]...constitutes moving toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self[,]” and “spiritual experiences most often happen by surprise” (pp. 28-29).

Several of the above-mentioned aspects of spiritual learning were evident in participants’ reports of learning and development. For instance, as presented in Table 9, Marion provided an example of when she became aware of a sense of wholeness and feeling settled. She shared that her mindfulness practice helped her feel whole and grounded regardless of the transient lifestyle she had been living due to her career. Through her practice, she learned that “home is...within.”

Tisdell (2003) describes of the role of spirituality in the construction of meaning: “Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains” (p. 20). Referring back to Table 9, but now providing more connections with spiritual learning as it is presented by Tisdell, we can see various aspects of spiritual learning in an example from Burton. Burton performed a self-authored song for the creative piece portion of the interview. The song

and subsequent discussion offered evidence of the collective elements of spirituality at work as described above. For example, Burton constructed new meaning related to how he moves through the world using a combination of the *affective, cognitive, unconscious, and symbolic* domains. The affective was sensed in his lyrics: "...the weight of the world brought me to my knees." The cognitive was exemplified in his ability to understand and describe how the new knowledge (or the song lyrics) came to him. Burton explained that the process associated with receiving new knowledge was *not* necessarily cognitive. He described mindfulness experiences as one of the sources of his new knowledge. The unconscious domain was represented in the emergence of the song itself, which occurred during a retreat. Parts of the song also pointed to the symbolic. For example, he referenced a calling to follow the direction or rhythm of something "larger" than his own heart and mind.

The MBSR learning experience fits the description of what Vella (2000) refers to as a *spirited epistemology*. For example, one of the assumptions of a spirited epistemology is that "each learning event is a moment of spiritual development in which people practice being what they are" (p. 8). Another assumption is that "transformation is not grasping an external set of information, knowledge, or skills, but rather a change into one's new self, informed by the new knowledge and skills" (p. 8). These two assumptions suggest that a spirited epistemology offers an environment where people can be their authentic selves and develop a new way of thinking or being based on an integration of new information. Burton provided another example (provided in Table 9) offering evidence that this type of learning was experienced during his MBSR trainings. Burton explained that he was amazed by the ways his MBSR teachers established a unique experiential learning environment where "deep" and "profound" changes occurred for him. He revealed that part of the learning experience included a natural or authentic unfolding.

For example, he explained that if the teachers' began the learning experience by diving into the deep learning "it's unlikely that people would have naturally found their way into it and it would have felt too artificial."

The MBSR curriculum provides a general guideline for instructors to follow, but leaves space for a flexible learning experience that is guided by the participants. This approach offers an opportunity for spontaneity and fluidity, which according to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007), is an important factor for spiritual learning to occur. They explain, "the spontaneous and fluid nature of spirituality requires space where it can happen. An overly programmed, information dissemination-driven classroom leaves no space for significant, indeed, spiritual, learning to occur" (p. 205).

Theme 7 - Shifts in ways of knowing. The concept of a *meaning-making structure* provides language to present shifts in ways of knowing. Meaning-making structures offer a framework through which individuals make sense of their internal or external experiences (Mezirow, 2000a). A meaning-making structure can be understood as a *frame of reference*, or the filter through which we make meaning. A *frame of reference* includes two components, a *habit of mind* (or set of assumptions) and the resulting *point of view*, which is the "immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgments – that tacitly direct and shape interpretation and determine how we judge, typify objects, and attribute causality" (p. 18).

The statements in this category indicate that shifts in meaning-making structures might have occurred. It should be noted that additional conversation regarding each of these changes would be required to qualify each statement as a true example of a shift in meaning-making or way of knowing. This type of conversation did not take place because the organizational

category *Shifts in Ways of Knowing* was realized after the interview occurred. The selected examples were included in this category because they suggest that this type of shift occurred.

A statement from Sunny (presented in Table 10) provides an example of a shift in a way of knowing. Sunny shared that she defines success differently now, after practicing mindfulness for approximately 20 years, and she is comfortable with her counter-cultural viewpoint and actions. She explained that she initially pursued a career based on ideas she “absorbed” from her parents and according to “conventional societal norms of what success.” However, these pursuits were not personally fulfilling. As she developed her mindfulness practice, she was able to identify and create a life that was in alignment with her own goals and ideals. She explained that she is confident and proud of her life now, and is “not ashamed about having stepped off the track that other people say defines success.”

Kurt provided another example of a meaning-making shift. Kurt recently made a career change from operating a well-established consultancy to focusing on mindfulness-based lifework. This change was the result of a larger shift that he experienced related to his perception of wealth. Kurt explained that, “Wealth [to me] before, was the traditional wealth[.]...the acquisitions...[and] the social prestige.” However, he identified that his current perception of wealth is much different. He has self-defined wealth by his own standards, “not [by] social standards.” When asked how he came to self-define wealth, he explained that his definition is based on his “visceral understanding that...wealth is beyond financial wealth.” He explained in order to understand this, one must *live* the experience of feeling “lighter” and “better” in the body and mind. He had to let go of many of his belongings that were associated with his earlier definitions of wealth, such as his large home and sports cars, before he experienced a new kind of wealth.

Another perspective that sheds some light on the concept of *Shift in Ways of Knowing* is Kegan's (1982) concept of orders of consciousness. Kegan's orders of consciousness model represents stage-dependent developmental shifts in the subject-object orientation of individuals related to their meaning-making structures. Kegan explains that internal conflicts arise when people experience a transition between orders of consciousness. In other words, contentment is often found following a transition into the next order of consciousness. Once a person makes a transition to the next order, his or her subconscious understanding of Self will allow for a more complex interpretation of life situations and circumstances, often resulting in an increased sense of harmony. This sense of contentment or harmony results from the development of increasingly complex meaning-making structures. Participants in this study reported experiences of development related to a new perception of Self. I believe it is possible that these experiences represent times of transition in orders of consciousness. For example, one of the transitions in Kegan's orders of consciousness involves a move from a Socialized way of knowing to a Self-Authoring way of knowing (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 2011). One of the characteristics of people who live with the perception of a Socialized mind includes the view that their world is acceptable if it conforms to the rule systems of others. For example, those who operate from the perspective of a Socialized mind will likely find some satisfaction in a profession that is in alignment with the ideas of job satisfaction held by those in the social system around them. On the other hand, a Self-Authoring mind recognizes external values and standards but operates from an internal authority. For example, those who are Self-Authoring understand that their ideas about job satisfaction can differ from others, and people who are Self-Authoring will be more comfortable in a profession that is in alignment with their personal ideologies, whether or not the job conforms to the ideologies of those around them.

Referring back to Chapter Four, Mary Ellen's decision to quit her corporate job to pursue work as an MBSR teacher (for personal reasons) offers a potential example of a transition to a Self-Authoring mind. She explained that her perspective on work changed when she recognized she could leave her corporate profession to adopt mindful lifework. As she made this transition, she realized that work did not have to be a "drudgery" and she no longer had to "compromise...[her] ethical standards."

Again, it is important to note that additional conversations would have to take place to determine the participant's true order of consciousness. Also, it should be noted that based on my training as a Subject-Object Interview administrator and scorer, one example is not sufficient to determine a person's order of consciousness. The interview statements throughout this section are offered as potential examples of shifts in ways of knowing.

Susan offered an example (presented in Table 10) of the discontent that can be experienced as part of a transition from one order of consciousness to another. She discussed a shift in meaning-making that was still in progress. Susan deconstructed an old way of knowing but at the time of the interview, she was still putting together a new meaning-making structure. She described a feeling of "things lying in pieces" and explained that if she were still in her old way of thinking, she would have navigated this part of her life "in a step-wise fashion with a plan." However, she identified her new way of being as a much healthier way; it "involve[s]...letting things emerge." However, she reported that "the reconstructing is still happening" and it can be uncomfortable. For example, she has questioned her new way of being. She has asked, "is this really the right thing?"

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) provide an additional perspective that supports the conclusion that participants experienced Shifts in Ways of Knowing. Their work with Women's Ways of Knowing can be applied to the lives of both men and women. These four scholars identified five "epistemological perspectives from which women know and view the world" (p. 15). These perspectives include silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. It is likely that the following example by Susan, previously presented in Table 10, demonstrates a shift from procedural to constructed knowing (these two types of knowing will be described in greater detail following the example). Susan explained that she had recently lost 20 pounds, but something did not feel right about it: "there was a rigidity to it...a sense of forcing." She reflected, "being super thin...is really rewarded in our culture." She commented on the cultural pressures to "look a certain way" and added that she has identified a new way of thinking that accepts and honors what society would otherwise consider a "non-perfect body." She mentioned that her shift towards this acceptance has been a difficult transition. She explained, "we...get so many rewards from...being a certain way." However, she is confident that her new way of thinking is positively serving her. She commented that cultural norms are "not always...the healthiest thing for the mind and the body."

Procedural knowers consciously and deliberately analyze what they know. They have learned that what appears to be true is not always so. These types of knowers will engage in deliberate activities in order to obtain new knowledge to inform their view. However, "their thinking is encapsulated within systems. They can criticize a system, but only in the system's terms, only according to the systems standards" (p. 127). Conversely, constructed knowers are able to think outside of the framework provided by the systems that surround them and thus

create their own framework – one that integrates knowledge that is intuitively and personally relevant with knowledge from others. These types of knowers often engage in intense self-reflection and take responsibility for examining and re-examining their views.

In the example above, it is clear that Susan developed a personal definition around what is an “ideal body” based on what feels healthy to her. Her words convey a struggle with an abandonment of what is an “ideal body” based on the definition provided by contemporary society. Susan is navigating the deconstruction of an indoctrination related to “ideal body” from numerous influences around her. She is creating her own framework of understanding based on her personal views.

In a statement presented in Table 10, Burton offered an example of a shift from procedural to constructive knowing. This example comes from Burton’s professional role as a mindfulness educator in corporate settings. When asked to talk about a change he noticed in the way that he connects with himself that he believes is related to his mindfulness practice, he discussed his decision to pause in silence during conversations or work sessions. He explained that in his work, he will often take time for a silent pause because it provides a “touch point” within himself that he can transfer to others through example. He explained that he works with people who are very busy and want to keep moving, “[but when I sit in silence, I’m] still staying engaged...even when the whole room...is ready to just barrel out of there.” In this example, Burton described overcoming the influence of a fast-paced corporate environment as well as the direct influence of other individuals in a hurry to leave their session with him. Burton adopted his own framework for how to “be” with others, operating outside of the framework that is offered by the systems and people around him.

Theme 8 - Embodied transformation. The theme of *Embodied Transformation* combines the concepts of embodied learning and transformational learning. As mentioned previously, for the purposes of this study, both embodied and somatic learning are used interchangeably to refer to a type of experiential learning that involves the body as a source for learning. In embodied learning, the body is considered a source of knowledge (Clark, 2001; Freiler, 2008; Gustafson, 1999). Michelson (1998) offers a feminist perspective of bodily learning. She presents the sensing body in its social and physical location as the initial site for learning. She explains, “the production of knowledge is a moment of social self-location...and one that uses all the cognitive, emotional, sensate, and muscular-neural faculties” (p. 226). Michelson claims that subsequent reflection allows mental processes to catch up with what the body already knows.

In embodied transformation, not only does the body offer new knowledge, but the new knowledge actually results in a new way of making meaning. To help draw a distinction between experiential embodied learning and what is referred to in this section as embodied transformation, an example is provided from the *Experiential Learning* theme in Chapter Four. Iboc provided an example that demonstrates embodied learning that is not embodied transformation: “When somebody’s rude, it helps...[to] take a breath; it’s not personal. Maybe you take two minutes just to concentrate on your breath and then you move on. And it helps.” When Iboc shifts her awareness to her breathing, she tunes into the body for information related to her response to rudeness, takes note of the response, and then returns to the situation with a fresh perspective. In the above example, Iboc accessed the sensations of breathing as a source for knowledge, but a shift in her meaning-making structure is not necessarily apparent.

During the data analysis process of this study, the theme *Embodied Transformation* was created as a separate category from *Shifts in Ways of Knowing* because the body as a source of knowledge appeared often enough in the data to be considered of significant importance. Also, several participants asserted the importance of body awareness as a part of their experience and their journey to an embodiment of mindfulness. An example from Kurt is presented in Table 11. Kurt brought up his desire to explore the body as part of his future development. He explained, “I’m realizing...that my body has... acquired knowledge and beliefs and false beliefs” and he would like to examine these non-cognitive ways of knowing more deeply. Also presented in Table 11, Susan called attention to the body’s role in healing from negative beliefs assimilated from her past in a strict religious community. She explained that much of her healing has been related to the body. She described some of the beliefs by which she had been previously surrounded, “...women are...denigrated in Christianity for leading men astray, for causing the downfall of all humanity with Eve,...[for] taking men away from their spiritual pursuits.” Her mindfulness practice, particularly meditation and mindful movement have provided her with the opportunity to explore a “...physical,...metaphorical remembering of the body.” She described this process as “putting the body back together” and “threading together again...the mind and the body” and coming to see the body as “a place...of wisdom.” Through mindfulness, Susan examined her old beliefs about the female body and constructed new beliefs. This exploration process helped her develop a new understanding, or new way of making meaning of “body.”

Other theorists working with transformational learning concepts recognize body awareness as an aspect of transformational learning. O’Sullivan, Morrell, and O’Connor (2002) have developed a definition of transformative learning that includes a shift in understanding related to body-awareness:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feeling, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awarenesses; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of the possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p. 11)

The above definition by O’Sullivan, Morrell, and O’Connor (2002) significantly informs the use of the term *Embodied Transformation*. Sunny provided an example (presented in Table 11) that helps to bring understanding to how the body can provide information that influences the way one makes meaning related to the perception of self. Sunny explained that her meditation practice and study of Buddhist philosophy have helped her cultivate the ability to identify when her “ego jumps in” and “the self wants to insert itself.” She described sensing a subtle “emotional impulse” or “movement of energy” in her body. Sunny’s ability to sense this bodily energy subsequently affects her interactions with the world. For example, communication with others “involves being aware of... my personal energy and the energy of the world coming back at me, and that interplay.” She also stated that her days are lived more through her “felt experience” than from a place of thinking. She spoke openly about how her personal understanding of body has influenced her way of being in the world. Based on Sunny’s example, it can be assumed that an embodied form of development has expanded her awareness, understanding, and meaning-making capacity.

An additional statement from Mary (see Table 11) supports the idea of embodied transformation. Mary reported that her mindfulness practice has helped her navigate living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). She explained that her practice initiated an awareness that not only shifted her daily behaviors but also changed the way she listens to and responds to her body. She described her experience with MS as one that is stress-related and affects her vision and cognitive thinking. However, she reported that she has not experienced many exacerbations of her illness lately and attributes this change to her mindfulness practice. She provided an example to explain the mind-body feedback loop that she uses her to regulate the health of her body, “when...I feel...tension...or stress in my body...I have the resource [to manage the tension or stress]...Without that knowledge...the body tenses up.” Mary explained that her moment-to-moment thinking, actions, and behaviors have been shaped by her experience with mindfulness. The new way of being that she has developed in relation to her body’s wisdom has subsequently (and positively) influenced her health.

Susan’s creative piece, her mandala, was presented in Table 11. The mandala offers a visual depiction of specific embodied changes in her way of being. She described the piece as “...a representation of my being, which has been shaped and transformed by mindfulness.” She indicated that mindfulness offers a different way of being related to her relationship with herself and “in relationship to all other beings in the world.” Changes related to the body are depicted in the blue circle of the mandala. She explained that this circle “represents the fluidity of experience in the body...[such as] breath and sensations of the body, the mind...[or] thoughts and emotions, and sounds, and the experience of riding the waves of sensations inside and outside the body.”

Four Particularly Significant Themes

While it is difficult to categorize some themes as more significant than others, four of the eight themes were considered particularly important and were selected for additional discussion. The four themes selected for additional discussion are: Informational Learning, Experiential Learning, Shifts in Ways of Knowing, and Embodied Transformation.

Informational learning. Seven of the 10 study participants shared that their mindfulness practices were built on introductory knowledge related to philosophy, science, or general concepts related to mindfulness that were offered to them through books, classes, retreats, or training programs. This information provided a foundation from which new understanding, required for a new way of being through an embodiment of mindfulness, could emerge. For example, in a significant statement provided in Table 4, Kurt described how he had acquired new information from reading that was required for critical changes associated with mindful living. He explained that in all of his readings in psychology, he had not been exposed to the concept of *leaning into* emotional or physical discomfort. He commented on the impact that this concept has had on his life, “it’s...really been through the mindfulness readings that I learned that this is a critical element in truly rewiring your life.”

Informational learning is considered exceptionally important because in many—but not all—cases, new information related to mindfulness philosophy served as a base from which participants could cultivate new personal knowledge and understanding. This information provided the groundwork for what can be perceived as non-traditional ways of making meaning and understanding. It is possible that the participants in this study, who lived in contemporary Western society, would not have developed in the ways they reported if they had not been exposed to (and open to accepting) the perspectives provided through books and educational

sessions such as MBSR trainings and retreats, which commonly include Buddhist philosophical talks referred to as dharma talks.

Participants reported that knowledge acquired through informational learning was eventually integrated as deeper understanding. In some cases, this type of information began as a skill or piece of information, but it was not permanently held as such. In an example from Table 4, Sunny explained that she learns best from teachers who provide her with a “scaffolding” of new information to help her process her own experiences. She understands the new information when she applies it to her personal experience.

Informational learning can be viewed as a contributor to development of the person as a whole. Miller (2005) explains that “...development of the whole person...includes the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual” (p. 2). New knowledge acquired through informational learning can add to a person’s already existing knowledge bank in the aforementioned areas, providing fodder for future growth. In an example provided in Table 4, Kurt explained that his developmental changes often begin “with an intellectual understanding” or “a cognitive appreciation” of a particular mindfulness concept. However, following significant mindfulness practices (such as daily practice and retreats), his cognitive knowing becomes an embodied knowing.

Based on a review of the significant statements categorized under the theme Informational Learning, it can be presumed that the knowledge attained through informational learning has the potential to contribute to subsequent development related to embodied mindfulness.

Experiential learning. The theme of experiential learning has been identified as significant largely because of the frequency with which it was revealed during participant interviews. Fifty-nine of the 209 total significant statements were categorized under the *Experiential Learning* theme. These significant statements make up more than one quarter of all the significant statements in this study. Nine of the 10 participants reported examples of experiential learning as an influence on an embodiment of mindfulness. Based on the data, participants reported that experiential learning, or learning through experience, was a clear contributor to their development of embodied mindfulness.

It is possible that examples of experiential learning were identified so frequently in the data because experiential learning covers various domains of learning. Boud, Cohen, and Walker (1993) describe experiential learning as a holistic process. They explain that at times it might be easier to break experiential learning into different personal domains, for example, the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. However, “no one aspect is discrete and independent of the rest and no one aspect should generally be privileged over the rest” (p. 12). Boud, Cohen, and Walker explain that learning is “not readily constrained by time or place” (p. 13). However, experiential learning is influenced by both the student’s constitution as a whole (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) *and* their interaction with the context through which learning occurs.

Armed with this knowledge about the far reaching span of experiential learning, it is important for MBSR teachers and practitioners to take into account the effect of context on learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness. In an example from Table 5, Mary Ellen offered a description of how she learns from everyday experiences. Based on her statement, one can infer that Mary Ellen experienced (and reported that she continues to experience) learning through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Mary Ellen

explained that she cultivates one of the aspects of mindfulness (patience) through daily life experiences, "...It's in...crabby moments...[or] hurry...That's...the opportunity for patience to arise...If there's impatience, you can...*feel* the non-truth of it, 'I feel like I need to fly out of my body,' says the mind." Mary Ellen's observation supports statements from the MBSR Standards of Practice (Santorelli, 2014) put forth by the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Center for Mindfulness, "A first-hand, on-going, experiential engagement in mindfulness practice on the part of both the instructor and the patients (participants) is the primary feature of MBSR" (p. 9). The document also states that it is "critically important" (p. 9) that instructors present a contextual framework whereby participants can begin to examine and understand the relationship between their mindfulness practice and everyday life experiences.

Shift in ways of knowing. As noted in Chapter Four, this theme categorized examples of significant statements that appear to represent shifts in ways of knowing, also known as ways of making meaning. *Shifts in Ways of Knowing* is significant because it is a way of learning that is not typical of more traditional learning environments, but it was clearly evident among this study's participants. Also, there is an observation related to this theme that was not presented previously—the theme *Perspective Change* has been identified as a potential pre-requisite to *Shifts in Way of Knowing*. As described in Chapter Four, *Perspective Change* is defined in this study as a shift in perception related to thoughts, feelings, sensations, or behaviors. A specific type of perspective change has been identified by many names in meditation. The specific type of perspective change refers to when mindfulness practitioners turn their attention to thoughts, feelings, sensations, or behaviors and observe them in a non-judgmental way, which leads to a detachment from them. Shapiro et al. (2006) refer to this shift as *reperceiving*, Fresco et al.

(2007) describe this shift as *decentering*, and Kerr, Josyula, and Littenburg (2011) have described this experience as the development of an *observer perspective*.

The reason *perspective change* is seen as a potential pre-cursor to a *shift in ways of knowing* is that acute attention and awareness (cultivated through mindfulness practices) in combination with non-judgment can lead to the examination of habits or patterns in thoughts, feelings, sensations, or behaviors which provides new thinking or new knowledge. It is my opinion, based on personal experience, the new knowledge that results from a *perspective change* can facilitate a *shift in ways of knowing*. Susan offered an example (presented in Table 8) that demonstrates a perspective change that potentially initiated a shift in her way of knowing. She explained that MBSR helped her move away from previously held beliefs that prioritized the body as being more appealing or attractive than the mind, referring to this move as a “return to embodiment.” She explained that this transition was not easy, “it was really challenging to...love the body, [and] love the mind.” As a result of her perspective change related to the body and mind, she was able to cultivate new way of being that includes bringing a consistent “quality of gentleness, of compassion, of empathy for the self.”

This example demonstrates how Susan’s experience with meditation helped her shift old thought patterns—thought patterns that prioritized the feminine body over the mind—towards valuing both the body and the mind (a *perspective change*). This change appeared to have assisted in the construction of a new more gentle, compassionate, and empathetic reality (*shift in way of knowing*). To use Mezirow’s (2000a) terminology, it can be presumed that Susan’s new views provide the scaffolding, or new points of view, required to make a shift in her meaning-making structure.

Embodied transformation. Six of the 10 participants reported experiences that were categorized as embodied transformation. Embodied transformation for the purposes of this study describes shifts in meaning-making, also known as transformation, initiated by bodily wisdom. The theme of *Embodied Transformation* is particularly important to this study because no reference to embodied transformation as it relates to adult learning and development could be found in the literature. Additionally, the theme of *embodied transformation* was described as significant to those who reported experiencing it. This theme describes a type of change that I have personally experienced, but until I conducted the study, only understood abstractly. During the interview process, Mary Ellen referred to this type of change as “embodied transformation,” and through subsequent analysis of participants’ transcripts, it became clear that embodied transformation was a true developmental concept. It is a concept that has not yet been empirically examined.

An example offered by Mary (presented in Table 11) demonstrated how embodied transformation, a type of body-based development, included the cultivation of changes in perception related to her ways of being in the body and in the world. Mary described a time within the last year when she was consistently striving to do more for her career, and then she broke her leg. She explained that her ambitions and the trajectory of her intended future was immediately halted. She spent a significant amount of time in a wheelchair and found the months of recovery to be humbling. She commented on the significance of “the waiting” and explained that she could no longer be striving. As she reflected on how this recent experience changed her, she shared that it was a blessing: “I’m so grateful that I had this...experience because it’s slowed me down...I just need to *be*...I had to go through it.” This change has carried into her life now, with a healed leg.

In another example listed in Table 11, Burton described how embodied transformation extends into several areas of his life. He explained that through his mindfulness practice, he has been able to cultivate an increased trust in his body, particularly in the ways that his body alerts him that attention or care is needed. He explained that “being able to tune into those [bodily] indicators...has been an immeasurably valuable resource...and [this insight] moves into a bunch of different situations in a bunch of different ways.”

Influences on Learning and Development Not Captured in Themes

It is likely that participants experienced additional influences on learning and development related to an embodiment of mindfulness that were not captured in this study. Only 10 participants were interviewed, and although the interviews were in-depth, it is not possible to capture every experience of learning and development during an interview. Time offers a constraint, and participants might not have been able to recall or report upon all of the experiences that contributed to their learning and development. Also, it is possible that some experiences of learning and development are not identified by participants as experiences of learning and development.

Every effort was made to capture all of the significant experiences reported within this study and these experiences were recorded as significant statements. All significant statements were categorized into one of eight themes. However, it is possible that I have missed one or more significant experiences when reviewing and recording due to my own biases, perspectives, or human error.

Limitations of the Current Study

The following limitations were identified:

- 1) The data collected was limited to the experiences of the participants interviewed.

While the 10 individuals that took part in the study were able to offer diverse personal experiences, it is likely that additional participants would have offered even more diverse examples of experiences.

- 2) Only one interview was conducted per participant. Each participant's mood, energy level, or life situation might have influenced the communication during the interview and the information revealed. Additional interviews would have provided an opportunity to elicit new information or more details. Also, time between interviews would have offered an opportunity for participants to reflect upon what was discussed initially, allowing for stimulation of new or additional information. The single-interview design might have limited the breadth or depth of data collected.
- 3) Some participants reported that the MBSR training path only played a minor role in the cultivation of an embodiment of mindfulness. While many of the significant statements provided pertain to learning and development that occurred along the MBSR training path, it should be noted that the potential opportunities for growth provided here are not *only* available through the MBSR training pathway.
- 4) The sample consisted of mostly qualified MBSR teachers (nine participants were qualified teachers and one was a certified teacher). While this strategy was purposeful in order to collect relatively recent experiences that led to the initial development of an embodiment of mindfulness, the inclusion of more certified teachers might have led to the collection of more diverse information during the interviews.

- 5) Only MBSR teachers were interviewed. While these teachers came from various backgrounds and practiced various traditions of contemplative practices, it is possible that they all maintained a similar understanding of embodied mindfulness as a result of their MBSR training. A more varied sample might have brought forth different findings.
- 6) Complexities associated with learning and development brought challenges to defining significant statements as specific concepts and processes. This challenge led to tremendous overlap across themes. An attempt was made to identify which theme best described each example and the example was categorized within that theme. I made a strong effort to draw clear boundaries between each category, but it was not always possible to keep these distinctions separate. For example, I believed it was important to discuss informational learning as a unique category for learning because participants often referenced a bank of source information related to mindfulness that had been acquired through oral and written mediums. However, in many cases, it can be difficult to separate oral and written learning from experiential learning. Additionally, each of the themes represent such complex and multifaceted processes, concepts, and theories that a separate study could have been conducted into any one particular theme.
- 7) Vocabulary regarding the concept of contemplation and meditation in the English language is limited. Vocabulary limitations existing at the outset might have limited communication with all participants, but might have been further impacted by a potential language barrier. For some participants, English was not their primary language. The topics that were discussed were often very rich, complex, and

sometimes emotional. Any of these contributing factors might have influenced word-finding.

- 8) Researchers bring their own experiences and views to their study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013b). I maintain a personal perspective. My subjectivity influenced my interactions with participants, the data analysis and interpretation processes, and subsequent meaning-making associated with the phenomenon under study. In order to reduce the effects of my limited perspective, participants were utilized for member-checking and my dissertation committee served to promote trustworthiness. However, the selection of relevant information and the presentation of findings have been shaped by my own experiences and worldview.

Suggestions for Future Research

I believe I have only scratched the surface when exploring the various experiences, processes, and theories revealed in this study. Focus on one specific theme would be an interesting avenue for future research. It would also be interesting to determine how various aspects such as (but not limited to) context, cognitive processing, or individual experiences impact or influence the appearance of a singular theme related to the learning and development of embodied mindfulness.

Two particularly interesting themes to explore more deeply would be *Embodied Transformation* and *Shifts in Ways of Knowing*. I believe participants provided examples of true developmental transformations or shifts in meaning-making, but these beliefs cannot be verified solely by the data gathered in this study. In order to determine whether true shifts in meaning-making structures or transformations occurred, one must develop a separate study. To explore these themes more deeply, I recommend the development of interview questions targeted at an

investigation of specific operational definitions related to each of the themes. For example, Mezirow (2009) and O'Sullivan et al. (2002) offer two different theoretical frameworks regarding transformational change. Kegan (1982) provides a model for shifts in meaning-making structures. Belenky et al. (1997) offer a model that describes women's ways of knowing. These scholars all offer interesting platforms for further investigation.

Another potential avenue for future research would be to explore the changes experienced by a more specific population. The sample population in this study was somewhat diverse, but a different sample would likely yield more or different findings. For example, I noticed when reviewing literature related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs that all of my participants met four of the five stages of needs. Their privilege or advantage might have offered ideal conditions for the development of embodied mindfulness. Not all meditation practitioners have been (or are) in such a position of advantage. Maslow's hierarchy stimulated thinking about the motivations of those who have pursued meditation without meeting either basic or psychological needs. MBSR programs have been studied in various populations, including the impoverished, those who live with fatal illnesses, and those with varying degrees of mental illnesses. I am curious to know about the processes of learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness among members of these populations and any others that might offer a different perspective from the population investigated in this study.

Final remarks

In Chapter Two of this dissertation, I presented Mezirow and Taylor's (2009) six core elements to transformational change to offer a framework through which an integration of learning and development in MBSR teacher training could be considered. Mezirow and Taylor identified several essential elements that can be implemented by educators to nurture the

development of transformational change in a learning environment. They proposed the following elements as common to most transformative educational experiences: individual experience, critical reflection, dialogue, holistic orientation, awareness of context, and an authentic practice. In Chapter Two, it was inferred that one way to integrate learning and development was to stimulate transformational learning (or *development*) while *learning* by introducing these six elements to an educational environment.

The findings of this study provide evidence that these core elements are present in the MBSR teacher training pathway. *Individual experience* can be associated with the themes of Informational Learning and Experiential Learning. *Critical reflection* was apparent in Perspective Change, Shifts in Ways of Knowing, and Embodied Transformation. Examples of *dialogue* were apparent in the theme Learning Through Other. *Holistic Orientation* was evident in a combination of multiple themes as participants reported growth through multiple processes. *Awareness of Context* can be associated with Spiritual Learning through the cultivation of safe learning spaces, for example, and Motivation through consideration of the learners' individual and group situations at the time of learning. Lastly, *An Authentic Practice* is evidenced through the overarching philosophy that undergirds the competency known as an embodiment of mindfulness—the belief that competent teachers are those who deeply know and understand themselves through their own authentic mindfulness practice.

Application of Findings

This study offers new information to support future dialogue as well as teaching and research associated with mindfulness-based initiatives. It is suggested that the findings of this study be used to supplement program development and evaluation as well as individual teacher and program improvements. The findings can be generally applied to facilitate additional

understanding related to learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness in the following populations: MBSR teachers, doctors, therapists, and other professionals who use Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs) including but not limited to, MBSR and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).

The findings of this study have the potential to positively impact the broader context of society. Our government, schools, workplaces, families, and communities include individuals who struggle as they attempt to manage complications related to their daily lives. These complications include physical pain and illness as well as mental or stress-related illness, in addition to other conditions and ailments. One can infer that the pain related to such complications can have deleterious effects on individual members of society, which has the potential to subsequently affect larger systems within society. There is a need to help people better manage pain and stress and more skillfully cope with related issues. Research shows that MBSR offers one way to help people navigate the inherent complexities of life.

Chapter Summary

This study was designed to examine the phenomenon of MBSR teachers' experiences of learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness. In Chapter Four, eight themes were revealed as processes that contributed to the phenomenon of learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness. In this chapter, I discussed the theories supporting each theme and provided additional commentary on four particularly significant themes. Potential influences on learning and development related to an embodiment of mindfulness not covered under the eight themes were acknowledged. Final remarks were provided. Lastly, I discussed how the findings of this study can be applied in the MBSR

community, declared limitations of the current study, and delivered suggestions for future research.

This study was designed to collect reports from a sample of individuals regarding their experiences with the phenomenon of learning and development associated with an embodiment of mindfulness. The intention was to gather some examples of experiences of learning and development in order to provide new information and enhanced understanding related to the phenomenon under study. I conclude that the participants in this study reported at least eight processes of learning and development associated with the embodiment of mindfulness: 1) Informational Learning, 2) Experiential Learning, 3) Learning Through Other, 4) Spiritual Learning, 5) Motivation 6) Perspective Change, 7) Shifts in Ways of Knowing, and 8) Embodied Transformation. These themes represent examples of learning and development, as well as an integration of learning and development.

The eight themes are intended to serve as guiding factors to assist in optimizing the cultivation of embodied mindfulness during the design, improvement, and offering of MBSR programs. It is hoped that the presentation of this information will offer MBSR teachers and other practitioners of MBSR a paradigm by which their own processes of learning and development along with the processes of their students can be understood, discussed, and explored.

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Appendix A

Information Gathering Questionnaire

Please fill out this form to the best of your ability. I thank you for your involvement in this study and I look forward to talking with you soon! – Kristen

Name: _____ **Identified gender:** _____ **Age:** _____

Pseudonym (if you do not provide a pseudonym, one will be provided for you in order to maintain confidentiality): _____

Current residential address: _____

Country of birth: _____

Number of years in current country of residence: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Do you identify as having a particular religious affiliation or belief system ? _____

If so, what is your religious affiliation/belief system? _____

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, highest degree received:* _____

Please describe your work/profession: _____

Teaching Experience

How long have you been teaching mindfulness? Mindfulness activities for the purposes of this study include MBSR, other forms of meditation, yoga, reiki, qi gong, tai chi, or aikido.

Describe Activity	How long did you teach or have you taught?	Are you currently teaching this activity?	How long has it been since you have taught?

MBSR Teacher Training Experience

When did you attend your first silent meditation retreat of 5 days or longer? _____

When did you attend your first 8-Week MBSR Program? _____

When did you attend the MBSR Teacher Training Practicum? _____

When did you attend the MBSR or Practice Teaching Intensive (formerly known as the Teacher Development Intensive)? _____

If you are a *Certified* MBSR Teacher, when did you receive your teacher certification? _____

Do/did you use MBCT in your profession? _____ If so, for how many years? _____

Experience with Mindfulness Activities

Please indicate which statement most accurately describes your mindfulness practice

(mindfulness activities for the purposes of this study include meditation, yoga, reiki, qi gong, tai chi, or aikido). If you have maintained another practice, and would also categorize it as mindfulness practice, please indicate that practice here: _____

☐ **I practice occasionally.**

What type of mindfulness activity or activities do you practice?

How often do you practice? _____

☐ **I maintain a fairly routine practice.**

What type of mindfulness activity or activities do you practice?

How often do you practice? _____

☐ **I maintain a formal, routine practice.**

What type of mindfulness activity or activities do you practice?

How often do you practice? _____

Please feel free to clarify any of the above statements or provide additional details related to your practice here:

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study or any part of this study. You have the right to drop out of the study at any time with no impact to you. You have the right to ask questions at any time throughout the study.

The second page of this form (*Participant Activities and Expectations*) includes a detailed description of what is going to be required of you throughout the course of the study.

You will undergo minimal or no stress or harm by participating in this research. As a result of internal reflection associated with the study, you may experience emotion-laden thoughts or memories. If you experience distress during this study or as a direct result of this study, you should contact the investigator, Kristen Picard, at the number or e-mail address provided.

You have the right to remain anonymous for the purposes of research presentations and publications. Your records will be private and confidential to the extent allowed by law. A pseudonym will be used as an identifier on study records rather than your name. Your name and other attributes that might identify you will not appear when the results of this study are presented or published; only your pseudonym will be used to identify you or the information you have provided.

You will be asked to produce a creative piece as part of involvement in this study. Because some forms of creative data have the potential to reveal identity, you will have the opportunity to **release** or **refuse the release** of your creative piece for public presentations and publications. See *Release Creative Data Form*. You will be asked to complete the *Release Creative Data Form* at the time of the interview.

If you have questions: Contact the researcher, Kristen Picard, at kbenoit2@lesley.edu or at 978-339-3867. You can also contact her faculty supervisor, Dr. Terry Keeney, at tkeeney@lesley.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Lesley University's Institutional Review Board (IRB)'s Co-Chair, Robyn Cruz, at rcruz@lesley.edu.

You will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

Your printed name, signature, and date below indicates agreement to the terms of this form:

Printed Name	Signature	Date
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There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu.

Participant Activities and Expectations

An overview of participant activities and expectations associated with the study is provided in the following paragraphs.

Participant Recruitment. Volunteers will be recruited through internet-based forums or groups, or via personal connections. Volunteer participants will be asked to affirm their interest in the study by replying to the forum or group posting or by responding to the researcher via email, telephone, or in person. Each participant enrolled in the study will be provided with a personal introduction from the researcher and an overview of the study. The overview will include the general purpose of the study, the definition of the embodiment of mindfulness for the purpose of this study, and a review of participant expectations and involvement, including a description of the interview process. The researcher will arrange an interview appointment with each volunteer via email, telephone, Skype, or in person. An Information Gathering Questionnaire will be provided to the participant via email or US postal service. The Information Gathering Questionnaire will be completed by the participant and returned to the researcher prior to the interview.

Interview. The interview will take place in person or through internet communication that offers both verbal and visual expression. It will be audio- and video-recorded.

Prior to the interview, participants will be asked to develop a creative product that is symbolic of a turning point or significant insight that they believe to be a result of their MBSR training or MBSR practice. It may be a musical compilation, photograph, dance, painting, illustration, poem, or any other form of expression that the participant chooses. The creative piece will serve as one of the topics for discussion during the interview. Participants will need to bring or perform their piece at the time of the interview. If the creative piece cannot be offered at the interview, a photograph, audio recording, or video recording may be provided in its place. It is noted that not all individuals will be comfortable with the development of a creative piece. For this reason, participants also have the option to deliver a written or verbal narrative as their creative piece.

The interview will be approximately two hours in duration and is comprised of three segments. The first segment includes an open question and answer period in which the participant will be asked to discuss experiences related to each question that comes to mind. The second segment includes directed questions that are specific to the participants' experiences regarding the embodiment of mindfulness. The third segment will include two questions and subsequent discussion regarding the participant's creative piece.

After the interview, the researcher will contact participants via email and ask them to review and comment upon the initial findings as part of the data analysis process. The intention of this activity is to ensure that significant aspects of participants' perspectives and experiences were appropriately identified and captured.

Participants can choose not to answer particular questions, and no further clarification will be required.

Appendix C

Release Creative Data Form

You will be asked to produce a creative piece, which will serve as creative data, as part of your involvement in this study.

If you choose to **release** your creative piece for use in public presentations or publications, a pseudonym will be used as an identifier instead of your name to identify your creative piece.

Because some forms of creative data have the potential to reveal identity, you have the option to refuse the release of your creative piece for public presentation and publication.

If you choose to **refuse release** of your creative piece for public presentation and publication, only the researcher, her advisor, and members of her dissertation committee will view your creative piece. It will not be used in public presentations or publications.

In order for you to make a decision that is specifically applicable to your finished piece, this form is to be completed at the time of the interview.

You will receive a copy of this form to keep.

RELEASE

Your printed name, signature, and date below indicates that you RELEASE your creative piece for public presentation or publication:

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name	Signature	Date

REFUSE RELEASE

Your printed name, signature, and date below indicates that you REFUSE RELEASE of your creative piece for public presentation or publication:

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name	Signature	Date

Appendix D

Interview Guide

- I. Opening Introductions and Discussion
- II. Define embodiment of mindfulness
- III. Review the intentions of the study as they relate to this interview:

To gather information related to MBSR teachers' developmental experiences associated with the embodiment of mindfulness.

The questions below guided the interview. Participants were informed that they were not required to answer all of the questions and no further clarification was necessary.

Questions for Open Developmental Interview Segment:

- 1.) How do you think your perspectives have changed throughout your teacher training and afterwards?
- 2.) What changes occurred in your life that might be related to your MBSR teacher training? When did they occur?
- 3.) What types of shifts have you noticed in the ways you connect with yourself? Are you able to identify when these shifts occurred?
- 4.) What types of shifts have you noticed in the ways you connect with others? Are you able to identify when these shifts occurred?
- 5.) What types of professional changes have occurred that you believe to be related to your MBSR teacher training? Are you able to identify when these shifts occurred?
- 6.) Have you experienced any shifts in productivity or creativity as a result of your training? If so, please explain (include timing in relation to training).

Questions for Directed Developmental Interview Segment:

- 1.) Describe how present moment focus appears in your life. Present moment focus refers to the ability to maintain attention and responsiveness to what arises from moment to moment.
- 2.) Was this the same or different before beginning your MBSR training? How? If it is different now, how did this shift occur?
- 3.) Describe an example of a time when you were able to suspend judgment. Suspending judgment (or non-judgment) can be described as not being caught up in your thoughts or ideas (such as your likes or dislikes, for example).
- 4.) How did your MBSR training contribute to this act of non-judgment?
- 5.) Please describe an experience when you practiced patience. Patience, for the purposes of this study, refers to the ability to know that all must unfold in its own time.
- 6.) How did your MBSR training influence your ability to practice patience in this situation?
- 7.) Describe an example of a time when you maintained the interest, curiosity, or vitality of a beginner's mind. A beginner's mind refers to being willing to see something as if for the first time.
- 8.) How did this ability emerge as a result of your MBSR training?

- 9.) Explain a scenario when you came to trust in the process of mindfulness. Trust can be described here as the honoring of your own feelings or experience.
- 10.) How did this stem from your MBSR training?
- 11.) Explain how you honored the unfolding of a particular moment through non-striving. Non-striving is not trying to do or be anything in particular—just being.
- 12.) How did your MBSR training lead you to honor that moment this way?
- 13.) Tell me about an experience of acceptance that occurred for you recently. Acceptance means being with each moment, exactly as it is (not forcing it to be different, for example).
- 14.) How did your MBSR training contribute to this act of acceptance?
- 15.) Describe a time when you were able to “let go” or “let be”? Letting go or letting be is the act of cultivating non-attachment, or accepting things as they are.

Questions for Creative Piece Interview Segment:

- 1.) Tell me about the creative piece you have developed. What does it represent?
- 2.) Taking your time, how would you summarize your thinking from the beginning to the end of the experience represented here?

If time allowed, the following additional prompts were provided to elicit additional examples of potential development:

- Share a little about an insight that has emerged for you that you believe was related to your MBSR training or practice.
- Provide an example of how your thinking *now* differs from your thinking *before* your training.