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Mindfulness training for individuals in organisations: Application, adaptation and perceived value

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Declaration of my own work

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree or examination at any other university. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Signed by candidate

Linda Sara Kantor

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Date: 1 June 2018

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) teachers and participants everywhere.

To Jon Kabat-Zinn, who changed my life.

To my teachers in MBSR: Dr Saki Santorelli, Florence Meyer and Melissa Blacker.

To Dr Simon Whitesman, our shared journey in this work in South Africa continues to amaze me.

And to the wise teachers, Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and many others, whose living presence continues to inspire me to spread this work.

–x–

> *What is the relation of contemplation to action? Simply this. He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centred ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas. There is nothing more tragic in the modern world than the misuse of power and action.*
> – Thomas Merton (1966)

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Although many say that a PhD journey is a lonely one, my experience has been one where so many caring individuals have provided support, allowing me to feel that there was always someone to reach out to. Here are just a few that I would like to mention.

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Abstract

Recently, mindfulness training has garnered increasing interest from organizational practitioners and scholars. This research explores participants' applications, experiences, and perceived impact of mindfulness for those who have undergone training outside of the workspace. Kabat-Zinn's approach to Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) underpins and informs this research.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 53 participants working in a variety of organisational contexts. Participants had trained in one of three different Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs): an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme (MBSR) a two-year Mindful Leadership programme as part of an Executive MBA programme, and a two-year Mindfulness certification for professionals.

Using an interpretive phenomenological approach and thematic analysis, I explored ways in which participants applied and shared mindfulness practice at work and home. I present the results in the form of an inductive model of mindfulness in the workplace. I distinguish some key individual meta-capacities (awareness of the wandering mind, embodiment, equanimity and kindness) and capacities developed (resilience, sense-of-self, multiple perspectives and possibility). I highlight how mindfulness enhanced the ability to work with difficult emotions, thoughts and sensations, opening participants up to new modes of relationship and new framings of productivity and power in the workplace. The transformation in the areas of productivity, power and relationality, could be tied in with the Buddhist concept of three poisons; greed (excessive productivity), hatred (competitive and aggressive workplace behaviours) and delusion (use and abuse of power at work). Mindfulness provides an antidote. The voices of participants highlight the intra and interpersonal effects and the potential and challenges of mindfulness practice in organisational contexts.

This research offers some hopeful data and a deeper understanding of the potential of mindfulness training as a modality for transformation in the workplace. It offers this at a time where some critics question whether the use of mindfulness to improve work-life might lead to dilution and misappropriation of the practice. The model developed in this study contributes to Positive Organisational Scholarship (POS) literature and provides a map of how mindfulness might be of value in the workplace in the service of wisdom and compassion.

Definitions and constructs

Affect: includes feeling traits and states. Feeling states contain emotions (from a particular target) and moods (diffuse). Feeling traits: the stable underlying tendency to experience positive and negative moods (Barsade & Gibson, 2007).

Compassion: A multidimensional process of **four** key components: (i) an awareness of suffering, (ii) sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering, (iii) wishing to see the relief of suffering, (iv) a responsive readiness to relieve suffering (Jazaieri et al., 2013).

Concentration practice: these meditation practices focus attention on a single object of meditation, most commonly the breath, in order to provide stability to the mind.

De-centering: The ability to be present to thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental way. A further similar concept is reperceiving which is described by Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, and Freedman (2006).

Dharma: In Buddhism, Dharma means *"cosmic law and order"*, but is also applied to the teachings of the Buddha. There is no single word translation for Dharma in Western languages.

Empathy: affective attunement with another (Halifax, 2012).

Flow: An optimal level of experience where activity is used to create a state where one is *"in the zone"* and full attention is absorbed, and mindfulness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Formal mindfulness practice: carving out time for daily meditation practice.

Informal mindfulness practice: bringing a moment-to-moment awareness to one's daily life.

Meta-cognitive awareness: This term is used interchangeably with the term meta-cognition. It has been identified as a major component of the change in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). This capacity has been defined as the process where negative thoughts can be seen as passing events as opposed to sold parts of the self or reality (Grabovac, Lau, & Willett, 2011).

Mindfulness practices: otherwise known as insight practice allowing an understanding of the characteristics of impermanence (the transient nature of phenomenon), suffering (our habitual

patterns of attachment and aversion), and Not-self (there is no lasting identity to sensations or phenomenon of the mind).

Self-compassion: as a healthy form of self-acceptance that entails **three** main components, namely (i) kindness to self in the face of suffering or perceived inadequacy, (ii) a sense of common humanity and the recognition that suffering is part of what we all share, and (iii) a balanced way of facing one's emotions.

States: Present activity, temporary states of mind and mood (Allport & Odbert, 1936).

Traits: Consistent and stable modes of an individual's adjustment to his environment (Allport & Odbert, 1936).

Keywords

Mindfulness, Mindfulness-Based Intervention, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Mindfulness in Organisations/Organizations

List of acronyms

1. ACT: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
2. AI: Appreciative Inquiry
3. BPM: Buddhist Psychological Model
4. CBT: cognitive behavioural therapy
5. DBT: Dialectical Behavioural Therapy
6. EI: Emotional Intelligence
7. EMBA: Executive MBA
8. FG-MBI: First-Generation Mindfulness-Based Intervention
9. HRO: High-Reliability Organisation
10. IAA: Intention, Attention and Attitude
11. IAT: Implicit Association Test
12. IMD: Institute for Management Development (IMD Business School in Lausanne)
13. IMISA: Institute for Mindfulness South Africa
14. IPA: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
15. MAAS: Mindful Attention Awareness Scale
16. MAT: Meditation Awareness Training
17. MBA: Master of Business Administration
18. MBCT: Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
19. MBI: Mindfulness-Based Intervention
20. MBSR: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
21. MOC: Managerial and Organisational Cognition
22. MRI: Magnetic Resonance Imaging
23. NCCAM: National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
24. OD: Organisational Development
25. POB: Positive Organisational Behaviour
26. POS: Positive Organisational Scholarship
27. PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
28. RCT: Randomised Controlled Trial

29. rsFC: Resting-State Functional Connectivity
30. SDT: Self-Determination Theory
31. SG-MBI: Second Generation Mindfulness-Based Intervention
32. TL: Transformational Learning
33. TM: Transcendental Meditation
34. UK: United Kingdom
35. US: United States
36. VUCA: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous

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CHAPTER ONE

> *The most radical thing any of us can do at this time is to be fully present to what is happening in the world.* (Macy, 2017 in an interview with Dahr Jamail, 2017, para. 12).

1.1 Introduction

We live in a fast-paced world. Distractions and demands, rapid social and economic change and diverse workplaces bombard those working in organisational contexts. The psychological and physiological impact of this culture of distraction and pace is of concern. A means of slowing down and responding to the conundrums of the workplace with more peace and equanimity might be valuable for those working in organisational contexts. However, what are the deeper implications of teaching people to slow down in the face of the complexity and the urge to remain competitive and driven in today's organisational world?

The term *"mindfulness"* describes a way of *"paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally"* (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). This capacity of attending moment to moment in a compassionate and non-judgmental way can be systematically cultivated and refined.

Empirical evidence that supports the use of mindfulness interventions has promoted this training. From the early 1980s, the field of mindfulness research and interventions was growing at a moderate level. The late 1990s saw a proliferation of research. This trend has continued today. Kabat-Zinn (2011) gives a compelling argument why this is so:

> *…the world and its institutions and denizens are literally and metaphorically starving for authentic ways to live and be and act in the world. We long for some degree of effective balance and wisdom that supports meaningful, embodied and significant work – the work of making a difference in the world, of adding value and beauty, of individually and collectively waking up to the full range of human intelligence and capacities we share for wisdom, ease of being, and kindness.* (p. xiii)

Reviews of empirical evidence indicate that mindfulness is a way of managing stress and is associated with reductions in a number of measures of psychological distress and reported medical symptoms (Baer, 2003; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Cullen, 2011; De Vibe, Bjorndal, Tipton, Hammerstrom, & Kowalski, 2012; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). In the United Kingdom (UK), the National Health Service has nominated Mindfulness-Based Cognitive

Therapy (MBCT) as its treatment of choice for patients living with major depressive disorder (Kuyken et al., 2008). Currently such interventions have expanded to include education (Shapiro et al., 2011), prisons (Samuelson et al., 2007), psychiatric conditions (Kuyken et al., 2008), medical conditions such as dementia, drug and alcohol dependence, HIV, chronic pain (Bishop, 2002; Creswell, 2017), and the United States (US) military (Jha et al., 2010; Jha et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2014). Mindfulness training is currently used in organisations as part of corporate training and wellness and in leading business schools. There is a growing body of research pointing to the positive impact of this modality at work (Good et al., 2015).

Evidence supporting mindfulness-based programmes in the treatment of physical and psychological health is strong, but in many areas, the uses of mindfulness are hopeful but relatively unexplored (Crane et al., 2016). In organisational science, mindfulness is an emerging field and researchers are interested in the ways in which it impacts work-life.

Training in this simple human ability to pay attention moment to moment has been developed for healthcare, education, and more recently organisational health and leadership. The understanding that we need to manage ourselves internally, so we can create a society that flourishes, is not new. Drucker's (1999) world-view, for example, was around healthy functioning organisations, which are populated by individuals who are well-functioning, and the practice of self-management. Goleman (2013) quotes the philosopher Martin Heidegger who during the 1950s warned against a technological revolution that might *"so captivate, bewitch, dazzle and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be …the only way of thinking. That would come at the loss of meditative thinking, a mode of reflection"* (p. 18).

The capacity for self-management and inner awareness seems to be more pressing at present. In this age of information, as our attention is increasingly hijacked by sensory, mental and emotional distractions, the issue of where and how we pay attention becomes crucial. Zajonc (2009) comments that while dealing with the problems of our times requires strong outer efforts, we need an equally strong inner effort, to change who we are. Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2007) argue that the manner in which we pay attention to situations both individually and as a collective determines the way systems emerge and evolve.

The psychological impact of distraction and fast-paced living is of concern in the workplace. The McKinsey Quarterly (2010) describes how multi-tasking work environments that are

always on, are reducing productivity and creativity. The capacity to pay attention in an increasingly challenging and disruptive world has garnered increased interest. Scharmer (2008) explains, *"Successful leadership depends on the quality of attention and intention that the leader brings to any situation"* (p. 52).

Kabat-Zinn in McCown, Reibel, & Micozzi, (2011) highlights that the implication of bringing mindfulness into the organisational space might enhance more than the quality of attention that Scharmer alludes to: *"For mindfulness is not just one more method or technique, akin to other familiar techniques and strategies, we may find instrumental and effective in one field or another. It is a way of being, seeing, of tapping into the full dimensionality of our humanity"* (p. xi).

Does the use of meditative thinking or meditation in the workplace have the potential to shift our understanding and connection to work? Sauer and Kohls (2011) describe how many tools and theories have been developed to improve leadership, and the views, belief systems, and values of successful leaders have been well researched. However, they note that there has been less focus on the states of mind or awareness related to leadership success. They pose the question *"is there a certain uniqueness to mindfulness that cannot be found in the enormous amount of leadership methods the world has seen and forgotten?"* (p. 289). Lyddy and Good (2017) reflect on the potential dissonance between mindfulness and traditional theories of Management and Organisational Cognition (MOC). They argue that the *"'Being Mode'…might offer a radical reconceptualization of the human mind"* (p. 16). This suggests that mindfulness training might also have the potential to create some disruption or transformation in the workplace.

Claims about the use of mindfulness at work are compelling. Bill George (2010), professor of management at Harvard Business School, describes the value of mindfulness in leadership: *"Mindfulness will help you clear away the trivia and the needless worries about unimportant things, nurture passion for your work and compassion for others, and develop the ability to empower the people in your organisation"* (para. 12).

As the media has grabbed hold of mindfulness studies, and the public's interest has increased dramatically, there is concern that mindfulness practices are being promoted with claims that are not fully supported. This is problematic, particularly in terms of bringing mindfulness into the organisational space where individual pathologies might be less seen or supported.

Although its introduction in the organisational arena is timely, there is a healthy concern that organisations might co-opt mindfulness to make people more productive and focused, or it might be used simply as a stress-management technique, missing the deeper understandings of what lies at the heart of its practice. Critics question whether modern mindfulness has diluted the essence of the practice and the practices themselves, which could lessen the impact and understanding (Forbes, 2012; Healey, 2015; Ng, 2015; Monteiro, Musten, & Compson, 2015; Purser & Loy, 2013).

Scholars have criticised the use of mindfulness in the workplace, referring to the Buddhist roots of practice. Purser and Loy (2013) suggest that mindfulness uncoupled from its Buddhist context in order to make it a viable product, leads to a denaturing of the practice *"which was intended for far more than relieving a headache, reducing blood pressure or helping executives become better focussed"* (para. 5). Kirk, Brown and Downar (2014) reflect on managing goal pursuit with mindfulness. Organisations are often places which encourage goals and accumulation of wealth, contrary to the Buddha's teachings regarding our attachment to greed, hatred and delusion.

Lyddy and Good (2017) question how mindfulness fits organisations, and that issues like disruption to goal-directed function is glossed over. Forbes (2012) highlights how the expectations companies such as Google's use of mindfulness for its employees can be mismatched. Using Google's in-house mindfulness programme as an example, the author claims;

> *"changing the stressful and emotionally harmful culture of the workplace itself is not on the agenda; the focus instead is on how to cope with the pressures rather than to question why the pressures are there and how they can be changed. Nor does it appear that the course examines the way the company possibly operates in the outside world and whether that too connects with and impacts on the everyday well-being of its employees".* (p. 5)

Critics are also concerned that this *"McMindfulness"* could be deployed to make employees more passive and accepting, at a time when the world needs social activism and change. Purser and Forbes (2017) claim it can lead to a *"zombified"* and productive workforce. Forbes, (2012) warns that its mindfulness training be used to maintain acceptance of a culture as opposed to challenging it missing the fundamental intentions of mindfulness -non-judgment, compassion, clarity, and insight of mind? Healey, (2015) describes how even as Silicon Valley companies

"deploy mindfulness programs for the benefit of their employees; they continue to develop platforms and services that exacerbate the problems of greed, aggression and delusion on a collective level" (p. 76).

Ng (2015) argues that stress is not just a problem of modern-day living, and of the individual, but it also *"important to interrogate and intervene in the structural conditions that generate stress in the first place"* (p. 1). The author cites the example of a 21-year-old Bank of America Merrill Lynch intern who died of an epileptic seizure after working 72 hours straight. Healey (2015) describes how even as Silicon Valley companies *"deploy mindfulness programs for the benefit of their employees, they continue to develop platforms and services that exacerbate the problems of greed, aggression and delusion on a collective level"* (p. 76).

More than 2.7 million people have downloaded the Headspace meditation smartphone app (Hafenbrack, 2017). Olano et al. (2015, p. 101) reported that 13% of US workers are practising some form of mindfulness (Meditation, Yoga, Tai Chi and Qigong), with the prevalence varying across socio-demographic groups. Kachan et al. (2017) found that 12% to 14 % of US workers and 9% to 12% of the unemployed reported they had engaged in at least one mindfulness practice in the past year. Whilst the South African figures for the numbers of workers practising mindfulness are unknown, I presume the percentage would be far less. We do not yet understand the impact of individuals learning these practices of their own accord, (as opposed to work-based programmes) and the opportunities and challenges mindfulness practice may bring to the workspace. Farb (2014) states that *"researchers may still work to distinguish 'right' from 'wrong' mindfulness through empirical study"* (p. 1062).

This study explores the ways in which individuals engage with mindfulness practice at work and may support and enhance training in this burgeoning field.

1.2 Motivation for the study

As a psychologist and mindfulness trainer since 1994, a door to teaching more fully in the organisational space opened for me in 2009. I began teaching a mindful leadership course at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business, in their Executive MBA Programme. In 2012, I also taught health professionals, coaches, and educators, on the first University Certification in Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) at the University of Stellenbosch. Over time, I have also taught in various organisational spaces. The range of responses, from willingness to engage, to resistance, has intrigued me.

As a practitioner with an interest in maintaining the integrity of the mindfulness approach, I consider a critical questioning of its uses in such spaces is timely. As we move more into an increasingly complex world, I have been interested in how mindfulness might support participants in becoming more compassionate, pro-social, and to challenge their workplaces in healthy ways. I reflected in my work on how individuals were using mindfulness, and whether it was being diluted or misused. I wondered whether organisations might reflect mismatched expectations of mindfulness. I also wondered how it might transform people's experiences of work and whether mindfulness, with its innate virtues such as compassion, attention, and non-judgment, might also enhance leadership models and be better utilised in Positive Organisational Scholarship (POS) literature and practice.

1.3 Purpose of the study

Drawing on thirty years of research on MBIs in healthcare, a strong case for the use of such interventions in the corporate world exists. Mindfulness in leadership is a part of a larger contemplative movement globally and is a relatively new field of research.

In this study, I explored the experiences of 53 individuals working in a variety of organisational contexts, using qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews. Mindfulness can be cultivated through formal mindfulness practices (carving out time for meditation practices) or informal practices (bringing a moment-to-moment awareness of one's daily life). The sample group for this study includes EMBA students attending a Mindful Leadership Programme at the University of Cape Town, participants on a two-year Mindfulness certification programme for health professionals, and participants from an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Programme (MBSR) who work in the organisational space.

This study aims to capture the richness and the nuances of the ways individuals apply and experience mindfulness practice and how these practices impact on their work-lives.

1.4 Research questions

This research explores the overarching question of the application, adaptation and perceived value of mindfulness training in work-lives. It poses the following questions:

1) In what ways are individuals using the practices both formally and informally? How do they adapt, experience and share the practices?

2) In what ways are they impacted by practices personally and in the broader context of work?

3) How mindfulness and mindfulness training might contribute to individual and organisational transformation and add to POS literature and practice.

The thesis roadmap is as follows:

Chapter Two presents the background literature in the field of mindfulness interventions.

Chapter Three presents the research design, data collection, ethical considerations and analysis, as well as strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of the results.

Chapters Four to Seven present findings and discussion.

Chapter Four describes how participants apply and share mindfulness practice.

Chapter Five highlights the key capacities developed through mindfulness practice.

Chapter Six describes how these capacities result in transformation in the dimension of resilience, sense of self, and capacity for multiple perspectives.

Chapter Seven demonstrates how these changes are reflected organisationally in the areas of productivity, power and relationality, and highlights some profiles of Mindful leaders/managers

Chapter Eight includes the overall research conclusions, theoretical and pedagogical contributions as well recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This review describes the existing literature in the areas of mindfulness definitions and constructs, MBIs, empirical studies, and critiques of mindfulness at work. To start, the definition of mindfulness and related constructs are explored from the perspectives of Buddhism, and Western Psychology. Next, a description of MBIs is provided, describing the programmes themselves, and the importance of adherence to practice and mindfulness facilitator training. An overview of empirical studies of mindfulness and cognitive neuroscience research, with a focus on work-based studies, is presented. The subsequent section explores the mechanisms and models of change that have emerged in the field of mindfulness. To conclude, the gaps in the literature are explained as a rationale for this study.

2.2 Mindfulness definitions and constructs

Although mindfulness has its roots in Eastern traditions, mindfulness is also rooted in Jewish, Islamic and Christian religions and can be seen as a universal human capacity for clear thinking and open-heartedness (Trousselard, Steiler, Claverie, & Canini, 2014). Mindfulness can also be understood as a capacity, not connected to spiritual beliefs or practices. There are similar references in many Western works, like those of Buber, Goethe and Husserl (Sauer & Kohls, 2011). In Buber's work, the movement from an *'I-It'* to an *'I-Thou'* relationship is linked to the ability to suspend judgment and to focus awareness on the generative process that lies behind what is seen (Senge et al., 2004). Goethe's studies of plants took time and used what he called *"exact sensorial imagination"*, the capacity to pay attention to nature in a way that allowed him to see *"the living field of the plant that creates the leaf"* (Senge et al., 2004, p. 46). William James (1890), known as the father of psychology, spoke about how the capacity to pay attention would be training *"par excellence"*. Although these authors were not necessarily considering Buddhist meditation practices, they refer to the human capacity to pay attention in an open way.

To distinguish between meditation and mindfulness, meditation has been used in healing and spiritual practices for over 5000 years (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011). There are many different forms of meditation. Some are rooted in spiritual traditions (including Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism) and others are not tied to any specific practice.

Glomb, Duffy, Bono, and Yang (2011) make the distinction that mindfulness meditation, but perhaps not all meditation (e.g., concentrative meditation that focuses on a word) can develop a state of non-judgmental awareness of internal and external stimuli. An important distinction is that mindfulness can include states that are pleasant (peacefulness) or unpleasant (restlessness, boredom, frustration).

Mindfulness is cultivated through mindfulness practice. To distinguish between concentrative practices and mindfulness practice, in concentration practice the intention is to focus purely on the meditation object to the exclusion of all else. With mindfulness practice, the nature of sensations, mental events, and the changing nature of self are observed. There is an overlap in techniques, with focused attention and open monitoring; practitioners may include both styles in their practices (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, & Davidson, 2008).

This keeping of one's *"consciousness alive to the present reality"* Hanh (1976, p. 11) or *"process of deeply experiencing one's life as it is unfolding in the present moment"* (Roth & Creaser, 1997, p. 152), is hard to operationalise in current research. The word *"mindfulness"* has entered popular literature and is used to describe *"a construct, a mental state or as a number of practices designed to achieve this state"* (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011), which has raised concern around mindfulness research and what exactly is being measured.

The different conceptualisations of mindfulness spanning from original Buddhist texts to modern scientific understandings and Western interpretations have led to some confusion and ambiguity in the territory and have been a barrier to progress in understanding the *"active ingredients"* of mindfulness interventions and what leads to change (Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003). Such questions are becoming more important in current literature as both research and MBIs become more refined. For example, there is a distinction in the literature between awareness and attention although they are interlinked. Awareness is seen as the primary aspect of mindfulness in much of the literature. Brown, Ryan, and Creswell (2007a) describe awareness as *"the conscious registration of stimuli, including the five physical senses, the kinaesthetic senses, and the activities of the mind"* (p. 212). Attention and awareness interact but are different. Attention is engaged when a stimulus is strong. It is possible to lack awareness while paying attention, for example, paying attention to a movie while not being aware that one is doing so (Reb, Narayanan, & Ho, 2013).

A further distinction is between self-awareness and self-focused attention. Brown, Ryan, and Creswell (2007b) refer to self-focused attention as thinking about aspects of the subject, or self-centred thought. This is in contrast to mindfulness, described as *"an open unbiased awareness, which allows for the possibility for unbiased information processing and consequently greater opportunities for adaptive self-regulation and well-being"* (p. 273).

Mindfulness meditation practice has its origins in Buddhism. The concept of mindfulness is found in early traditional Buddhist texts. There are many meanings depending on the lineage and time in history that one examines (Farb, 2014). The origins of meditation taught in the West are from Tibetan (Vajrayana), Theravada-Vipassana and Zen-Buddhist and Buddhist trainings, where there are cultural differences in the emphasis on teaching. It is beyond the scope of this research to describe these in depth, but some key points are essential regarding how they have shaped western understandings. The Buddhist practice of Vipassana (which translates as: *"seeing things as they are"*) begins with the sustained attention of the breath and expands to include awareness of physical sensations, emotions and thoughts. Vipassana is comprised of meditation practices from the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, through which there is the potential to liberate the mind from the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion. Mahayana schools of Buddhism also place mindfulness in a primary role of liberation and wholeness. In Vajrayana, mindfulness is about bringing the mind back to the chosen object of attention and is seen in a more neutral way. In Theravada, Buddhism mindfulness is seen as a movement through phases from the development of sustained attention to the capacity to perceive adaptive and maladaptive thoughts and feelings (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011).

The Pali word for mindfulness, *"Sati"*, can be found in the early Buddhist texts such as the Abhidhamma (a classic collection of Buddhist Psychology and Philosophy) and can be translated to the original meaning *"to remember"*. *Sati* also describes a lucidity that can be seen as part of a development of self that is linked to the reduction of human suffering and enhanced states of calmness and contentment (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011). In most contemporary Buddhist teachings, the term mindfulness is used in a more comprehensive way than just remembering and includes a cultivation of introspective awareness (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011; Cullen, 2011). Western understandings are impacted by these streams of Buddhist teachings.

Buddhist mindfulness is more than just a state of awareness; it has ethical dimensions as well. Chiesa (2012) states, *"Buddhist mindfulness is not an ethically neutral practice but requires an*

ethical prejudgment of what is considered wholesome/skilful and unwholesome/unskilful". Amaro (2015, para. 7) refers to a more holistic mindfulness and describes how *sati* can refer to **three** distinct qualities, namely, the simple act of paying attention, *"sati-sampajanna"* meaning mindfulness and clear comprehension, and finally *"sati-panna"* which can be understood as the quality that leads to *"full blossoming of human well-being"* (Amaro, 2015, p. 65). In its purest form, mindfulness can be seen as linked to ethical development.

Grabovac et al. (2011) describe mindfulness as the moment-by-moment observing of the **three** characteristics of the meditation object, namely (i) impermanence, (ii) suffering and (iii) non-self. Thus, they include understandings of Buddhist thought which are borne out in mindfulness practice itself; sensations and thoughts are impermanent and do not form any entity that one could call the *"self"*, and habitual reactions can lead to suffering. Cultivation of mindfulness leads to insight, which here does not mean conscious reflection, but rather an understanding of the transience of mental and sensory events, and a different relationship to one's feelings of pleasure or aversion in daily life. This requires equanimity, which is described by Grabovac et al. (2011) as *"a balanced state of mind in which an equal interest is taken in pleasant, unpleasant and neutral"*. Desbordes et al. (2014, para. 21) separate mindfulness from equanimity and name equanimity as potentially the most important element in the improvement of well-being; a state and dispositional tendency that can be developed over time.

Advanced mindfulness meditation is focused on investigating the true nature of the self, allowing practitioners to recognise the fleeting nature or emptiness of the self. This ultimately reduces the concept of an individual ego and can lead to reduced suffering (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011). All of these definitions show how mindfulness is a state that is different to just wakefulness; it has qualities that are more holistic and may include an ethical foundation. It explores the nature of self, reducing ego and suffering.

Modern definitions of mindfulness are designed to be utilised in modern psychological and medical research settings and draw on current psychological understandings. These might miss some of the deeper understandings. For example, Dimidjian and Linehan (2003) provide a conceptualisation that includes three qualities with which one practices mindfulness, namely (i) non-judgmentally, with acceptance; (ii) in the present moment with a beginners mind; and (iii) effectively. They reflect that certain goals or outcomes of treatments that emerge from the deep traditions of meditation practice (such as wisdom or insight) have not been operationalised.

Confusion in measuring mindfulness empirically might be that mindfulness is considered to have state and trait-like qualities (Brown & Ryan, 2004; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), and to be a skill or skill set (Bishop et al., 2004). Mindfulness is a state of consciousness that can vary between individuals and, therefore, people may have the trait-like tendencies. In some research, mindfulness is seen as a stable individual difference (Glomb et al., 2011) and as similar to other personality traits (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Some researchers suggest that *"state and trait"* mindfulness should be explored as separate concepts (Thompson & Waltz, 2007). Chiesa (2012) proposes that researchers should refer to the specific psychological characteristics and dimensions assessed. Mindfulness has been operationalised in many ways and is seen by some authors as unidimensional, and by others as multidimensional (Reb, Narayan, & Chaturvedi, 2014). Mindfulness can include numerous processes; attention, awareness, intention, attitude, cognition, non-judgmental, decentring, openness, acceptance, and non-reaction (Reb et al., 2014).

An operational definition would bring more conformity in the ways in which mindfulness is taught in different interventions. This is a conversation in progress in many institutes that are training mindfulness teachers. Key areas of conversation amongst Western psychologists in terms of a working definition are:

1) Non-judgemental awareness: Concerns that this might be read as the practitioner of mindfulness is *"indifferent"* as opposed to able to discern responses that are ethically wholesome.

2) Insight generation: Mindfulness meditation is not seen as *"insight meditation"* according to the traditional Buddhist construct where meditation is about being able to see the non-dual or empty nature of reality.

3) Context for practice: Mindfulness is traditionally practised in the context of spiritual development. In Buddhism, it is practised with other spiritual practices as part of the Noble Eightfold Path. Mindfulness requires an understanding of wisdom, meditation and ethics and there is debate whether it should be practised with this wider understanding (Van Gordon, Shonin, Zangeneh, & Griffiths, 2014, p. 131).

These points are of particular interest with mindfulness entering the workplace in complex times, where a focus on ethics and wider understandings of what it means to be human are necessary.

2.2.1 Definitions and constructs in organisational work

Historically, MBIs were explored in clinical settings, and research has examined clinical outcomes. Elliot (2011) sees mindfulness as being absent in the occupational discourse, partly due to the difficulties in defining and understanding concepts. He notes:

> *To remain cognizant of the delicate demarcations between mindfulness, flow, consciousness and presence require patience and persistence…mindfulness may be the consistent thread joining each of the related psychological structures with a conjoint thread being the centrality of occupational engagement.* (p. 374)

Some of the Western discourse on mindfulness stems from the study of mindlessness (McCown et al., 2011). This includes absent-mindedness as is described by Reb et al. (2013) which occurs when one performs tasks on autopilot or not at all because the mind is wandering or completely blank.

Looking at understandings and definitions of mindfulness in the organisational context leads to further complexity. Mindfulness is seen by some researchers to be a form of consciousness and by others to be *"the enhancement of conscious participation"* (Elliot, 2011, p. 372).

In organisational literature, there is confusion between mindfulness and reflective/contemplative practices in the workspace. Chiesa and Malinowski (2011) explain that contemplative practices suggest an engagement with specific content or thoughts, while mindfulness allows for non-engagement with content.

There is further confusion between Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow, in which activity is used to create a state where one is *"in the zone"* and full attention is absorbed, and mindfulness. It has been suggested that mindfulness and flow are part of a more dynamic and larger experience of consciousness (Wright, Sadlo, & Stew, 2007). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests flow is an optimal level experience where activity (as opposed to meditative practice) can bring order to the chaotic mind. Mindfulness allows a noticing of the mind, which is not always peaceful. Flow can also be distinguished from work engagement, where the flow is a more short-term experience of being fully present, while work engagement is more stable (Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova, & Sels, 2013).

Exploring mindfulness without an Eastern framework, Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) define mindfulness as *"the process of drawing novel distinctions"* (p. 1) and describe how this process

can lead to consequences such as openness to new information, a greater sensitivity to one's environment, the creation of new categories of structuring perception and enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem-solving. The authors refer to mindfulness as a way to be (more) present and connected to the world and suggest discipline to counter mindlessness and automaticity. Although they mention that it is not a cold cognitive process, they do not expand on this.

In organisational literature, mindfulness is seen as a type of information processing, the collective capacity to detect and correct errors and unexpected events. The concept of mindful organising (Weick & Roberts 1993; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999), inspired by the work of Langer, utilised a conceptualisation of mindfulness as cognitive flexibility and attention. This collective capacity is seen as a social process, dependent on the actions of the group and the capacity to pay attention to context and to act.

There is a distinction between mindful organising and organisational mindfulness, but both are necessary for organisations. Mindful organising is seen as *"a dynamic process comprising of specific on-going actions rather than an enduring organisational characteristic"* (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012, p. 724). It is dependent on continuous communication and interaction and the behaviours carried out from those in the front line (bottom-up); because routines unfold in different ways each time it is not constant and needs to be re-formatted constantly. Mindful organising is seen as a social process resulting from actions and interactions of individuals to the collective.

According to Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012), organisational mindfulness refers to the capacity of an organisation to recognise details about emerging threats and to react quickly to the information High-Reliability Organisations (HROs) utilise organisational mindfulness to be almost error-free in their performance despite operating in complex and highly pressurised settings. Organisational mindfulness may help organisations function more reliably by discussing potential threats and frequently checking assumptions, integrating the understandings into the bigger picture, being able to analyse and learn from problems, and relying on expertise rather than authority to make crucial decisions. Mindfulness in this context is more action-based and external as opposed to the receptive inner awareness cultivated in mindfulness practice. Thus, organisational mindfulness is a stable and enduring attribute resulting from structures and practices implemented by administrators, not a result of intra-psychic processes. For example, the authors question whether employing mindful managers or

employees might be substituted for mindful organising, and what portion of administrators needs to be mindful in order to impact performance outcomes.

Although valuable, these Western understandings of mindfulness might miss some of the deeper wisdom inherent in meditative practices. Interestingly, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) ask which form of mindfulness, Western (based on Langer's work) or Eastern (from meditative disciplines) would have more impact on mindful organising and organisational mindfulness. There has been a division in understanding between Western and Eastern perspectives and the integration of Western evidence-based understandings of mindfulness with Buddhist or Eastern perspectives might take time and effort (Chiesa, 2012).

In summary, the streams of discourse around definitions of mindfulness are numerous and range from early Buddhist understandings to Western philosophical approaches, to cognitive understandings of attention. In the West, descriptions range from referring to it as a state, trait, or way of being which has particular characteristics (e.g., non-striving, patience and compassion). Mindfulness can relate to the faculty of being consciously aware or may refer to formal meditation practice. There is some agreement regarding defining the capacity to sustain attention in the present moment. Many definitions do include aspects of paying attention in a specific and non-judgmental way (Kabat-Zinn, 1994), and Buddhist scholars suggest that it entails awareness, memory retention and discernment (Van Dam et al., 2017). However, the ways in which it is applied in modern practice may not necessarily stay close to historical definitions (Van Dam et al., 2017). This impacts research where the terms mindfulness and meditation may refer to a broad range of practices and states, with five-minute apps and meditation retreats both being named meditation.

2.2.2 Understandings used in this study

It is clear why Buddhist scholar, Bodhi (2013), describes the term mindfulness as being *"so vague and elastic that it serves almost as a cypher into which we can read anything we want*" (p. 22). Singh, Lancioni, Wahler, Winton, and Singh (2008) argue, *"the definition of mindfulness will vary depending on whether one is interested in mindfulness from a social, psychological, clinical, or spiritual context, or from the perspective of a researcher, clinician, or a practitioner, and their various combinations"* (p. 661).

In this study, the definition by Kabat-Zinn (1994), *"paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally"* (p. 4) will be used as mindfulness was

taught in the form of MBIs or MBSR from Kabat-Zinn's work. Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness as moment-to-moment awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, in the present moment, as non-reactively, nonjudgmentally, and open-heartedly as possible (Kabat-Zinn, 2011) is most accessible. Kabat-Zinn (2011) has acknowledged that the term represents (to him) a much broader scope of concepts and practices than what his earlier (1994) definition might suggest. Mindfulness is not just about paying attention, but it is about the way in which we pay attention (Williams, Teasdale, Segal, & Kabat-Zinn, 2007). The attitudes of compassion and non-judgment are included in this state of awareness that is cultivated and emerges from meditative practices (Kabat-Zinn 1994).

Kabat-Zinn developed a strong lineage of evidence-based MBIs. Participants in this research were trained in this approach. Kabat-Zinn's (1994) definition has been criticised for the use of the term non-judgmental, which can be seen as being too broad, open to misinterpretation, used to justify self-centred behaviour, bypass experience or encourage passivity (Amaro, 2015). However, Kabat-Zinn (2011) explains how mindfulness has less to do *"with Buddhism per se, and everything to do with wakefulness, compassion and wisdom"* (p. 283). At the same time, the understanding in MBIs comes from deeper Buddhist Teachings (Dharma), where the word Dharma can be understood as the teachings of the Buddha and also the nature of things in relationship to suffering and the nature of the mind. Kabat-Zinn's conceptualisation of mindfulness is closer to the definitions of Sati provided by Amaro (2015), which includes *"the mindfulness that encourages us to attune to situations skilfully and to live as a benevolent and responsible member of society"* (p. 67). Kabat-Zinn describes mindfulness as *"a way of being"* which is dynamic and *"embedded within all of life, both intra and interpersonal rather than a static technique, practised only on the cushion"* (Cullen, 2011, para. 2). This links with the Buddhist understanding that mindfulness is practised both on and off the cushion. He has also described it as affectionate attention, which is orientated in the direction of non-harming (Cullen, 2011). With his seven attitudes of mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn (2013) captures the multi-faceted conceptualisation of mindfulness.

Reb and Atkins (2015) concur that mindfulness is multifaceted and extends across history, disciplines and areas of application. They argue that agreeing on the right definition:

> *…will never happen because mindfulness is a living and fundamentally disputed concept like 'leadership' in that part of its value is in the continual discussion and redefinition of its nature. Instead, the tension is more about how to move forward productively in*

> *researching mindfulness and developing workplace MBIs against the backdrop of on-going discussion about the nature of mindfulness.* (p. 12)

As this study is influenced by my perspective as a clinician, researcher and practitioner of mindfulness-based approaches. I use Kabat-Zinn's definition, with the understanding that my research falls within the context of the on-going discussion.

2.3 Overview of mindfulness trainings

I provide an overview of mindfulness trainings in order to place the trainings used in the current study in context. Mindfulness training was introduced to secular settings for therapeutic purposes through the work of Linehan (1993) who developed Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) for borderline personality disorder. DBT is influenced by Zen practice, dialectical philosophy and behavioural science. Another psychological training using mindfulness is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999) which teaches contact with the present moment and observation of self, but with less focus on formal meditation practices. No direct connection with Buddhist philosophy is acknowledged here. ACT (Hayes et al., 1999) and DBT (Linehan, 1993) do not require facilitators to have a daily mindfulness practice.

There are distinct similarities and differences between mindfulness meditations and MBIs. Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditative practice that teaches attention; that is, to focus on a specific object (e.g., breath or sound) and open awareness. The basis of formal mindfulness meditation is the development of concentration. This occurs by focusing on the sensation of breath (flow of air in and out of the nostrils, movement of the chest and/or the abdomen). The breath is used as the object of attention because it is the constant link between body and mind. When attention has wandered, attention is returned to the breath. As concentration is strengthened, the practitioner learns to observe the continuous stream of thought, emotions and bodily sensations. Over time and with practice, habitual reactions can shift to experiences becoming more conscious of responses to internal and external events.

MBIs are programmes that combine mindfulness practice and theory to address specific psychological or physical conditions or specific population groups (Chiesa & Malinowksi, 2011), including cancer, HIV, children, teens, insomnia, eating disorders, relapse prevention, heart disease, and chronic pain. MBIs were derived from the original 8-week MBSR programme developed by Kabat-Zinn. MBSR was initially developed by Kabat-Zinn for

patients with psychological or physiological conditions, based on the premise that individuals have inner resources that can be mobilised to assist healing. Numerous MBIs have developed from the original MBSR programme, and thousands of health professionals have been trained to teach such programmes.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is rooted in Buddhist Mahayana and Theravada traditions and combines practices found in more Western forms of Vipassana, Japanese Zen, Hatha Yoga and didactic exercises from Western models of stress (Farb, 2014). MBSR and MBIs acknowledge their connection with Buddhist philosophy and focus on training participants in the concepts of Vedanta; the awareness of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feeling tone of sensations, attachment and aversion. They differ from traditional Vipassana teachings in that the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self are not explicitly taught, although they may be implicitly discussed (Grabovac, 2015). Kabat-Zinn was clear that MBSR is a non-religious and secular intervention.

In MBSR, participants engage in various formal and informal mindfulness practices, to encourage more presence in daily living. Formal practices consist of time carved out daily for cultivating present moment awareness, in the form of daily sitting meditation, mindful movement, or body scanning. This skill is also applied to all other activities of daily life in informal practice (e.g., brushing teeth, driving, showering). The skill of carefully paying attention *"moment-by-moment"* is developed in this way. As described by Gratton (2011), *"resilient lives are not made by grand gestures and the construction of grandiose theories. Resilience is built through the every day, every minute habits and exercises that punctuate our daily lives"* (p. xi). In the ever-increasing pace of the world, the skills of self-awareness can help one ascertain where attention is drawn and to develop equanimity in the face of stress.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was developed from MBSR in the 1990s by Segal et al. (2002) to assist individuals with chronic depression. Like MBSR, MBCT is an 8-week programme, with 2.5-hour weekly meetings and daily practices of at least 45 minutes. MBCT is based on cognitive behavioural therapy precepts. Both programmes include didactic teaching (for MBSR, a focus on stress, and in MBCT, a focus on understanding depression) and inquiry (where the instructor invites the participants to reflect on their experiences and turn towards what is present). Although differing in original intention and some of the teaching practices, the two programmes are more recently seen as being used in comparable contexts (Morgan, Simpson, & Smith, 2014).

Most Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) teach **four** main mindfulness practices: (i) body-scan, a process of moving attention through the body; (ii) mindful movement, gentle yoga stretches to develop awareness of body in movement; (iii) sitting meditation-developing awareness of breath, body, sound, thought and choiceless awareness; and (iv) walking meditation. MBIs can vary in length of programme and practices. Didactic Teaching in interventions currently covers a variety of conditions and contexts. In the case of MBIs in the corporate space, didactic teaching might include some understanding of stress reactivity, leadership and brain science.

Van Gordon, Shonin, Griffiths and Singh (2015a) describe the use of First-Generation Mindfulness-Based Interventions (FG-MBIs) with recovery from somatic/psychological illness and improvements of personal effectiveness being primary goals. The authors describe Second Generation Mindfulness-Based Interventions (SG-MBIs) as openly spiritual and including aspects of Buddhist training that include wisdom, ethical conduct and meditation. Practitioners of FG-MBIs believe that ethical conduct, compassionate outlook and right intention are innate in the practice and that there is no need to teach this explicitly. This research will focus on FG-trainings in the lineage of Jon Kabat-Zinn (either MBSR or adaptations of MBSR).

2.3.1 Mindfulness training in organisations

Traditionally, management training explored external methods of managing stress. Today's organisations are more cognisant of the need for inner awareness and processes to support employees. In the US, 25 % of companies have now introduced stress reduction interventions, although there are no reliable statistics on how many of these introduce mindfulness or meditation (Gelles, 2012). Mindfulness training as part of corporate training and wellness has recently gained popularity, with a number of companies introducing mindfulness practice. One better-known programme is Google's *"Search inside yourself"* founded by Chade-Meng Tan, a long-standing Google employee. Tan used Kabat-Zinn's 8-week MBSR as the basis of the programme, with input from nine experts who included input on Emotional Intelligence. Since its inception, more than 1000 Google employees have taken this course (Kelly, 2012).

Genentech's Mindfulness-Based Leadership Development Programme won the 2012 HBR/McKinsey M-Prize for Management Innovation. An independent assessment of the programme found it to be influential on individuals and on the organisation as a whole, with a 10-20% increase in employee satisfaction, 12% increase in customer satisfaction, and 50%

increase in employee collaboration, conflict management, and communication (Trisoglio, 2013). Other Fortune 500 companies such as Ford, Intel and General Mills also have mindfulness-based training programmes for their employees (Hafenbrack, 2017).

Even the US military uses Mindfulness-Based Mind Fitness Training, a 20-hour course, taught over eight weeks to military service personnel before they are deployed. This trains their ability to sustain attention and to tolerate difficult internal and external conditions. The use of such programmes has drawn criticism (Forbes, 2012), particularly when taught to improve military skills.

Holt and Marques (2012), in their empirical study of empathy in leadership, argue that skills such as compassion and empathy can help prevent repressive or unethical business practice. The authors discuss the need for a paradigm shift in organisations and in business schools regarding empathy, and soft skills. Given the effects of narcissism, individualism and self-serving behaviour in the workplace, they suggest scholars need to be pro-active in changing the paradigm. They claim the faster the workplace, the more essential it is to lead with emotional intelligence and empathy, however, they do not suggest mindfulness practice as a way of doing so.

Some business schools (such as IMD Business School in Lausanne, Peter Drucker & Masatoshi Graduate School of Managers) include mindfulness practices in order to reinforce the concept of mindful organisations and to apply mindfulness on a more individual level (Gardiner, 2012). Kuechler and Stedham (2017) discuss how mindfulness incorporated into an MBA course can support Transformational Learning, contributing to Transformational Learning (TL) theory. TL is a subset of experiential learning theory and is based on engaging with and examining practice and experience as it occurs. The authors suggest that mindfulness raises self-awareness and allows for new perspectives. One key to whether this learning happens is the skill of the teacher.

2.3.2 The importance of teacher training

As mindfulness interventions develop worldwide, there has been increasing awareness of the importance of standards for training processes. The lens through which a teacher teaches will have an impact on the group. In traditional Buddhist settings, meditation teachers would be trained for many years. There are many reports of individuals teaching after having done little training.

Tang and Leve (2016) refer to the barrier in research of a lack of facilitators who can deliver interventions with fidelity and model adherence. In particular, in the workplace, there are no intervention manuals and fidelity systems to allow effective delivery. There is also a danger in relying on instruction manuals as opposed to the depth of understanding of the facilitator.

To ensure that systems are in place to allow for good training of facilitators, University-based teacher training now occurs worldwide, with Bangor, Oxford and Exeter Universities offering postgraduate training in MBSR/MBCT and pooling criteria to develop a national benchmark of standards in the UK for first and second-generation teachers (Crane et al., 2011). Many university-based trainings combine scientific understandings as well as intensive mindfulness practice.

One key to ensuring these teachings are being taught in ways that might instil deeper levels of awareness and care into organisations is that facilitators of such trainings are properly trained according to particular standards for the workplace. In the words of Van Gordon et al. (2015b),

> *According to Buddhist thought, the Buddha's teachings can be likened to an all-purpose medicine (Tsong-Kha-pa, 2004). The key principles of this view are that (i) due to their purity and potency, the inevitable outcome for an individual that receives the Buddha's teachings – including those relating to mindfulness – is an increase in wisdom, compassion, and awareness and (ii) in the event that such qualities do not manifest, it is because the teachings have been incorrectly taught and/or incorrectly practised.* (p. 53)

According to Van Gordon et al. (2015b), anyone in contact with the Dharma intending to use the teachings for selfish purposes will prevent the teachings from rooting inside of them and only receive a theoretical and superficial account of the teachings. These words are in line with Kabat-Zinn's beliefs and intentions for teachers following the MBSR lineage and training. Practitioners need to debate the value and intentionality of mindfulness in the workplace. This may help ensure that mindfulness is not perceived as another fad due to limited transmission.

To further address the issue of standards, Crane et al. (2011) have developed Good Practice Guidelines and Competencies in Teaching Mindfulness. It is imperative that facilitators have their own mindfulness practice, attend annual retreats, and have experiential training in running MBIs. Progress has been made in developing a Mindfulness-Based Intervention Teaching Assessment Criteria. This shows good reliability in assessing teachers in areas such as relational skills, an embodiment of mindfulness, the capacity to guide practices and group learning (Farb,

2014). Programmes should address human distress and a way of relieving it, teaching greater attentional emotional and behavioural self-regulation, as well as positive qualities such as compassion, wisdom and equanimity (Crane et al., 2016). The teachers used to facilitate the programmes under investigation in this study fulfil these criteria.

2.4 Empirical mindfulness research: Overview

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of empirical research pointing to the value of mindfulness in the work context. I highlight some of the clinical research that indicates the benefits of mindfulness practice and expands these findings to recent research into mindfulness at work. I also explore commitment to practice, duration of practice, and potential adverse effects of mindfulness practice in order to highlight current understandings of mindfulness training and how it might impact mindfulness at work. Finally, I present qualitative research that is relevant for organisational spaces and some of the emerging questions in the field.

Research on the benefits of meditation started in the 1960s, in the fields of medicine and psychology. Transcendental Meditation (TM) was researched even before mindfulness meditation gained popularity. Benefits such as reduction of anxiety (Dillbeck, 1977), decrease in blood pressure (Benson, Rosner, Marzetta, & Klemchuk, 1974; Patel & Marmot, 1988), and improving cognitive flexibility and stress reactivity (Goleman & Schwartz, 1976) were investigated. Benson et al. (1974) documented physiological changes as a result of the relaxation response that occurs during meditation. This state is the opposite of the *"fight"* or *"flight"* stress response (Roth & Creaser, 1997).

The first wave of mindfulness research quantified its impact in various contexts. Research in mindfulness has been conducted mainly in health sciences, with Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT) being seen to be the prime means of assessment. Early meta-analytic reports suggested that mindfulness interventions have significant mental health benefits in a wide range of clinical and non-clinical populations. However, there may have been methodological shortcomings in terms of RCT (Baer, 2003). A 2007 report commissioned by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) in the US, reported that future studies in meditation needed to be more rigorous in design and execution, analysis and reporting. Since then the rigour and calibre of studies have improved (Creswell, 2017; Duerr, 2011).

Research has been conducted in healthcare, education (Sibinga, Webb, Ghazarian, & Ellen 2015), the military **(**Johnson et al., 2014**)**, prisons (Samuelson et al., 2007), and in the workplace

(Good et al., 2015). The most common occupational contexts represented in research are healthcare, where the use of mindfulness training for health professionals has been shown to reduce medical errors, improve physician and patient communication, manage stress and burnout, increase empathy and enhance self-efficacy (McCabe Ruff & Mackenzie, 2009). Other common work contexts are education, science/technology, military and financial (Allen et al., 2015).

2.4.1 Mindfulness in the workplace: Overview

Reviews of empirical evidence indicate that mindfulness is a way of managing stress and is associated with reductions in a number of measures of psychological distress and reported medical symptoms (Baer, 2003; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Creswell, 2017; Cullen, 2011; De Vibe et al., 2012; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011), with the most consistent evidence in support of mindfulness for depression, pain conditions, smoking and addictive disorders (Goldberg et al., 2018).

In terms of workplace reviews, Allen et al. (2015) reviewed 27 mindfulness workplace studies. The majority of training showed impact on stress and strain, perhaps because based on MBSR, or a combination of MBSR and MBCT. Programme design and content ranged from eight days to six months, with eight weeks being the modal duration. Some programmes were delivered online and others face-to-face. The authors identified **seven** training outcomes, namely (i) stress and strain; (ii) objective physical measures; (iii) work engagement, performance; (iv) health behaviour; (v) patient/client relations; (vi) job satisfaction; and (vii) an "other category". Programmes ranged from eight days to six months (online and some face-to-face), highlighting the vast variation in design.

Lomas, Medina, Ivtzan, Rupprecht, and Eiroa-Orosa (2017), reviewing mindfulness training for educators, identify 145 studies. Only a third of these employed RCT. These stronger trials show some positive impact. For example, Roeser et al. (2012) randomised 113 public school teachers into a waitlist control and 8-week mindfulness intervention. Teachers in the mindfulness group showed improvements in self-compassion, which mediated the effects of stress in a 3-month follow-up. They showed improved focus, attention and working memory. There were no physiological indicators of stress reduction in measures of blood pressure and salivary cortisol. Emerson et al. (2017) reviewed 12 independent qualitative and quantitative publications on MBIs for school teachers finding a strongest promise for intermediary effects

on teacher emotion-regulation. Burton, Burgess, Dean, Koutsopoulou, and Hugh-Jones (2017) found MBIs can reduce stress for healthcare professionals, but more high-quality research with long-term follow-up measures is necessary.

In general, research into mindfulness in the workplace has shown numerous positive results. Good et al. (2015), in their review of mindfulness at work, present an integrative framework highlighting both empirical evidence and open questions. This framework separates out mindfulness as a trait, state, practice or intervention, referring to functional domains of mindfulness as attention, cognition, emotion, behaviour and physiology. Workplace outcomes are categorised as performance, relationships and well-being. The authors conclude that mindfulness promotes effects on individual functioning that would make it a good management tool. They argue that trait mindfulness has positive psychosocial qualities and may be important for jobs that require attention, self-regulation and interpersonal skills. With adaptations being made to MBSR at work, there is a lack of understanding as to how and why programmes work. Gaps exist in how to design interventions for maximum efficacy and sustainability. Their naming of mindfulness as a management tool (as opposed to a way of being) however, lends itself to dilution of what the practice entails.

Highlighting the potential of mindfulness at work, Cheng (2016) reviews 10 empirical studies (North America, Europe and Asia) and concludes that meditation not only benefits personal and mental health but is beneficial to social relationships and alleviation of role conflicts and benefits organisational innovativeness and development. Shapiro, Wang, and Peltason (2015) assert, the *"multifaceted nature of mindfulness combined with its inherent simplicity may offer a unique and powerful resource to the corporate setting"* (p. 35). I will now elaborate further on some of the benefits.

2.4.2 Positive effects of meditation practice in the workplace

Attention, cognitive capacities and performance

In a large-scale study, using an iPhone's application to sampling people's responses, Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010) found that 47% of the time individuals' attention was not in the present moment and this was correlated with levels of unhappiness. The authors assert that although the brain's default mode of mind-wandering is an evolutionary feat, it has an emotional cost.

Wilson et al. (2014) found participants in 11 studies did not enjoy spending 6 to 15 minutes in a room on their own. Rather than being left alone with their thoughts, they preferred mundane external activities and to administer electric shocks to themselves. They conclude that this may be why *"many people seek to gain better control of their thoughts with meditation and other techniques. The untutored mind does not like to be alone with itself"* (p. 77).

The capacity to pay attention at work is critical. Affective states such as rumination and arousal negatively affect performance as attentional capacities are removed from the activity at hand (Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005) and mindlessness can cause human error, prejudice and stereotyping (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Slowing down is connected to better work management (Hallowell, 2005). Attention and quality of attention has an impact on workplace safety (Hopkins, 2002; Weick et al., 1999), and work outcomes. Overloaded brain circuits have been linked to underperformance at work, and mind-wandering has been shown to reduce task performance (Smallwood & Schooler, 2006).

Creswell (2017) highlights RCT evidence that for healthy adult populations, MBIs can improve attention-related outcomes (sustained-attention, working memory), and effective outcomes (reducing rumination). Mindfulness practice enhances the capacity to pay attention over time, with those practising mindfulness meditations showing greater sustained attention than control group participants (Valentine & Sweet, 1999). Participants in a 10-day mindfulness retreat performed better than the control on measures of working memory and sustained attention and attention switching (Chambers, Lo, & Allen, 2008). The attentional sub-processes of orienting and alerting have also been shown to improve with mindfulness (Jha, Krompinger, & Baime, 2007).

Levy, Wobbrock, Kaszniak, and Ostergren (2012) explored the effects of meditation training on the multitasking behaviour of knowledge workers, using a wait-list, relaxation and a mindfulness-based meditation group and found that those who were trained in meditation stayed on task longer and made fewer task switches. They also reported less negative emotion after task performance. Even short mindfulness training can stabilise attention. Four days, 20 minutes a day, was found to enhance the ability to sustain attention, improve visuospatial processing, working memory and executive functioning, benefits that have been reported with long-term meditators (Zeidan, Johnson, Diamond, David, & Goolkasian, 2010).

Mindfulness training has been shown to improve cognitive functioning, including improved cognitive flexibility, more rational decision-making (Kirk, Downar, & Montague, 2011) and open-mindedness and response flexibility (Dane, 2010). Greenberg, Reiner, and Meiran (2012) explored cognitive functioning and flexibility, where experienced mindfulness meditators received significantly lower cognitive rigidity scores than non-meditators who had registered for their first meditation retreat. Similar results were obtained for non-meditators who underwent 8-meeting mindfulness programmes with a waiting-list group. The authors highlighted the capacity to reduce cognitive rigidity and enhance new ways of responding.

This open-mindedness might be linked to improved creativity, and there is some evidence that as mindfulness enhances cognitive functioning, it enhances creativity and creative thinking (Capurso, Fabbro, & Crescentini, 2014; Ostafin & Kassman, 2012).

Mindfulness has also been correlated with improved insight problem solving, as this requires overcoming habitual responses acquired from previous history and task performance. Ostafin and Kassman (2012) demonstrated that trait mindfulness predicts better insight but not non-insight problem solving and that mindfulness training improves insight but not non-insight problem solving (this improvement is partially mediated by state mindfulness). Trait mindfulness has also been linked to reduced negativity bias, the tendency to weigh negative information more than positive (Kiken & Shook, 2011).

Mindfulness can impact job performance. Dane and Brummel (2013) found support for a positive relationship in a dynamic service industry between workplace mindfulness and job performance that holds even when accounting for the constituent dimensions of work engagement, namely vigour, dedication and absorption. Reb et al. (2013) explored the antecedents and consequences of employee awareness and absent-mindedness. Mindfulness was positively associated with employee well-being (emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction and psychological need satisfaction were measured) and job performance (task performance, organisational citizenship behaviours and deviance). The authors highlight the implications of mindfulness at work; being aware of thoughts and feelings without reacting, more skilful emotional capacity and relating, reduction of negativity bias, awareness of mindlessness, and implementation of plans into actions. The authors question what the processes could be, through which mindfulness might influence well-being and performance.

Leroy et al. (2013) examined the relationships between mindfulness, authentic functioning and work engagement as they changed overtraining. Mindfulness and meditation were found to support work engagement and were found to be an antecedent of authentic functioning.

Thus, the capacity to cultivate attention through mindfulness meditation appears to improve aspects of multi-tasking and support information overload. There are shifts in capacities for focus, creativity, problem-solving, work engagement and decision making. Although ways to enhance performance in dynamic environments are highlighted, the question of whether mindfulness might increase awareness of being over-pushed or overburdened in the workplace has not been explored empirically.

Managing stress, health and well-being

Mindfulness has been seen to contribute to the reduction of *"cognitive vulnerability to stress and emotional distress"* (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 230). The practice indirectly helps individuals manage maladaptive responses to stress, such as binge eating, alcohol, substance abuse (Creswell, 2017) and health issues (McCabe Ruff & Mackenzie, 2009). The stress buffering effects of mindfulness interventions (Creswell & Lindsay, 2014) are evident in numerous randomised controlled trials (RCT). MBCT holds potential for the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Thompson, Arnkoff, and Glass (2011) suggest that a more mindful and accepting orientation to one's experience may promote psychological resilience following trauma. Well controlled studies show a reduction in anxiety, and PTSD symptoms (Creswell, 2017). Mindfulness supports responding to distressing mental and emotional states more skilfully (Kuyken et al., 2008), and enhances self-awareness (Bishop et al., 2004). RCT studies show MBCT reduces the risk of depression relapse amongst individuals at risk (Creswell, 2017) and is more effective for patients with chronic recurring depression than the standard anti-depressant medication.

Mindfulness has a direct impact on health (Bishop, 2002). Studies demonstrate the impact of MBIs on stress-related physical health outcomes; chronic pain, immune-functioning, and disease-specific conditions. Interventions may improve life-quality across a range of stress-related conditions. MBSR has been reviewed for improving health, quality of life and social functioning in adults. The quality of the studies varied, and the overall risk of bias was high for several studies, but there were also some encouraging high-quality trials (De Vibe et al., 2012; Glomb et al., 2011).

Some promising studies explore the therapeutic, wellness and regulatory aspects of mindfulness training in the organisational arena (Malarkey, Jarjoura, & Klatt 2013; Halliwell, 2010; Wolever et al., 2012). Malarkey et al. (2013) utilised an adapted and shorter version of MBSR in the workplace, which allowed participants to continue to attend to their work. As opposed to self-reported stress, they measured cortisol levels and found a non-significant drop in levels. Halliwell (2010) examined the use of mindfulness training with staff at Transport for London. Days off due to stress, depression and anxiety were reduced by 70%. Participants also reported significant improvement in their quality of life, with 80% saying relationships had improved, 79% more able to relax, and 53% more content in their jobs. For a sample of Chinese nursing students, brief mindfulness meditation training (30 minutes for seven days) was beneficial in reducing anxiety symptoms and lowering systolic blood pressure. No specific benefits were found with mood scales (Chen, Yang, Wang, & Zhang, 2013). A large-scale preliminary study of four companies using self-report data from 425 participants showed reductions in burnout and perceived stress, improvements in mindfulness, well-being and increases in team and organisational climate and personal performance. However, no control group was used (Kersemaekers et al., 2018).

As described above, research shows that mindfulness training enhances the ability to manage stress (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009), allowing for an increased ability to perform in times of pressure and VUCA conditions (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous). For example, Jha et al. (2010) explored the impact of mindfulness training on Marines, to manage the mental rigours of combat; they received an 8-week mindfulness programme. Mindfulness training improved their working memory under stress and enhanced their level of clarity, in addition to providing some protection from PTSD.

There are also overlaps with how improved well-being can enhance task performance. Reb et al. (2014) found that the trait mindfulness of employees was positively related to task performance, suggesting that this is partially due to the lower emotional exhaustion that more mindful employees experience. Shonin, Van Gordon, Dunn, Singh, and Griffiths (2014) randomly assigned 152 middle managers to a cognitive behavioural group or a mindfulness intervention. The mindfulness intervention showed effects on work-related stress, psychological distress, and employer rated job performance.

Interpersonal mindfulness at work

Mindfulness practice may impact relationships via attunement, defined as the active perceptual process that accompanies presence. Siegel (2010) highlights that the neurobiology of both attunement and meditation practice is located in the prefrontal cortex. When the brain perceives another human, it activates the neural mechanism of receptivity to others. The ability to be attuned to one's own physical functioning (being aware of breathing, heartbeat, circulation) seems to impact the capacity to attune to another (Halifax, 2012). Attunement developed through mindfulness practice might enhance empathy and connection. Neuroscience indicates that inter-receptivity or visceral attunement activates the same brain circuits within the insular cortex as those of empathy.

When we are under threat, the social engagement system can be turned off. In safety, we can shift this state to a ventral vagal state of being open and receptive. The vagus nerve plays a role in regulating the heartbeat and other organs, calming the body in times of distress (Porges, 2009). Improved vagal tone increases capacity to meet a challenge and then to recover, and to prevent the negative impact of stress (Goleman, 2013). Glomb et al. (2011) refer to the ability to slow down or pause before reacting, or response flexibility, a key factor in relating to our emotions and those of others. There is preliminary evidence that mindfulness can enhance emotional intelligence (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005) and that there is a positive link between mindfulness, emotional intelligence and self-regulation (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Research suggests that mindfulness leads to improved emotional relating to others (Dekeyser, Raes, Leijssen, Leysen, & Dewulf, 2008; Wachs & Cordova, 2007), and capacity to deal with relationship stress (Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell, & Rogge, 2007). In the workplace, Choi and Leroy (2015) comment, *"we know little about how a mindful organisation might affect individual mindfulness or how one very mindful team member might impact the group"*. They ask, *"would higher mindfulness levels alter group dynamics, communication patterns and shared mental models that result in higher functioning teams?"* (p. 87).

Mindfulness and relationship processes at work are prevalent in healthcare. Mindfulness training among healthcare practitioners relates to improved communication quality, including open listening with increased awareness and less evaluative judgment of others (Beckman et al., 2012), self-compassion (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005), empathy (McCabe Ruff & Mackenzie, 2009), as well as better client-related relationship quality (Beach et al., 2013).

Cohen-Katz, Wiley, Capuano, Baker, and Shapiro (2005) found improved self-care and relationships to be benefits of MBSR training for nurses, with challenges including restlessness, pain and difficult emotions.

Such interventions can impact teams and patient care. Singh, Singh, Sabaawi, Myers, and Wahler (2006) applied a mindfulness-based mentoring intervention in multidisciplinary therapeutic treatment teams and found improved listening, team meetings, and more patient-focused discussions and respect in the teams. In a one-year follow-up, the effects remained. Training in mindful communication was associated with improvements in well-being and attitudes associated with patient-centred care (Krasner et al., 2009). In nursing, mindfulness was found to be a *"transformative process"* that has applications for nurse well-being and the development and sustainability of therapeutic nursing capacities (White, 2013, p. 282). Irving et al. (2012) used a grounded theory approach to demonstrate that health professionals enrolled in MBSR had themes similar to clinical populations, with additional awareness of perfectionism, self-criticism and automaticity of helping/fixing mode. Beckman et al. (2012) explored the impact of an intensive 52-hour mindful communication programme for physicians, where 20 physicians were interviewed and reported reduced professional isolations, enhanced capacity for attention to patients, and greater self-awareness. Participants reported struggling to give themselves time for personal growth. A qualitative review of the experiences of mindfulness training on healthcare workers explored 14 relevant studies. Perceived benefits of training ranged from improved personal well-being and self-compassion to enhanced presence when relating to others, increased compassion and a sense of shared humanity (Morgan et al., 2014).

Outside of healthcare, Reb et al. (2012) investigated the impact of interpersonal mindfulness, in the influence of supervisor trait mindfulness on employee well-being and performance. Leaders' dispositional mindfulness was associated with more favourable subordinate attitudes and behaviours via improved relationship quality. The authors encourage investigating the impact of mindfulness levels of one member on other members of the organisation, and on authentic leadership.

There are few RCT trials in interpersonal awareness and mindfulness (Creswell, 2017). A controlled trial conducted at Ashridge found a statistically significant increase in general levels of satisfaction in contentment, self-esteem, home, health, financial, relationship with partner, friends and family (Dolman & Bond, 2011).

In workplaces other than healthcare, some qualitative studies bear mention. Hunter and McCormick (2008) conducted eight interviews in the workplace. Various outcomes were reported: more acceptance of work situations, more modest goals, increased selflessness at work, less concern with acquisition of wealth, ability to cope at work and enjoy it more, and more positive work relationships. Burrows (2013, p. 9) used short 'soles of the feet' meditation and informal practices, which helped participants gain distance from work issues. Reb and Choi (2014) describe a mindfulness programme in an organisation and the challenges/benefits experienced by participants. Reitz et al. (2016), in a mixed method, wait-list controlled study of senior leaders on a Mindful Leader Programme found that meta-capacities develop, that allow for collaboration, resilience and leading in complexity.

Shonin, Van Gordon, and Griffiths (2014) share a case history of an adult male who was treated for workaholism utilising MAT (Meditation Awareness Training), showing improvements in psychological distress and job performance. They suggest that meditation is a non-invasive intervention that allows for a re-evaluation of life's priorities. Although a single case, it raises the value of mindfulness in relating to work in more meaningful ways.

Shonin and Van Gordon (2014a), using interpretative phenomenological analysis, explored participant experiences of Meditation Awareness Training on a sample of 10 participants and found **six** themes emerging from the data set: (i) changing attitudes to work, (ii) improved job performance, (iii) letting go of self, (iv) phenomena feed-back effect, (v) well-being at work, and (vi) taking responsibility for one's spiritual growth. They comment that this may have implications for the development of *"authentic"* mindfulness training programmes and suggest that compared with FG-MBIs, the SG-MBI approach might tap into different meta-cognitive resources. This is hard to ascertain, given the absence of qualitative research using FG-MBIs at work. The assertion that FG-MBIs lack *"authenticity"* is questionable. The authors do concur that both FG-MBIs and SG-MBIs enhance the field of mindfulness and are valid and may target overlapping outcomes. They stress the importance of improving our understanding of what are essential components of effective mindfulness trainings. Their study was the first qualitative exploration of an SG-MBI in an occupational setting and they suggest there are few if any qualitative studies exploring experiences of employees trained in an FG-MBI model. This study is an attempt to address the gap.

There are many ways in which mindfulness might improve relational skills at work. Glomb et al. (2011) hypothesise that mindful leaders may encourage environments that are safe and

enhancing of trust, non-judgment, and openness to new perspectives. Good et al. (2015) suggest that mindful leaders may be able to attune to nonverbal communication and emotional states, allowing for better discernment of individual needs and differences, *"other orientation"* and pro-social behaviour. Important aspects might be the increased capacity for non-judgment to self and other, and levels of satisfaction.

On the other hand, Good et al. (2015) question whether a more caring workplace could interfere with decisions that might maximise profits in the workplace. They do, however, cite research (Reb & Narayan, 2013) where mindful negotiators were more successful in distributive negotiations. Shapiro et al. (2015) explain that self-care is critical and not at odds with productivity at work and suggest investigating the mechanisms whereby mindfulness can enhance work experience. They question whether power or competition might decrease the impact of mindfulness on care for others, or whether mindful concern might shift contextual circumstances such as power. The impact of mindfulness on power dynamics is unknown. However, given that mindfulness is linked to improved self-regulation at work (Glomb et al., 2011), it may provide new ways of managing such dynamics.

Dekeyser et al. (2008) discuss the multidimensional nature of mindfulness and its links to interpersonal feelings and performance. A greater tendency for mindful observation was linked to greater engagement with empathy, enhanced capacity to describe and label their experiences and ability to express themselves in social situations. Glomb et al. (2011) question how mindfulness is different to self-control? The answer to this is perhaps that, interpersonally, mindfulness might help in leaders' capacity to step back from their thoughts and to allow for a connection with other's stories. This is the *"reperceiving"* named by Shapiro et al. (2006).

There is room for exploration into how mindfulness training might impact relationality, particularly in contexts other than healthcare. The ways in which mindfulness impacts conflict at work has not been explored.

Goal pursuit

Given the emphasis on being and non-striving in mindfulness, the impact on goal pursuit is interesting. Enhanced mindfulness has been associated with a greater likelihood of implementation of intentions into actions and to control cognitive and emotional components that run counter to the intention (Chatzisarantis & Hagger, 2007). With mindfulness, goal pursuit is more likely to be selective and in accord with intrinsic goals and values, and less

invested in ego (Brown et al., 2007b). In a series of studies on financial goals and perceived gaps between ideal and actual financial states, Brown, Kasser, Ryan, Linley, and Orzech (2009) found that both dispositional mindfulness and mindfulness training were associated with perceptions of having *"enough"*.

Shonin and Van Gordon (2014a) conducted a RCT to assess the impact of an 8-week meditation intervention (Meditation Awareness Training) (MAT) on 152 office managers. They found significant and sustainable improvements for the meditation group in levels of work-related stress, job satisfaction, reduction in psychological distress, and employer-related job satisfaction. They argue that meditation creates a perceptual shift; meditation-based working styles may be more effective than goal-based styles, and meditation may reduce the separation made by employees of their own interests from those of their organisations. The impact of teaching *"being"* in goal-driven organisations has been underexplored.

These studies point to the impact of mindfulness on goal pursuit, however, there is space for exploring the nuances of teaching *"being"* in goal-driven organisations.

Pro-social and ethical behaviour and sustainability

The impact of mindfulness on pro-social behaviour is also recent and important territory. Pro-social behaviour is seen as a dispositional trait or a state that is influenced by the external, and motivated from the intrinsic to the extrinsic and obligation-driven (Bolino & Grant, 2016), but not as a capacity that can be grown.

There are links with mindfulness and reductions in implicit bias and increased pro-social behaviour. In a recent study, participants listened to a mindfulness audio or a control audio and then completed Implicit Association Tests (IATs) for race and for age (Lueke & Gibson, 2015). There was an increase in state mindfulness and a decrease in implicit race and age bias, as measured by implicit association tests. Understanding how mindfulness meditation might reduce the processes of associations could help in reducing prejudice and discrimination. This concurs with neuro-scientific studies that show that the activation of the default mode network is reduced for those with sustained mindfulness practice (Ng, 2015). Looking at pro-social behaviour, Condon, Desbordes, Miller, and DeSteno (2013) randomly assigned participants to an MBSR programme. When a confederate, walking with crutches, entered a full waiting room, half of those who had completed mindfulness training offered their seats, compared to fewer than 20% of the wait-group controls. In a single group design study, Shapiro, Jazaieri, and

Goldin (2012) showed two-months follow-up results where MBSR resulted in improvements in moral reasoning and ethical decision making.

Through better self-regulation of undesirable responses to negative work events, dispositional mindfulness and mindfulness training may improve relationships; in an initial pair of studies, both moderated reactions to injustice, including reduced rumination, negative emotion, and retaliation (Long & Christian, 2015).

In the workplace, Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) have shown that mindfulness (measured by the MAAS - Mindful Attention Awareness Scale) may lead to increased ethical behaviour and decision-making, making use of a short mindfulness induction rather than longer-term training. The authors argue that the causes of unethical attention, such as self-serving cognition, self-deception and unconscious biases, are exacerbated by a lack of attention and awareness. They suggest that organisations could promote ethical decision-making through mindfulness training and that managers could teach employees to centre themselves by paying attention to their current experiences and thoughts before making important decisions. The capacity to make decisions with more awareness of one's biases in the process may also be linked to increased mindfulness. The link between mindfulness and delayed gratification and reduced impulsivity (Stratton, 2006) may also enhance ethical behaviour.

Linked to ethical behaviour is sustainability. Ericson, Kjonstad, and Barstad (2014) describe how sustainable behaviour is connected to the capacity of mindfulness to enhance well-being, empathy, compassion and non-materialistic values. They suggest that well-being achieved through means other than the material can enhance sustainability.

Using Mintzberg's Model (Sauer & Kohls, 2011), delineate how mindfulness might assist leaders in their informational, interpersonal decisions and moral roles. They argue that mindfulness might promote improved information processing by increasing capacity for *"out-of-the-box"* thinking and improving the capacity to listen to others. Given the importance of ethical behaviour and sustainability in today's complex workspaces, mindfulness might play a valuable role.

<u>Contemplative neuroscience and measurement of mindfulness (mindfulness scales)</u>

Neuroscience has played a significant role in the popularity of mindfulness programmes. Early on in meditation research, there was an exploration into how meditation affects cerebral

functioning, including increased cortical alertness and specificity, and limbic inhibition (Roth & Creaser, 1977). Developments in Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and contemplative neuroscience allowed researchers to explore effects of meditative techniques on the brain (Acevedo, Pospos, & Lavretsky, 2016).

Davidson et al. (2003) reported brain shifts from right to the left prefrontal cortex in employees of a biotechnology firm, after eight weeks of mindfulness training. Activity in the left prefrontal cortex is connected to positive emotions such as energy, and enthusiasm. Right activation is associated with more distressing emotions. Employees reported feeling more creative and enthusiastic about work. Mindfulness thus appears to be related to the approach mode of mind (Chaskalson, 2011, p. 127).

Programmes such as MBSR help individuals distinguish between on-going sensory experience and the narrative default position of the brain. Neuronal activity increases in the brain network connected with the present-moment experience and decreases in the brain network known as the narrative network, associated with the self as experienced across time (Farb et al., 2007). Kabat-Zinn (2013) differentiates between the two brain networks:

> *…one with an on-going 'story of me' and one without – showing how they work together and how mindfulness can influence their relationship to each other may shed at least a bit of light on the mystery of who and what we consider ourselves to be, and how we manage to live and function as an integrated whole being.* (p. xiii)

There is evidence of changes in grey matter concentration in brain regions involved in learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, self-referential processing and perspective-taking post an 8-week MBSR programme. The amygdala (responsible for appraising and reacting to perceived threats) was thinner, and this was related to the degree of improvement on a perceived stress scale (Hölzel et al., 2010). The authors explain mindfulness practice as associated with changes in the anterior cingulate cortex, insula, temporoparietal junction, front-limbic network and default network structure. These mechanisms work synergistically to enhance self-regulation. This synergistic self-regulation of on-going mindfulness meditation has been linked to increased alpha activity (relaxation and reduced anxiety), increased theta activity (linked to reduced trait and state anxiety), and increased gamma activity (Treadway & Lazar, 2009).

Brain changes, after short training, is also compelling for the workplace, with changes such as more neural efficiency occurring with just three hours of training (Moore, Gruber, Derose, &

Malinowski, 2012). Tang et al. (2010) document a longitudinal study showing that brief mindfulness training induced structural changes in white-matter changes after 11 hours of training. Taren et al. (2015) explored the potential of 3-day intensive mindfulness meditation training for unemployed community adults to alter the resting state functional connectivity of the amygdala, showing that brief training could reverse increased amygdala and subgenual anterior cingulate cortex rsFC (Resting-State Functional Connectivity) caused by stress. Mindfulness meditation might have an amygdala pathway for stress reduction.

The wandering nature of the mind also has implications, right down to the level of cells and telomeres (DNA), repeat sequences at the ends of chromosomes, essential for cell division, which shorten as we age) (Conklin et al., 2018). Recent data suggests that longer telomeres are linked to ratings of how present one is (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Mindfulness has been shown to improve the way our chromosomes maintain their structure by increasing the enzyme telomerase (Jacobs et al., 2010).

Although hopeful, studies are often used to encourage workplace trainings, with little known about the sustainability of these effects, and their generalisability to the workplace (Good et al., 2015). As stated by Goleman and Davidson (2017):

> *Among the iffy findings gone viral with enthusiastic claims: that meditation thickens the brain's executive center, the prefrontal cortex, while shrinking the amygdala, the trigger for our freeze-fight-or-flight response; that meditation shifts our brain's set point for emotions into a more positive range; that meditation slows aging; and that meditation can be used to treat diseases ranging from diabetes to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. On closer look, each of the studies on which these claims are based has problems with the methods used; they need more testing and corroboration to make firm claims. Such findings may well stand up to further scrutiny – or maybe not.* (p. 12)

These kinds of studies, however, have led to the popularity of mindfulness in the field of leadership. Many studies using mindfulness scales have had an impact on popularity of the practice, however, such scales have their own issues.

Various mindfulness scales have been developed. The more popular ones are the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2004), The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006), The Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (Walach, Buchheld, Buttenmüller, Kleinknecht, & Schmidt, 2006), and

The Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004). To describe all the scales is beyond the scope of this thesis. There has been some criticism of these instruments. For example, the scale developed to capture the definition by Bishop et al. (2004) did not show evidence in support of active self-regulation of attention. Current scales may focus on mindful behaviours and miss the original definitions of mindfulness that emphasise qualities of awareness. It has been argued that modern MBIs fail to distinguish between awareness and attention (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011). Furthermore, mindfulness has been shown to increase in meditation practices that are different to Mindfulness Meditation (for example, Transcendental Meditation) and this raises further questions about the lack of specificity in modern constructs of mindfulness (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011).

2.4.3 Negative effects of meditation

The impact of adverse effects of practice have not been explored in the workplace. Shapiro (1992) suggests at least one adverse effect was reported by 62.9% of long-term mindfulness meditators either before or after a meditation retreat. It is understood in the Theravada tradition that meditators may go through experiences that are psychologically challenging. Grabovac (2015) highlights the stages of insight of the Theravada Buddhist practices (from which MBIs derive their core elements) so that clinicians can be aware of them and clinically significant symptoms can be recognised. These *"side effects"* are considered to be a part of the practice, however, there are symptoms consistent with psychiatric clinical syndromes such as mania, depression and psychosis, and suicidality, which can persist outside of formal practice. While most participants in an MBI will not progress along these states there might be some that do. A qualitative study of 60 Buddhist meditators and meditation teachers (Lindahl, Fisher, Cooper, Rosen, & Britton, 2017) explored under-reported adverse effects of meditation and produced 60 categories of meditation related experiences and 26 categories of influencing factors that might have an impact on distress. This might serve to provide a clearer understanding of who might be at risk in MBIs. The implications of these experiences in the workplace and where mindfulness might need boundary conditions at work is unknown.

2.4.4 Practice compliance, length and types of trainings

Both MBSR and MBCT highlight the importance of daily home practice (formal and informal) during and post the programme. Time spent doing formal practice predicted increases in self-reported mindfulness in daily life, which mediated reductions in stress and improvements in

psychological functioning (Carmody & Baer, 2009). Few studies have assessed the maintenance of mindfulness practice beyond 8-week programmes. Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, Burney, and Sellers (1986) found that 30 to 40% of chronic pain participants practised sitting meditation at least three times a week for 15 minutes or more. Similarly, half of the participants in a 4-year follow-up continued the practice irregularly (Miller, Fletcher, & Kabat-Zinn, 1997). Bondolfi et al. (2010) found that after an 8-week programme, use of formal practice decreased whilst informal practice remained unchanged. Parsons, Crane, Parsons, Fjorback, and Kuyken (2017) found that across 43 MBI studies, participants completed about 60% of assigned practice during the intervention.

Furthermore, although home practice is seen as essential for treatment-outcome, few studies explore the relationship between practice and clinical change. Pradhan et al. (2007) found a positive correlation between improvement in psychological symptoms and frequency of home practice. Parsons et al. (2017) found a small, significant association between home practice (self-reported) and outcomes for clinical and non-clinical populations. A review by Lloyd, White, Eames, and Crane (2017) of 14 RCT studies (participants of 18 years and above, using MBSR or MBCT and standardised quantitative outcome measures) found only seven studies looking at the relationship between home practice and clinical outcome.

There is also the issue of quantity of practice vs. quality. For example, Thompson and Waltz (2007) suggest that a regular daily practice is more important than the level of mindfulness during the practice in order to cultivate mindfulness during the day. Quality of practice is difficult to measure and necessitates further qualitative research. Even in secular programmes, practitioners develop traits consistent with progress towards enlightenment (Davis & Vago, 2013). As participants continue their practices, they may encounter these effects on their own, particularly if they remain committed to practice. The length of programmes required for MBIs to impact is unknown as effects may occur through moments of insight that shift the individual, as opposed to duration. Tang and Leve (2016) question what length of intervention will achieve benefits to the individual and still minimise the costs of service delivery, encouraging the examination of dosage.

Studies have shown that even a 10-minute daily practice can result in improved self-regulation, altering the efficacy of allocating cognitive resources (Moore et al., 2012) and enhancing executive attention and recognition memory linked to task performance (Watier & Dubois, 2016). Reitz, Chaskalson, Olivier, and Waller (2016), reporting initial findings of a wait list

controlled study of senior leaders on a Mindful Leader Programme, note that finding even 10 minutes is difficult for executives. However, they found that capacities of collaboration, resilience and leading in complexity were dependent on the amount of home practice. The findings on brief mindfulness training (e.g., Burrows, 2013; Chen et al., 2013; Gregoire & Lachance, 2014) are hopeful for organisational contexts where individuals may be less open or committed to longer mindfulness practices or taking time off work for interventions. Making mindfulness practical for the workplace might be dependent on the dose required for effects. Although many workplace programmes do keep the core practices, they tend to reduce the length of practices, class durations and programmes. Reb and Choi (2014) suggest that asking too much of participants may lead to less compliance and negative perceptions of mindfulness. Typical mindfulness programmes might be costly and time-consuming for organisations (Huffman, Irving, & Wayment, 2015). There is evidence that just five minutes of training induced changes in negotiation performance (Reb & Narayan, 2013) and 15 minutes of training resulted in better decision-making (Hafenbrack, Kinias, & Barsade, 2013), although it is unclear how long-lasting these results might be. These kinds of results are relevant in busy workplaces where practices might be difficult to adopt.

Some studies have just used short practices as opposed to interventions. For example, Gregoire and Lachance (2014) use two short guided meditations. Reb and Narayanan (2013) explored the impact of mindfulness on negotiations, where participants who performed a short mindfulness exercise (awareness of raisin) claimed a larger share of a bargaining zone than the control group. This study focused on distributive negotiations where the bargaining zone is fixed and the outcome of one negotiator in a positive direction will result in a negative result for the other negotiator. In another study using student groups without formal leaders, and short practices, group task performance was explored. Participants took part in a 10-minute mindfulness intervention or control intervention and then performed a 40-minute group decision task with results showing a positive effect on group performance for the mindfulness group, and possible increased group cohesion (Cleirigh & Greaney, 2014).

Hafenbrack et al. (2013) explored mindfulness and decision making. Increased resistance to sunk cost bias occurred after only a 15-minute recorded mindfulness meditation. Hafenbrack et al. (2013) argue that by comparison to an 8-week mindfulness training, their 15-minute mindfulness induction is more practical. They do note that exploring longer-term training might show improvements on other decision-making processes and outcomes. Hafenbrack (2017) argues for short on-the-spot mindfulness practices as opposed to longer-term practice,

suggesting mindfulness meditation be used as an intervention for specific work situations; to impact commitment, counterproductive work behaviours, negotiation and motivation to achieve goals. These examples highlight how the practice can be promoted as a tool to work harder, enhance performance, and become more competitive, with mindfulness practice being seen as an instant solution. Outcomes-based research may support understanding of a part of the meditation process but may miss the richness and complexity of participants' experiences. Research can utilise mindfulness in ways somewhat divorced from its Buddhist principles. For example, Hafenbrack (2017) argues that it might reduce negative affect in the workplace, however, this implies that mindfulness would make people feel better as opposed to lead to wiser management of complexity.

The use of online mindfulness programmes and online support is also new territory. Wolever et al. (2012) conducted a RCT in which a mindfulness-based and a therapeutic yoga programme provided significant improvements on perceived stress, sleep-quality, and heart-rate variability. They also evaluated two delivery venues of the MBI, online and in-person, and found no significant difference between the two. Van Dongen et al. (2016) explored the long-term cost-effectiveness and return on investment of a mindfulness-based worksite intervention. In this RCT trial, 257 governmental research institute employees were randomised to the intervention or control group. Intervention group participants received an 8-week mindfulness training, e-coaching, and supporting elements. Outcomes included work engagement, general vitality, job satisfaction, workability, and costs. Cost-effectiveness analyses were conducted from the societal and employer's perspective, and a return-on-investment analysis from the employer's perspective. After 12 months there were no significant differences found in job satisfaction, general vitality and workability and total costs; the intervention was neither cost-effective nor cost saving. This was attributed partially to poor e-coaching compliance. Interestingly, a significant but not clinically relevant adverse effect on work engagement was shown. Hülsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, and Lang (2013) conducted a self-administered mindfulness programme where participants measured lower on emotional exhaustion and higher in job satisfaction post training as opposed to the control group, and this relationship was mediated by surface acting (displaying emotions without feeling them).

The use of mindfulness training without a mindfulness trainer is appealing for the workplace but under-explored. Dilution of the practice (shorter trainings, limited use of formal daily practice, use of unskilled teachers, or no teachers) might be of concern in organisational trainings. Research has also not explored ways in which participants actually use the practices

at work (i.e., which practices, for how long). Further understanding of the value and application of formal practice is needed.

2.4.5 Conclusion: Empirical research

Mindfulness training, particularly in the form of MBIs, has been shown to impact a large range of physiological and psychological measures, the capacity to relate to self and others. The addition of cognitive neuroscience over the past decade has resulted in a proliferation of interest and research in the field. There are various issues that impact and add complexity to the research into MBIs, which I have highlighted, namely (i) capacity for commitment to practice, (ii) facilitator training, (iii) adverse effects, and (iv) the duration of programmes. Furthermore, there are often crucial variations in teachings of mindfulness even with those programmes derived from MBSR. Nevertheless, mindfulness research in the workplace has recently proliferated with evidence pointing to changes in attentional capacities, well-being, stress, decision-making, creativity, problem solving, cognitive flexibility, sustainability, resilience, stress, health and ethical behaviour. Mindfulness and conflict management have been explored more in interpersonal relationships outside of work, such as romantic partnerships (Barnes et al., 2007), where emotional reactions can be reduced. The impact on work conflict has not been researched. Mindfulness might enhance connection and relieve conflict due to its capacity to enhance perspective training (Krasner et al., 2009).

Much of the research explores ways in which mindfulness can enhance outcomes in well-being, performance and functioning. Whilst prevention of clinical disorders and health problems is valuable in the workplace, work benefits extend beyond regulation of health. A qualitative approach might capture the impact on humanity and complexity at work, and the uniqueness of each journey for programme participants.

Increasing numbers of individuals are learning mindfulness through in-person programmes, online programmes, and apps. For example, more than 2.7 million people have downloaded the Headspace Meditation App (Hafenbrack, 2017). The impact of those who engage in mindfulness practice in an individual capacity, and apply it at work, is unexplored. We have yet to understand what in the work environment supports mindfulness (Glomb et al., 2011). Might mindfulness enhance compassion and pro-social behaviour, and shift experiences of work? Would mindfulness heighten individual awareness of unhealthy workplaces? What are the barriers to practice and what might enhance daily practice? What are the challenges and

possibilities that mindfulness offers the workplace? Does it increase agency and skill to challenge the organisational system? In which ways can it bring about transformation? What happens to those who learn practices outside of the workplace? An understanding of what mechanisms allow for transformation is a further gap.

Reb and Atkins (2015) suggest, *"…uncritical proclamations about the benefits of mindfulness as a kind of 'cure all' will only contribute to a boom and a bust of the mindfulness bubble"* (p. 14). Glomb et al. (2011) suggest a focus on mediating processes by which mindfulness-based practices lead to improved self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and behaviours. Hayes and Shenk (2004) propose that reductionist approaches to mindfulness can miss and even mislead. There is a need to explore mindfulness using qualitative assessment (Roeser et al., 2012) where the texture of participant's experiences is captured (Kerr, Josyula, & Littenberg, 2011; Malpass et al., 2011; Van Gordon, Shonin, & Griffiths, 2015b). In Black's (2010) online Mindfulness Research Monthly report of the latest peer-reviewed journal articles, qualitative methodologies are increasing, particularly in healthcare interventions.

This qualitative study, therefore, explores participant experiences at work post-training. How do they apply, understand and perceive the impact of mindfulness?

2.5 Models of mindfulness and change

Research has focussed on the mechanisms of mindfulness as opposed to just the impact (Carmody, Baer, Lykins, & Olendzki, 2009). Grabovac et al. (2011) separate **three** possible mechanisms of change, namely (i) cognitive mediators, (ii) attentional mediators, and (iii) neurobiological mediators. Neurobiological measures are beyond the scope of the study.

Models of mindfulness might highlight the unique elements in mindfulness that are related to the process of change. Some of these models are derived from clinical fields and are not necessarily addressing nonclinical population groups. I will present some of the models that might be relevant to MBIs and to the non-clinical population groups encountered in organisational spaces in order to support understanding of ways in which mindfulness might lead to transformation.

2.5.1 Reperceiving model

Shapiro et al. (2006) describe a three-part model of how mindfulness brings about positive change: (i) intention, (ii) attention, and (iii) attitude (IAA). This is a cyclic process with the three elements impacting on each other.

Intention involves knowing why we are cultivating attention. Although not always explicit in MBIs, the authors describe intention as a key factor in maintaining the commitment to practice. Attention refers to the capacity to be present to moment-to-moment experience in the form of thoughts, feelings and sensations. Attitude relates to the qualities that are brought to this attention, that allow for presence to the full range of one's experiences.

The authors introduce *"reperceiving"* as a meta-mechanism that allows for the transformational effects of mindfulness. Reperceiving is seen as a developmental process which can be accelerated through mindfulness and is described as a *"deep knowing and intimacy"* (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 7) as opposed to a detachment. Shapiro et al. (2006) propose that reperceiving might be linked to self-regulation, emotional, cognitive and behavioural flexibility, values clarification and exposure. The authors also suggest that the health effects might be linked to mindfulness altering one's concept of the self.

2.5.2 Attention Regulation Model

The Attention Regulation Model (Carmody et al., 2009) suggests that the breath is affect neutral for most people and being able to redirect attention to the breath results in a decrease of emotional arousal that can accompany symptoms. In this model, the ability to notice where attention is and bring it to the breath is a key component to the benefits of MBIs. Meta-cognitive awareness is developed once attention can move beyond the breath. Carmody et al. (2009) concur with Shapiro et al. (2006) that testable theories would lead to a greater understanding of how MBIs can lead to beneficial outcomes in clinical settings. They emphasise that good assessment methods are needed for variables (such as mindfulness, decentering and self-regulation) in order to test the theories. Grabovac et al. (2011) raises the concern that in this model patients may become averse to aversion if they frequently move attention to neutral stimuli and this might strengthen a narrative self that has an increased sense of aversion when unwanted experiences arise.

2.5.3 De-automatization Model

Kang et al. (2012) review theoretical and empirical sources, suggesting mindfulness can discontinue automatic mental operations. The authors propose a framework of **four** specific mechanisms that support the de-automatization function of mindfulness, namely (i) awareness, (ii) attention, (iii) focus on the present, and (iv) acceptance. Each of these is linked to further processes such as discontinuing automatic inference, enhancing cognitive control capacity, facilitative cognitive insight and preventing suppression or thought distortion. This framework thus focuses more on the de-automatizing potential of mindfulness that can then increase self-control and well-being. Their Model depicting The De-Automatization Model is presented below in Figure 1.

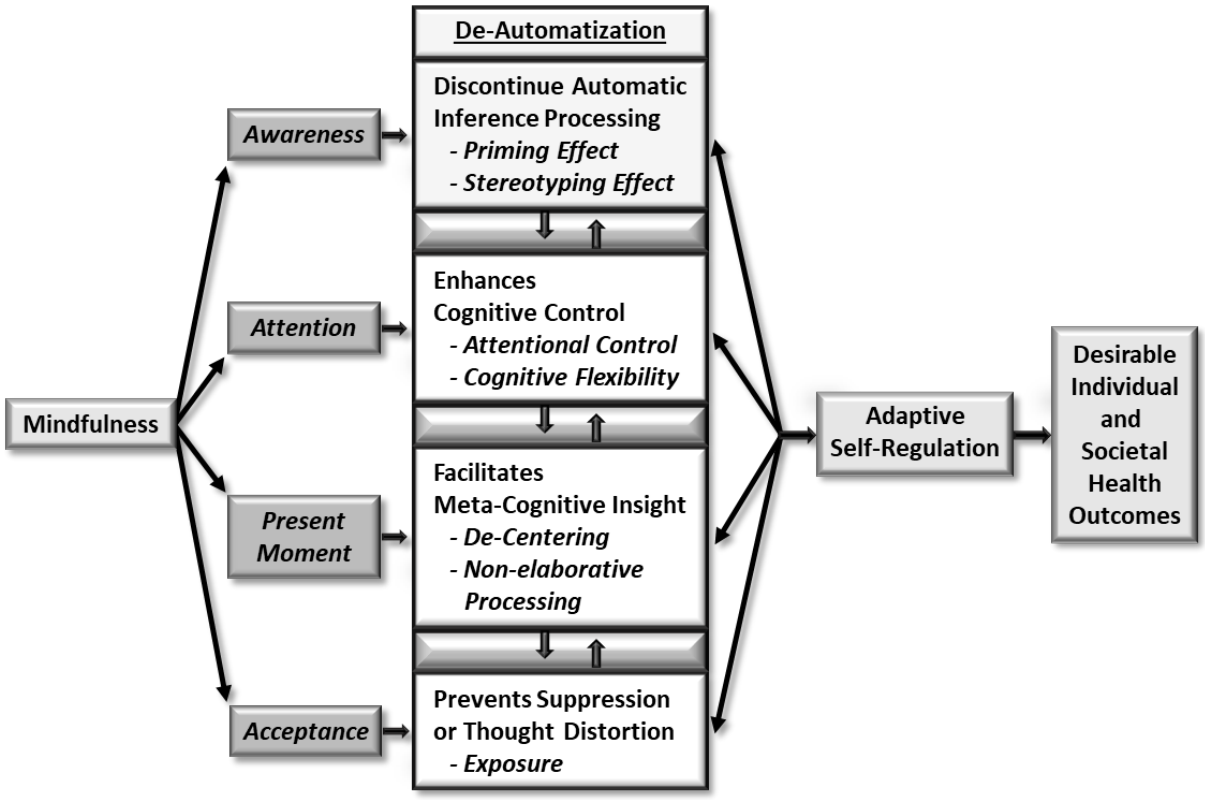

Figure 1: De-Automatization Model (Kang, Gruber & Gray, 2012)

2.5.4 Mindful Coping Model

In this model of Mindful Coping, Garland et al. (2009) suggest that new meaning can be given to negative events. The authors hypothesise that a key mediator of change is positive reappraisal, and mindfulness is the tool that allows this to happen. In this hypothetical causal model, perceived negative events can be responded to with a decentred awareness and increased

flexibility of attention. Over time the capacity to appraise more positively strengthens, particularly in times of acute stress. The authors assert that this is not a defence mechanism of wishful thinking; positive reappraisal, rather than just being a cognitive process, might also enhance qualities such as compassion, trust, and patience. Garland, Farb, Goldin, and Fredrickson (2015), in the Mindfulness-to-Meaning theory, assert that mindfulness facilitates positive reappraisal, whereby a metacognitive awareness allows for more adaptive appraisal. This frees up resources to deepen meaning-making and enhance engagement with life. Grabovac et al. (2011) comment that this focus on positive reappraisal might lead to a reinforcement of the narrative experience of self. This model does not allow for a capacity to be with uncomfortable events without having to change meaning. A capacity to engage with discomfort might be key to managing dominant discourses at work. See Figure 2 below of the Mindful Coping Model.

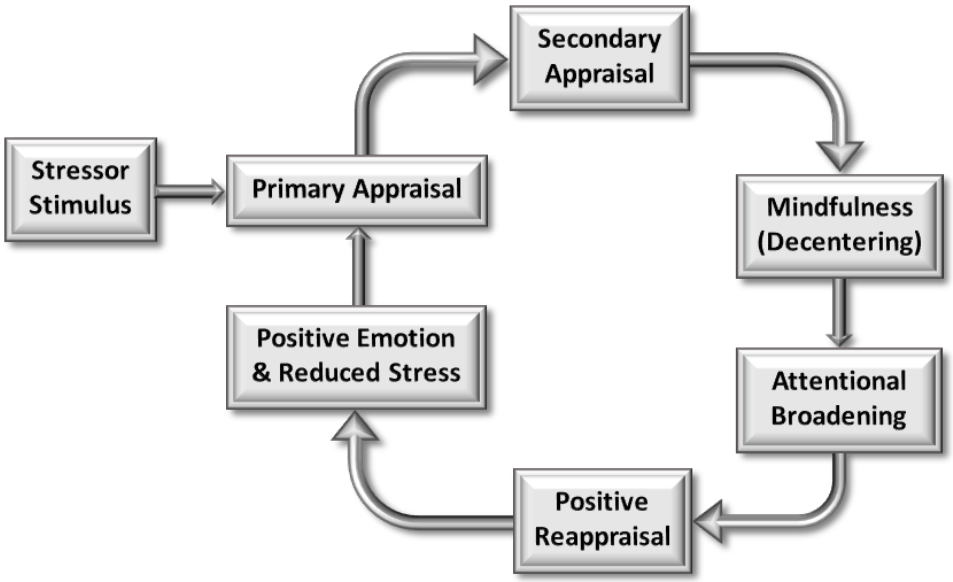

Figure 2: Mindful Coping Model (Garland, Gaylord, & Park, 2009)

2.5.5 The Buddhist Psychological Model (BPM)

This model illustrates the components of insight and concentration practices that might allow for precise content analysis studies of MBIs (Grabovac et al., 2011). Their model describes change process underlying MBIs and focuses on clinical benefits of reduced symptomatology and increased well-being. The BPM is derived from commentaries and translations of Buddhist texts known as the Abhidhamma Pitathka and simplifies these complex texts. In this model, mental activity is seen as the arising and passing away of sense impressions and mental events.

Due to the fast arising of these sensations, the accompanying feeling tone of pleasant, unpleasant or neutral is not noticed. We are then unaware of our habitual patterns of attachment and aversion that arise as a reaction to the feeling state as opposed to arising to the objects themselves. This lack of awareness then results in mental proliferation.

The BPM model describes how insight into what is known in Theravada Buddhism as the **three** characteristics, (i) suffering, (ii) impermanence, and (iii) no-self, common to all sense impressions or mental events. Decreased attachment or aversion to feelings, leads to decreased mental proliferation. This leads to shifts in well-being and symptom reduction. This model makes a distinction between concentration and mindfulness practices. However, MBIs make use of both concentration and mindfulness practices.

The BPM highlights acceptance, attention regulation and ethical practices as part of their model. Whilst acceptance and attention are common themes in mindfulness programmes, the conscious addition of ethical practices and an emphasis on living an ethical life are not specifically taught in First Generation MBIs. See Figure 3 below of the (BPM) Model.

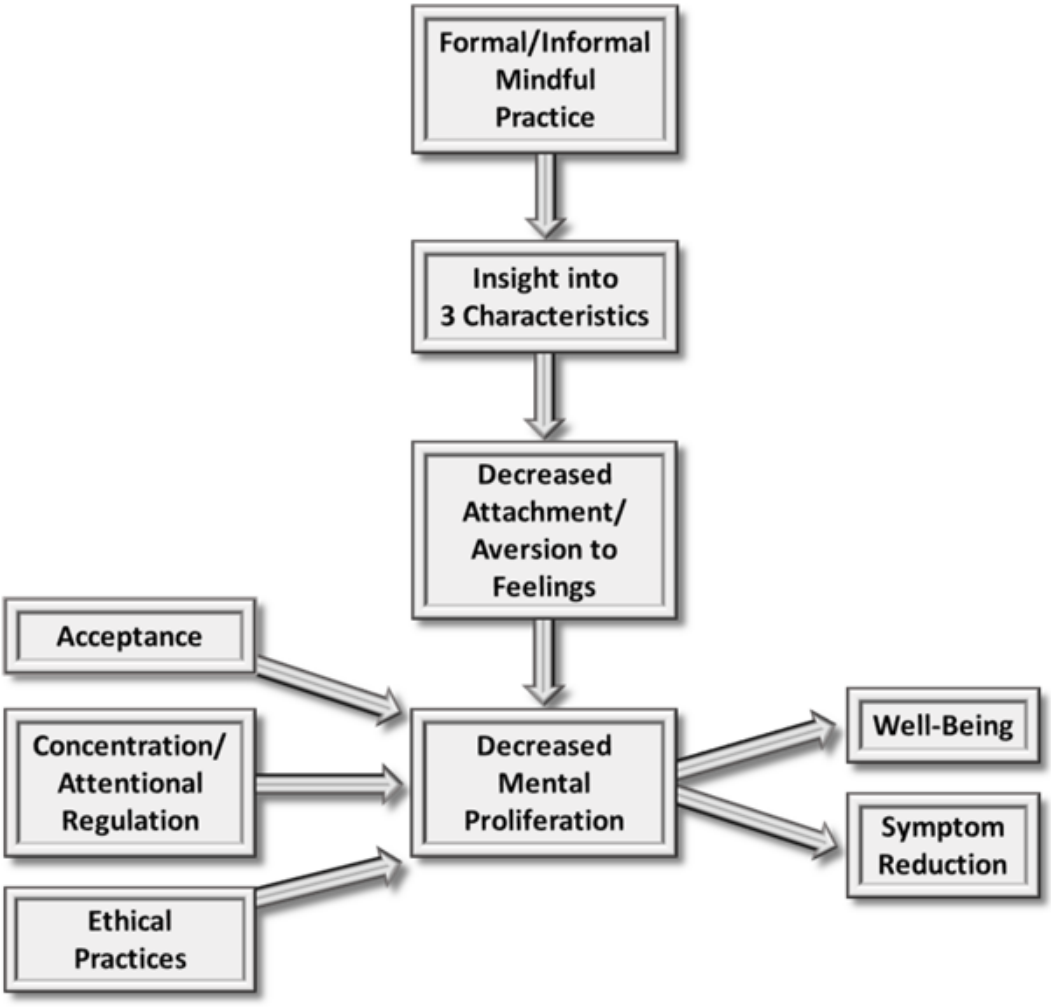

Figure 3: Buddhist Psychological Model (BPM) (Grabovac et al., 2011)

2.5.6 Logic Model of Mindfulness Training

Roeser et al. (2012) developed a logic model for teachers. This model provides a logical coherence in illustrating virtuous cycles of positive relationships, based on teachers' and students' enjoyment, engagement and satisfaction in the learning journey. The model includes Fidelity of programme and participant engagement but omits skill of the mindfulness facilitator. It provides a useful overview of how mindfulness can result in organisational health, well-being and engagement. See Figure 4 below of the Logic Model of Mindfulness Training.

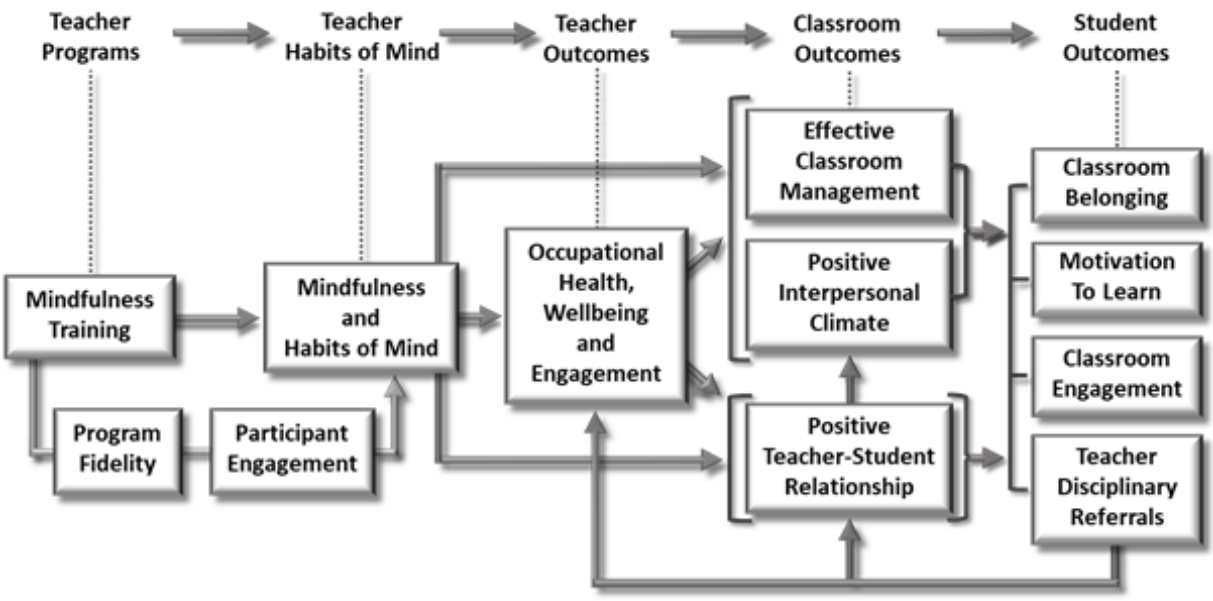

Figure 4:

Logic Model of Hypothesized Mindfulness Training Effects on Teachers, Classroom Environments, and Students.

(Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012)

2.5.7 Inductive Model of Mindfulness at Work (Lyddy & Good, 2017)

Through inductive research on 39 professionals, Lyddy and Good (2017) identified two types of experiences, namely when informants were unable to activate Being mode while engaging Doing (Entanglement) and simultaneous activating Being and Doing (Disentanglement). There are three means of transitioning between these experiences. The Inductive model of Mindfulness at Work provides a useful understanding of the role of entanglement and disentanglement of thinking and its subsequent effect on feeling and functioning at work. Being and Doing have a complex relationship that fluctuates across individuals and situations, making mindfulness at work challenging. See Figure 5 below.

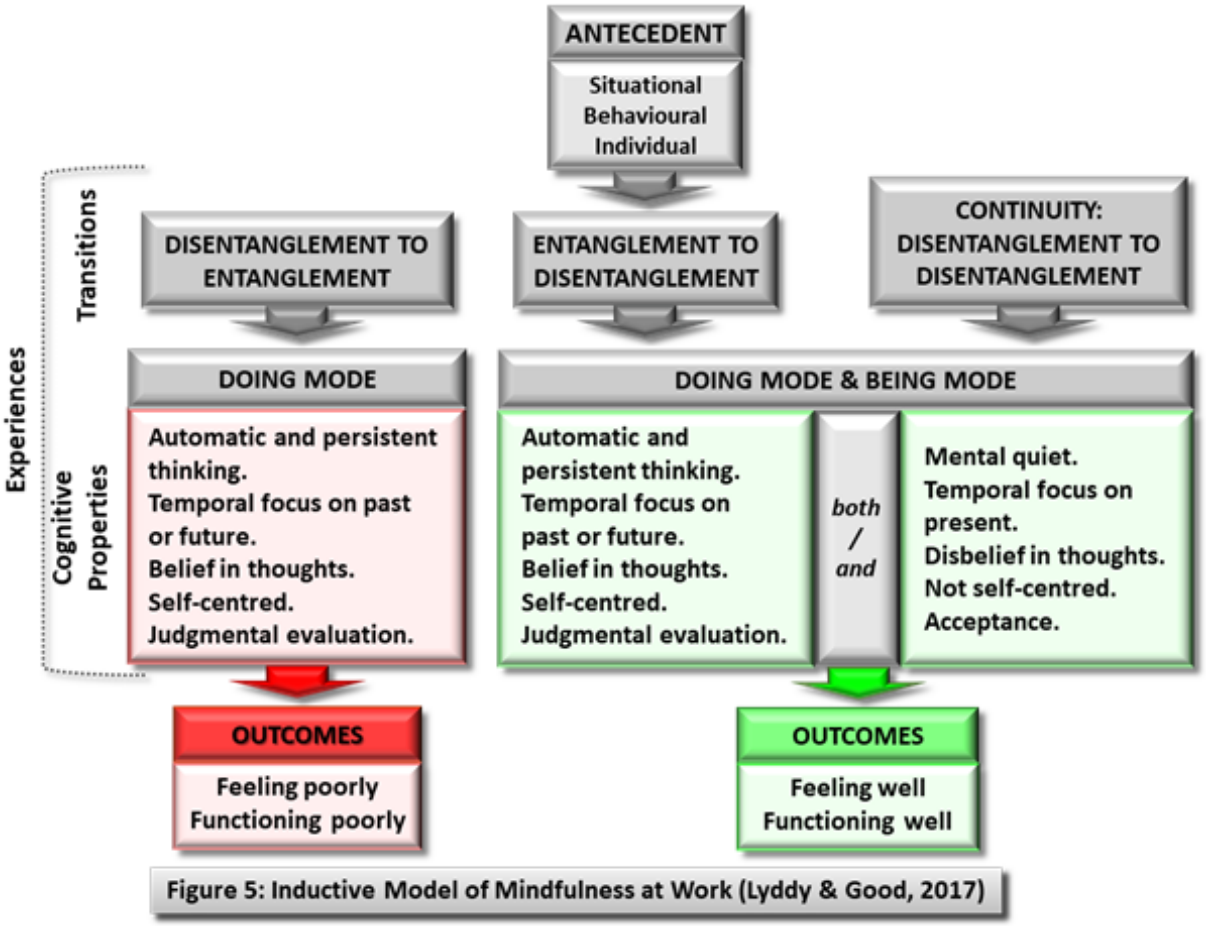

Figure 5: Inductive Model of Mindfulness at Work (Lyddy & Good, 2017)

2.5.8 Heuristic Model of Enactive Compassion

Neff, Rude, and Kirkpatrick (2007) define self-compassion as being composed of three key factors: (i) self-kindness vs. self-judgment, (ii) common humanity vs. isolation, and (iii) mindfulness vs. over-identification. With increased self-compassion, individuals can confront a sense of inadequacy or failure with warmth as opposed to self-criticism, recognising that the difficulties of life are a part of our shared humanity and being able to take a more balanced approach to painful feelings.

Halifax (2012) provides a heuristic model of enactive compassion, challenging the general understanding of compassion as being the feeling of caring for one who is suffering and the motivation to relieve suffering. In this model, compassion is an interaction between living organisms and their environment and is an emergent process.

Halifax's Heuristic Model (Figure 6) is developed specifically for compassion-training for clinicians, particularly those in the end-of-life-care professions. The model is valuable in terms of the level of fluidity and understanding the emergent nature of the qualities (attentional, affective, cognitive, somatic) cultivated through mindfulness practice. Unlike the other models

mentioned above, it highlights embodiment, as well as the interaction of different elements in the cultivation of compassion. Halifax questions how responses can be regulated to nurture compassion, as opposed to reactions such as violence, numbness, moral outrage or abandonment. The same questions can be asked in the workspace.

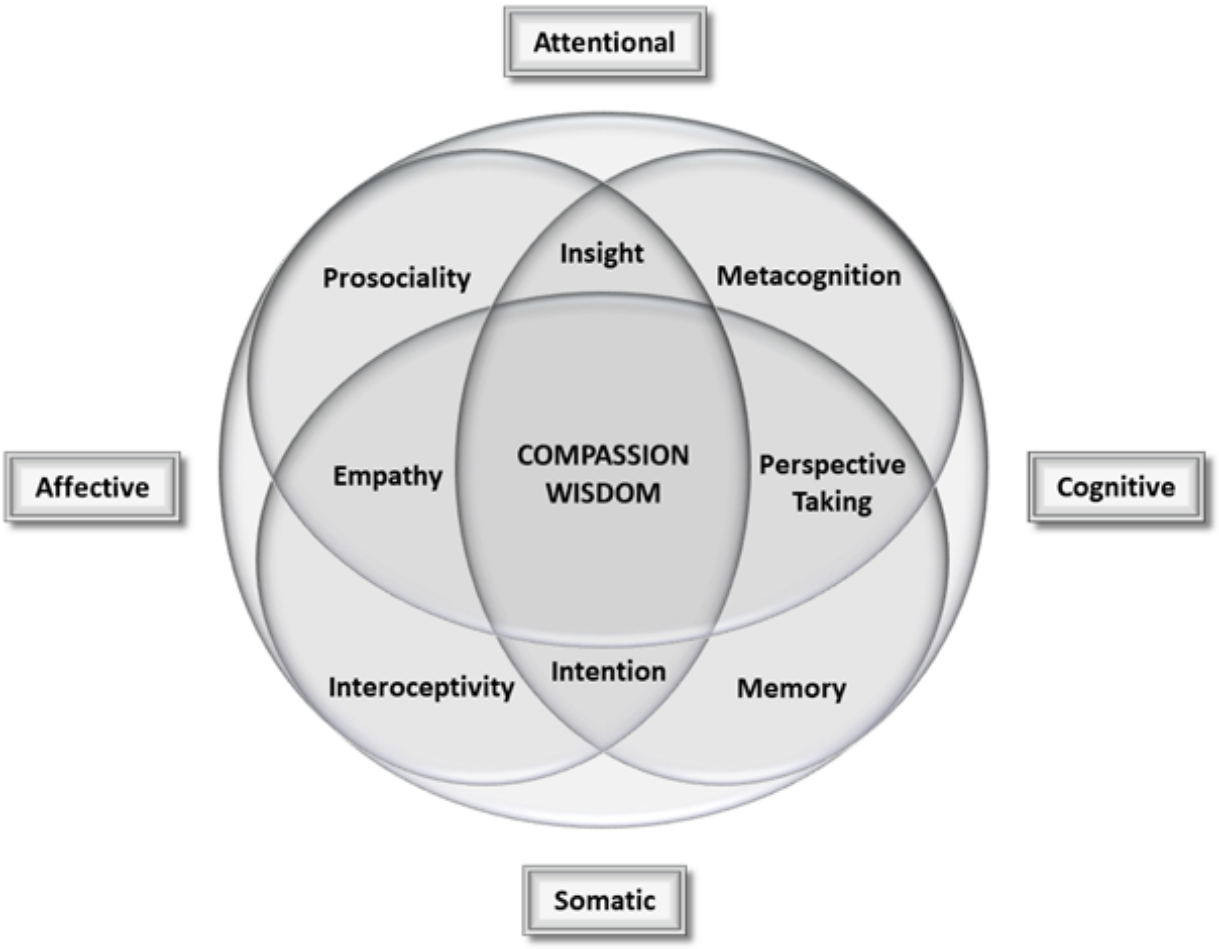

Figure 6: Heuristic Model of Enactive Compassion (Halifax, 2012)

2.5.9 Integrated Translational Framework

Although a neurobiological mode is beyond the scope of this research, I am including the recent model by Tang and Leve (2016) as it indicates that physiology and brain function is an important aspect that is impacted through mindfulness practice. Tang and Leve (2016) provide an Integrated Translational Framework (Figure 7) illustrating neurobiological and behavioural mechanisms that could affect self-regulation.

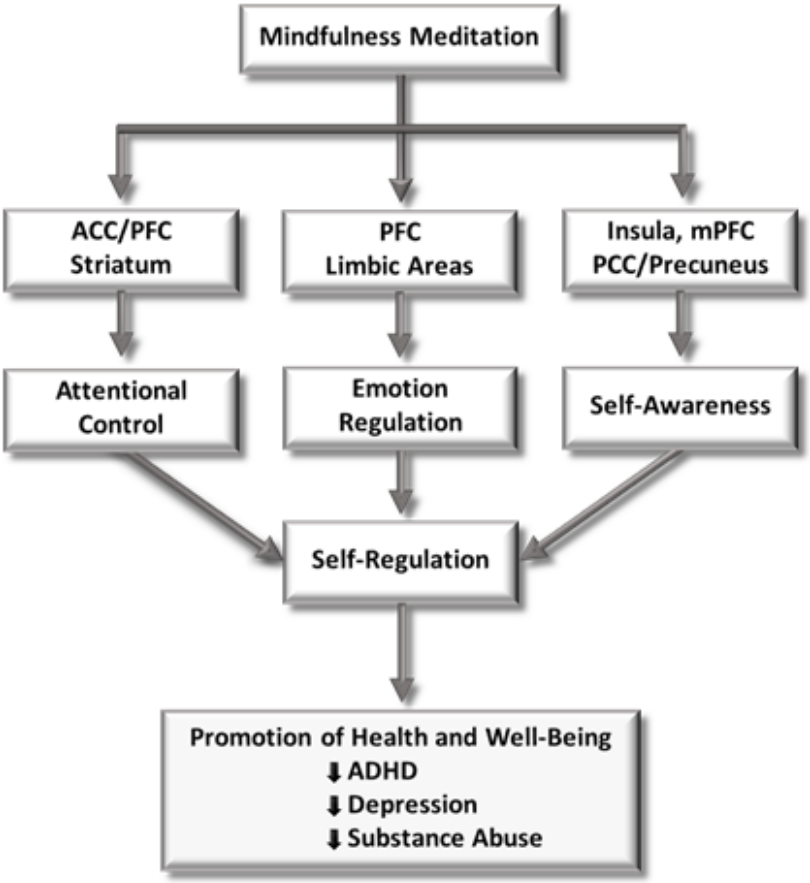

Figure 7: Integrated Translational Framework (Tang & Leve, 2016)

2.5.10 Models reflecting behaviour change

Although not related to mindfulness, two models of learning and behaviour change are worth mentioning here. Burch's Four Stages of Competence Model (Figure 8), developed in the 1970s (Adams, 2016), is useful in illustrating the relationship between commitment to, and levels of, an embodiment of practice. The model demonstrates how, in learning, one moves from unconscious competence to conscious competence.

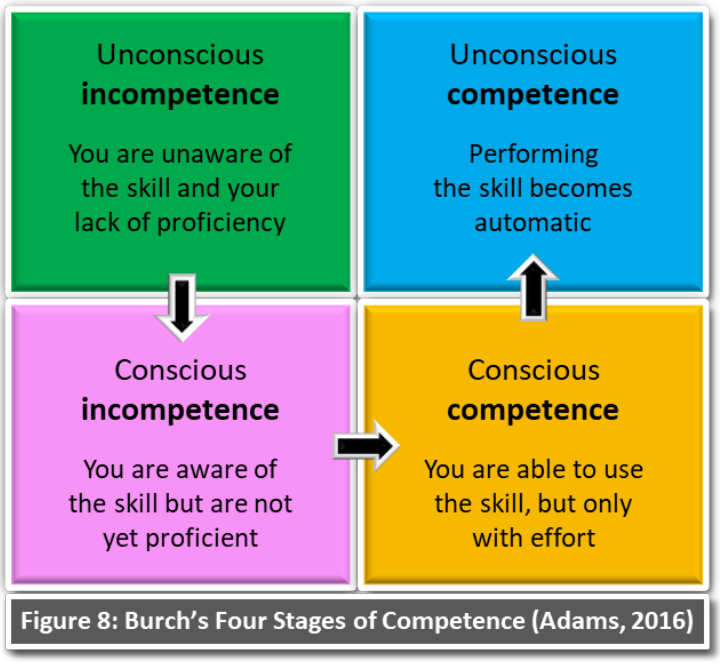

Figure 8: Burch's Four Stages of Competence (Adams, 2016)

Stage models of behaviour change, such as the Trans-Theoretical Model (Figure 9) (Noar, 2017), describe how change is non-linear, and that individuals start and stop behaviours many times. Lapses and relapses in behaviours are seen as normal (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992).

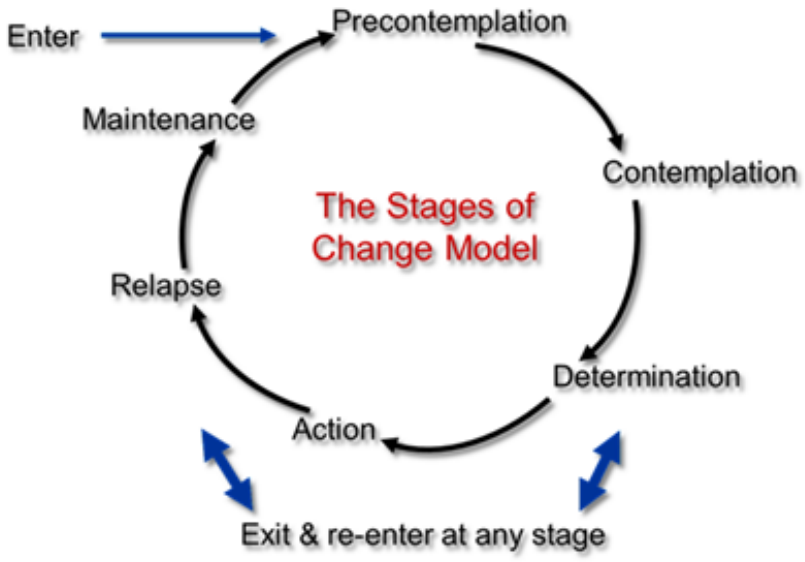

Figure 9: Trans-Theoretical Model (Noar, 2017)

2.5.11 Conclusion

These models provide useful ways of understanding transformational aspects of mindfulness training. The Reperceiving model (Shapiro et al., 2006) highlights the role of reperceiving as a

key mechanism or meta-mechanism that allows for change. The Attentional Model (Carmody et al., 2009) highlights the capacity to bring attention to the affect-neutral breath as a key to reducing arousal and symptoms. Kang et al.'s (2012) work in the De-Automization Model emphasises the capacity for de-automatization through awareness, attention, focus on the attention and acceptance in order to highlight how mindfulness can shift cognitive control and well-being. Garland et al.'s (2009) Mindful Coping Model provides an understanding of positive re-appraisal, however, again on a more cognitive level, also focusing on decentering of attention. The BPM highlights some of the Buddhist understandings of mindfulness. Halifax's Model of Compassion highlights the embodied aspects of mindfulness and the capacity for compassion (absent in the other models). These models focus on clinical and therapeutic benefits which might differ from impacts at work.

The Logic Model**,** is a valuable one in the workplace of teachers and teaching but is hypothetical, focusing mostly on engagement and well-being for teachers and students. Lyddy and Good's (2017) Inductive Model provides a preliminary understanding of Being and Doing at work. However, a more comprehensive understanding and model of mindfulness at work, that can include some understanding of how mindfulness training might have the potential not only to shift well-being and engagement but to impact paradigms of competition and aggression (or in Buddhist terms, greed, hatred and delusion), might be a valuable addition to the field for both scholars and practitioners.

2.6 Mindfulness and related leadership models

In this VUCA age, there is much thought about the kinds of capacities leaders need. In the qualitative study by McCall and Hollenbeck (2002, p. 37), the following qualities were listed: (i) open minded and flexible in thought and tactics; (ii) cultural interest and sensitivity; (iii) able to deal with complexity; (iv) resilient, resourceful, optimistic, energetic; (v) honest and authentic; (vi) stable personal life; and (vii) business and technical skills. The Hay Group's (2011) 2030 research describes three levels in which the new business world order will challenge leaders:

1) **Cognitive:** Leaders need forms of contextual awareness, based on strong conceptual and strategic thinking capacities. They need to be able to conceptualise change, and to exhibit new forms of intellectual openness and curiosity.

2) **Emotional:** Leaders need to be sensitive to different cultures, generations and genders, demonstrating higher levels of ethics, integrity and sincerity. They must also tolerate higher levels of ambiguity.

3) **Behavioural:** Leaders must create a culture of trust and openness and rethink old concepts such as loyalty and retention. They lead teams that are diverse and need to be able to collaborate (cross-generational, cross-functional and cross-company).

Finding ways to help leaders embrace these levels of challenge is important. There are some current leadership models, which highlight the importance of self-awareness and presence, which I will describe briefly:

1) **Adaptive leadership:** Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) describe the challenges of leadership today and the two phases of crisis leadership, the emergency phase when the objective is to stabilise, and the adaptive phase where the underlying causes of the crisis need to be addressed and a new capacity built. Crisis allows a move from default patterns. Leadership qualities are needed to foster adaptation, manage disequilibrium and generate self-care. Mindfulness practice is not formally used, and might support individuals to be present to uncertainty, open to possibility and enhance self-care.

2) **Resonant leadership:** Boyatzis and McKee (2005) name mindfulness as part of a renewal model of leadership but do not describe how to cultivate it through meditation. Demands of leadership can result in *"power stresses"* and as a result leaders find themselves moving to an avoidance orientation that is characterised by irritability, aversion and fixed patterns. Good leaders attain resonance with those around them through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and management of relationships. The authors use the term mindfulness but do not describe how to cultivate it through meditation.

3) **Conscious business:** Kofman (2006) stresses that great leadership is conscious leadership, and conscious means being awake, mindful and perceiving the world. This leads to being able to understand and respond to our lives in ways that honour needs, values and goals. A conscious business can promote mindfulness for all stakeholders involved. Conscious employees need conscious managers in order to stay engaged in the workplace and to give their best. Kofman (2006) names seven qualities to distinguish conscious from unconscious employees: (i) unconditional **responsibility**, (ii) essential

integrity, (iii) ontological **humility** (character attributes), (iv) authentic **communication**, (v) constructive **negotiation**, and (vi) impeccable **coordination** (interpersonal skills). The seventh is **emotional mastery**, the enabling quality for the other six. The description of conscious employees embraces some of the qualities and capacities innate in Eastern understandings of the practice. Kofman's description of a conscious business seems akin to the concept of flow, where work results in feeling absorbed, time stops, and hard work is performed with ease.

4) **Theory U:** Senge et al. (2004, p. 14) describe presence as "*leading to a state of 'letting come', of consciously participating in a larger field for change*". They name the capacity to see clearly, starting with the suspension of habitual ways of seeing. In organisations, the expectation of working at a fast pace makes it difficult to stop and examine assumptions. Seeing clearly in an organisation starts with curiosity, attention and learning to tolerate not knowing. The core capacities of the U movement, of suspending, redirecting, letting go and letting come, might be supported through mindfulness practice.

5) **Centred leadership:** Developed from The Centred Leadership Project at McKinsey & Company, Centred Leadership (Barsh & Lavoie, 2014) teaches leaders to embrace the polarities inside of them, helping them gain greater self-awareness and self-reflection. There is no use of formal mindfulness practices. Informal practices such as deep breathing and feeling feet on the floor are utilised.

Although these leadership models capture some of the essence of mindfulness, it remains to be seen whether these models could be bolstered by the integration of mindfulness practice in order to cultivate the skills and qualities mentioned. Overwhelming demands at work and cultures of fear can result in less presence. The workplace is moving from favouring individual hard work and competition, towards collaboration, consensus, and non-hierarchical relations. This shifting context and understanding of the workplace means that practices of self-reflection, self-awareness and connection become more imperative.

Trisoglio (2012, p. 9) comments that although mindset-based approaches to leadership are gaining popularity, there is*: "not yet widespread use of practices from the mindfulness and wisdom traditions to develop real-time…awareness of these mind-sets. This opens up a fertile opportunity to develop a new generation of tools and approaches for mindful leadership"*. The

current research explores ways in which mindfulness training might promote the self-awareness that is imperative in today's world. However, critics of mindfulness training have concerns about the use of mindfulness at work.

2.7 Critiques and counter-arguments of mindfulness in the workplace

As the media and the public's interest have increased dramatically, there has been a risk that mindfulness practices are being promoted with claims that are not fully supported. Mindfulness interventions at work are currently unregulated, with interventions ranging from those delivered by contemplative practitioners, to those trained in mindfulness-based approaches through various university courses, to business consultants with sparse training or personal practice. There are also numerous digital products used or being developed for the workplace. One concern is that in corporate space individual pathologies might be less seen or supported.

The secularisation of mindfulness, particularly in the workplace, has come under fire by critics of the mindfulness movement. Reb and Atkins (2015) suggest there is still a reticence in the workspace to mix the spiritual with professional, perhaps due to conflicting values between spiritual practices and work, secularisation of society, and a need to keep work and personal life separate.

Harrington and Dunne (2015, p. 630) remind us of the value of looking at how various forces have been responsible in the emergence of the mindfulness movement:

> *Because of the peculiar circumstances behind its historical emergence, therapeutic mindfulness today sits on an unstable knife-edge between spirituality and secularism, therapeutics, and popular culture. Understanding how we got here…may serve us as a first step toward deciding how best to move forward with discernment and, if we may use the term, mindfulness.*

The separation of mindfulness from its spiritual context for clinical purposes may have led to a dilution because of the lack of explicit discussion of mindfulness being a method to experience enlightenment and to perceive the true nature of reality. We can question whether teachings that were originally provided for the relief of suffering have been withheld because they were seen as religion and whether clinical models should include such discussions without labelling them as spiritual (Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003).

Kabat-Zinn (2011) highlights this issue, describing that rather than a decontextualizing of the Dharma, MBSR is an attempt to decontextualize it in its essential fullness. He argues that had MBSR employed traditional Buddhist language, or introduced medical patients to Buddhist frameworks, it may have prevented MBIs from influencing medicine and psychology.

Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) cite Gethin: the argument depends on one's perspective; Buddhists could see it as appropriation and a dilution, or as skilful means. Modernists could say unnecessary historical and cultural baggage is removed and the essence of what is useful is left. A non-Buddhist perspective can see that it allows for the essence that Buddhist religion obscured. It can be seen as a coming together of practices from Buddhism to modern western cognitive science. As observers of social history, it can be an example of a change from a cultural situation where we turn to religion to heal our souls to one where we turn to medicine and science.

Although authors immersed in Buddhist teachings have argued that the modern MBI does not fit with classical theory of mindfulness, other scholars argue that MBSR is the only practice that is *"overtly rooted in Buddhist tradition"* (according to Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011, p. 409). Kabat-Zinn and MBI teachers do share the concern that as mindfulness gains more of a foothold in the west, crucial elements may be omitted. Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) ask "*can it be exploited or misappropriated in ways that might lead to hear of some kind, either by omission or commission?*" (p. 4) Ng (2015) questions (without dismissing) the use of therapeutic mindfulness in institutional settings, and appeals for a meeting of therapeutic, rehabilitative mindfulness and critical, civic mindfulness on a middle path to generate a more compassionate future. The term critical and civic mindfulness refers to the use of mindfulness to help people cultivate ethical and political sensibilities.

Monteiro et al. (2015) discuss whether it is appropriate for mindfulness to be utilised in military and business settings, arguing that the practices were a means of developing peace and spiritual awakening. Reb et al. (2013) question whether mindfulness could increase unethical behaviour due to the increased capacity to sustain attention and awareness. The analogy here is that of a sniper, who is able to sustain attention. His or her use of attention may not necessarily be ethical or non-harming. The idea that mindfulness is a kind of *"magic bullet"* that can increase productivity and brain-power is a disturbing one. To quote Sauer and Kohls (2011), *"the assumption that building the mindfulness muscle may actually turn human beings into super leaders is a blatant misunderstanding of what mindfulness is all about"* (p. 301). Zajonc (2009)

comments that meditation, even if one is skilled at it, does not guarantee ethical living or good moral judgment. *"We need to ask is mindfulness a transformative practice and ethics or does it unwittingly reinforce self-centred and conformist values"* (Forbes, 2012, p. 3).

Purser and Milillo (2015) extend this argument further saying that a denatured mindfulness might be misappropriated for *"reproducing corporate and institutional power, employee pacification and maintenance of toxic organisational cultures"*. Mindfulness might be used to keep employees accepting of a company's culture as opposed to challenging it, gaining productivity from a workplace that benefits management more than employees. The implicit ethic of the liberation from suffering and movement to skilful compassion might be missed *"when those in power employ mindfulness as a technology for their own self-serving purposes, unmoored from its ethical meaning"* (Forbes, 2012, p. 3).

Purser and Milillo (2015) describe the early Buddhist canonical to give clarity to the tenets of Buddhist mindfulness in a triadic model that includes; Right View (discerning presence and causes of suffering), Right Effort (prevention of unskilful qualities and development of skilful), and Right Mindfulness. They claim that contemporary understandings of mindfulness are partial understandings and miss that mindfulness is not ethically neutral, and that modern and clinical definitions lack any reference to discerning skilful from unskilful actions. The authors suggest that preserving the integrity of Buddhist mindfulness requires a humility and willingness to engage with the Buddhist canon from organisational scholars and practitioners.

On this note, Farb (2014) explains that classical teachings themselves do not require the Buddhist tenets. These teachings can be seen as a psychological model to promote well-being and might retain their benefits outside of their cultural contexts. Farb (2014) suggests a mindfulness that promotes relaxation or health benefits and can be seen as *"right"* from a salutary perspective. However, if it does not reduce attachment in the guise of craving and aversion, *"its benefits may be short-lived and ultimately illusory, constituting wrong mindfulness from a more classical perspective"* (p. 1066). The author refers to the *"Great Danger"* where, if mindfulness trainers are focusing on wrong mindfulness, the movement might fail or be used to justify practices that are not connected to Buddhist ideals.

Monteiro et al. (2015) suggest that in order to assess MBIs in the light of traditional Buddhist frameworks, we can consider: adherence to basic elements of *"Right mindfulness"*, whether the

practices lead to insight into suffering as opposed to just symptom relief, and whether the MBIs include the ethical context in which mindfulness is traditionally taught.

Van Gordon (2015a) counter some concerns by describing how in Buddhist thought the teachings result in an inevitable outcome of an increase in wisdom, compassion and awareness. If these results do not occur, it is due to teachings being incorrectly taught or practised. Contemporary mindfulness teachers agree that *"if mindfulness doesn't ultimately cultivate greater awareness of connectedness – to others, to the community, to a larger environment – it isn't the genuine article"* (Hunter, 2013, p. 59).

Walsh (2017) argues for shifts in theory and practice that would result in what he terms contemplative praxis, which integrates the personal, political, inner and outer aspects of transformation. The concern is that we could use mindfulness to delude ourselves that we are awake, whilst we continue destructive patterns. This appeal connects with the reminder from Farb (2014), who suggests that *"right"* mindfulness in the Buddhist sense means more than a quality of attention that improves one's mood; it also contains deep ethical constraints such as putting aside greed and self-concern (p. 1066). These ideas have even been developed in the field of neuroscience. Singer and Ricard (2015) promote the idea of a *"caring economy"*, integrating findings from contemplative sciences into economic models. This begs the question of how organisations might respond to this as they consider the impact on the bottom line (Walsh, 2017).

Davis (2015) highlights the individual nature of mindfulness practice, commenting that,

> *…there is hardly a cross-cultural consensus that we ought to accept the Buddha as the authority on how a human being ought to be. No appeal to authority will settle the question of whether MBIs adhere to Right mindfulness…to settle that question would require nothing short of an answer to the ethical question of how it is best for a human being to be.* (p. 47)

Davis (2015) continues that it may be problematic to impose a pedagogy based on Buddhist understandings of how humans should be, to those who do not accept this, and that even traditional Buddhist ethical visions differ from each other. Monteiro et al. (2015) concur that there are differences in the understanding of mindfulness, not only between Buddhism and modern-day MBIs, but also within Buddhism. Furthermore, Davis (2015) notes that the ultimate goal of mindfulness practice is to achieve liberation from re-birth but MBIs are not presented

in contexts where that can be assumed; the idea of realising the cessation of suffering might *"provide a note of consilience between traditional and secular presentations"* (p. 47). The author supports the need to dialogue and challenge our convictions on how it is best for humans to be and thus how it is best for us to train our minds.

Western mindfulness training might miss the fundamental intentions of Buddhist mindfulness practices. At the same time, Buddhist understandings might miss an understanding of what might serve contemporary workspaces. The *"quiet ego"* construct, which has its roots in humanistic and philosophical traditions, may be better aligned with organisational goals. Within Self-determination theory, the quiet ego is understood to be the basis of self-regulation that is determined from within, and that facilitates growth in intra- and inter-personal harmony (Niemiec, Ryan, & Brown, 2008).

As described by Wayment and Bauer (2017), *"the quiet ego is a way of constructing the self that transcends egotism, not by neglecting the self but rather by facilitating a balance of concerns for the self and others as well as facilitating the growth of the self and others"* (p. 1). The quiet ego consists of the capacity for inclusive identity (ability to see oneself as interconnected with others and the world), perspective taking (ability to shift attention away from the self which can increase compassion) and detached awareness (ability to focus on the immediate without predetermined expectations).

Few studies have considered the voices and subjective experiences of those who have completed mindfulness trainings and are using them at work (in areas other than health and well-being). Once participants have completed trainings, the ways in which they adapt and use their practices, in terms of Right mindfulness, are relatively unexplored.

2.8 Mindfulness in Positive Organisational Scholarship (POS)

In 2003, POS was introduced as a new research field, drawing on the work of positive psychology. POS focuses on what leads to the development of strength, resilience, meaningfulness, flourishing, vitality, virtue, life-giving dynamics and excellence in organisations. POS explores how the cultivation of positive human qualities is linked to improved organisational performance. It looks at how both individual level and organisational level virtues can contribute to fulfilment of the members of an organisation. The effect of mindfulness training on these character strengths has not been explored (Baer, 2015). Also derived from positive psychology, Positive Organisational Behaviour (POB) focuses on

situational strengths that can influence positive behaviour (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). A dialectical approach would be valuable to explore the inter-connection between personal characteristics and environment (Lopes, 2013). I focus on POS in this study.

Cameron and Spreitzer (2012), in a definition of the Positive in POS, highlight the following aspects: *"adopting a unique or alternative perspective"* (p. 2), *"a focus on extraordinarily positive outcomes or positively deviant performance"* (p. 2), *"an affirmative bias that fosters resourcefulness"* (p. 3), and *"the examination of virtuousness or the best of the human condition"* (p. 4). According to Cameron and Spreitzer (2012), POS might have a history dating to William James' term *"healthy mindedness"*, and interestingly James also wrote about the power of paying attention. Concepts from other disciplines might help inform POS in its quest to allow organisations and humans to thrive and flourish in difficult conditions.

Positive psychology has explored the benefits of mindfulness practice, finding improvements in markers such as psychological symptoms, well-being, and resilience (Orzech, Shapiro, Brown, & McKay, 2009). The meditative traditions understand that the innate human qualities are those of compassion, joy, and loving-kindness and that a still mind leads to happiness. Mindfulness training might enhance POS in the following areas:

1) **Work engagement:** Research into the concept of work engagement is a growing area and embraces a broad array of constructs. Rothbard and Patil (2011) describe employee engagement as a psychological state and a key ingredient for organisational success. They state, *"Psychological presence is defined as the extent to which people are attentive, connected, integrated, and focused in their role performances"* (p. 57), naming three critical factors in engagement: attention, energy, and absorption. These factors seem closely linked to mindfulness. The role of external factors that contribute to psychological safety (through coaching leadership, the balance between demands and resources, sufficient breaks, and contextual support) has been explored in enhancing engagement. The use of inner resources could be explored through mindfulness practice. Dane and Brummel (2013) found support for a positive relationship in a dynamic service industry between workplace mindfulness and job performance that holds even when accounting for the constituent dimensions of work engagement, namely vigour, dedication and absorption. Interestingly, Van Dongen et al. (2016) found no significant effect of a work-based programme on work engagement. Some interesting questions

here are: Can mindfulness practice improve work engagement? Can sustained engagement lead to burnout? Do breaks encourage better engagement?

2) **Curiosity:** The role of curiosity in organisational life has not been explored in organisational scholarship, despite the links between curiosity and learning, well-being, longevity, and life satisfaction. Empirical evidence suggests that curiosity is an important trait for individuals at any organisational level, leading to enhanced interpersonal safety, a better ability to deal with uncertainty, and improved efficacy (Harrison, 2012). Mindfulness practice has an innate quality of curiosity and openness to the moment that can be trained and might enhance openness to multiple perspectives.

3) **High core self-evaluation:** The tendency to view the self in a positive way, may enhance flourishing and better-coping skills. The term flourishing is used in reference to individuals who are *"happy, engaged, self-motivated, successful, and learning"* (Bono, Davies, & Rasch, 2012, p. 125). Can the cultivation of non-judgmental attention towards oneself through mindfulness practice improve core self-evaluation?

4) **Humble leadership:** Literature describes the qualities of the humble leader as effective emotional management and awareness, openness to new ideas, a sense of calmness and quietness (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Could mindfulness be linked to, or support, humble leadership?

5) **Authenticity:** Leroy et al. (2013) exploring relationships between mindfulness, authentic functioning and work engagement post mindfulness training, describe that authentic individuals *"express their true selves, (open), while being willing to take relational demands into account"* (p. 239). Mindfulness was found to be an antecedent to authentic functioning, and authentic functioning is also a possible antecedent of work engagement. What are the links between mindfulness and authenticity at work?

6) **Compassion:** Organisations can be the cause of pain and suffering or they can be the places that manage levels of stress and suffering in employee's lives. Kanov et al. (2004) suggest compassion and the enactment of collective compassion processes can contribute to the emerging field of POS. They describe the elements of compassion as it is experienced amongst individuals as *"noticing"* another's suffering, *"feeling"* the other's pain, and *"responding"* to that person's suffering. They argue that organisational compassion can be found in any organisation, but to be shared and to become collective,

the processes must be legitimised. They also refer to the inter-connectedness of organisational compassion and hypothesise it could increase organisational resilience.

Neff et al. (2007) suggest self-compassion is an important human strength *"as it invokes qualities of kindness, equanimity, and feelings of inter-connectedness, helping individuals to find hope and meaning when faced with the difficulties of life"* (p. 909). Self-compassion was associated with positive aspects of well-being such as *"happiness, optimism, positive affect, wisdom, personal initiative, curiosity and exploration"* (p. 909). Mindfulness might help cultivate compassion and self-compassion at work.

7) **Virtuousness:** Bright, Cameron, and Caza (2006) refer to the buffering and amplifying effects of virtuousness in organisations, commenting that ethical codes cannot predict every dilemma that managers will face, and that the absence of unethical behaviour does not assure the presence of principled behaviour. The authors highlight the three characteristics of virtuousness as human impact, moral goodness, and unconditional betterment, and that it can be found individually and collectively. They describe tonic virtuousness which can exist at any time, and phasic virtuousness that occurs when specific events create a need for it. Can virtuousness be cultivated and grown as both phasic and tonic through mindfulness practices?

This study aims to draw links to POS concepts which mindfulness training might enhance. Other potential concepts in this body of literature might be; resilience, high-quality connections, creativity, meaningfulness, and transcendent behaviour. The virtuous states of mind that are innate in Tibetan Buddhism such as compassion, gentleness, patience and generosity, and the *"basic goodness"* referred to in Shambhala Buddhist practice (Garland et al., 2009) might correspond to, or overlap with, these concepts in POS, and at the very least provide some way of helping organisations enhance these qualities.

Positive psychology has been criticised for its failure to acknowledge embodiment and shadow emotions (Bretherton, 2017). Mindfulness interventions might have something unique to offer POS. As opposed to the strong positive bias evident in POS, mindful awareness embraces all experiences; positive, negative, and neutral. This might provide a richer understanding of flourishing in the POS context. For example, the capacity to embrace all situations with equanimity as opposed to only positivity might be relevant to the topic of mindful organising. Vogus (2012) describes mindful organising as *"a lens for understanding the cognitive and*

social processes through which those in the frontlines successfully navigate high-risk, high hazard work" (p. 674). In such situations, equanimity and the ability to be present to difficulties might be more valuable than the bias towards positivity.

2.9 Literature review: Conclusion

This literature review has highlighted the academic understanding of the application, understandings and impact of mindfulness trainings, particularly in the context of work and organisations.

I have described how mindfulness trainings have grown over the past three decades and are now used in healthcare, leadership, and education. I have illustrated the various understandings and constructs of mindfulness, both Western and Eastern. I focused on some of the quantitative and qualitative research in the field, which has relevance for those implementing it in the workspace. The data from such studies are strongly supportive of mindfulness training in the context of health and stress management, and there is also evidence that mindfulness training has an impact in the organisational context in new areas of exploration. I have described the mechanisms of mindfulness through various models. Furthermore, I have described how the concept of presence exists in numerous leadership models but the practice of mindfulness is not utilised. Critical commentary on the implications of taking mindfulness programmes into the workplace is described. Finally, although POS literature mentions mindfulness, some areas where mindfulness practice itself could contribute to POS are highlighted.

Although the physiological and psychological impact of mindfulness is understood and well-accepted, the ways in which such practices are understood, experiences and applied in the workplace have only recently been explored. With the increase of participants engaging in these practices outside of work, we lack a more nuanced understanding of how participants experience and apply mindfulness in the workplace.

2.9.1 Gaps in the literature

This literature review has explored research into the use of mindfulness practice at work and provides a frame from which the current study was developed. The gaps in the literature can be summarised as follows:

1) The use of mindfulness practices in the workplace is timely given the wealth of research that points to its benefits, however, outcome-based studies can miss more nuanced

understandings of the impact, understandings and applications of such practices at work. There are leadership models that use understandings of presence but are not necessarily using formal and informal mindfulness and practice. How do participants experience mindfulness in the workplace post-training outside of work?

2) Buddhist practitioners and scholars are concerned that mindfulness practice is diluted and misunderstood when uncoupled from the Buddhist understandings. Critics of mindfulness in the workplace question whether these practices will be mis-appropriated. However, these critiques have not included the voices of participants of mindfulness programmes. What is the understanding and experience for participants who have been through FG-Mindfulness trainings outside of the workplace?

3) There are numerous models of mindfulness in healthcare and education that reflect the capacity of mindfulness to transform. An inductive model of mindfulness specifically for individuals in the workplace may be useful to explore ways in which mindfulness might transform participants' experiences of work and workspaces.

4) Exploring the role and contribution of mindfulness practice to POS, there is room to explore how mindfulness practice might support and enhance POS.

In summary, there is a lack of qualitative, phenomenological research that reflects how individuals are using and experiencing mindfulness practice in the workplace, particularly for those who learn the practices outside of work. How do these participants translate these practices into their work contexts? This research addresses these gaps, in order to paint a rich picture of the phenomenon of mindfulness at work, through the lives of individual participants of three different mindfulness trainings, of varying lengths and levels of intensity. In so doing, I provide a more textured picture highlighting the potentially disruptive and ethically transformative nature of the practice. Mindfulness practice might elucidate new ways of dealing with some of our external problems, as described by the Dalai Lama (Levey & Levey, 2015):

> *We spend a large amount of the best human brain power looking outside – too much –.... Perhaps now that the Western sciences have reached down into the atom and out into the cosmos finally to realise the extreme vulnerability of all life and value, it is becoming credible, even obvious, that the field of what we call 'inner science' – dealing with the inner things is of supreme importance.* (p. 7)

This study considers the following questions:

1) In which ways are individuals applying and experiencing formal and informal practices at work? In which ways do they share these practices and their impact with others, particularly at work? How have they understood mindfulness and integrated it in the complexity of the organisational context? The study does not look at the impact of a work-based mindfulness programme. It does focus on participant's experiences at work when they have engaged in some form of mindfulness training outside of the workspace.

2) What do participants who have been through FG-Mindfulness trainings say about the impact of these programmes and how do their responses contribute to our understandings of the concerns raised by Buddhist practitioners and other scholars, as regards the dilution of these practices? A more nuanced understanding of how mindfulness practices are being utilised and understood can also highlight areas of concern and caution, bringing in a more holistic mindfulness (Amaro, 2015), and might open up new avenues of research on the use of mindfulness at work. It can also provide an inductive model of understanding how mindfulness might contribute to workplace transformation.

3) How does mindfulness training contribute to POS, drawing in with current POS understandings of flourishing at work?

The research was framed by the question, *"what are the applications, understandings and perceived impact of mindfulness training in the organisational context?"* and explored qualitatively how participants were using and experiencing formal and informal practices after mindfulness training. This question was the guiding principle of the study, and as suggested by Silverman (2013), the question directed decisions regarding theory, choice of participants, procedures and means of data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses my research methodology. I explain the rationale behind using a qualitative research, and more specifically a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Using an adapted interpretative phenomenological approach, as a foundation, I interviewed 53

participants who completed three different MBIs. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Issues of ontology and epistemology are discussed. Also described in this chapter are the research design, participants, interview development and procedure, ethics, use of Thematic Analysis, and trustworthiness.

3.2 Qualitative research: Background and rationale

Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe how qualitative data provides insight into human behaviour. A qualitative method (interviewing, ethnographic observation, case study) allows the researcher to obtain details about the phenomena such as feelings, experiences and ideas that would be difficult to access without direct observation and allows for an in-depth understanding of phenomena that are being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Much of the research of mindfulness in general and mindfulness in the workplace is quantitative, and RCT studies are often preferred (Creswell, 2017). The richness, depth and nuances of the impact of mindfulness training may be missed in quantitative research. Chiesa (2012), in reviewing mindfulness research, recommends further emphasis on qualitative data for more meaningful insights into the psychological experience of mindfulness practitioners. This could open an exploration and understanding of new and yet unconsidered aspects of the effects of mindfulness training. Whilst evidence points to the positive impact of interventions (Creswell, 2017; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Good et al., 2015), I chose to explore the social meaning and perceptions of mindfulness practice and a deeper understanding of the change process for participants.

As meditation is a personal and individual experience, interviews provided information about participants' lived experiences. Qualitative approaches allow for exploration of the complexity, novelty and processes (Smith, 2008) in which mindfulness might impact the workplace. This study aimed to explore the applications, understanding and impact of mindfulness training on individuals at work. I used a qualitative design and a phenomenological approach using thematic analysis to interpret my data.

Ontology provides a way of seeing who we are and viewing the world as it is. My ontology is based in relativistic thinking (multiple truths), where reality is a constructed account. I have been impacted by understandings of western scientific methods, psychology, and eastern

philosophies. Silverman (2013) explains that if we see the world as correlations of social facts, we need to consider statistics. However, if we see the world in terms of meaning and perceptions, then interviews would be the way to gather information. Since my ontology is the latter, I used semi-structured interviews.

The overarching research question of this study was *"What are applications, adaptations, and the perceived value of mindfulness training that is acquired outside of work, for individuals in the organisational context?"* I hoped to identify specific ways in which participants used and adapted their mindfulness practices and the ways in which they experienced it at work, highlighting issues that were hopeful or challenging. I will now elaborate on the phenomenological approach.

3.3 Phenomenological approach

Heidegger (1953), argued that phenomenology, derived from the Greek words *"phenomenon"* and *"logos"* refers to *"bringing something to the light.* "Moustakas (1994) describes how the researcher creates a description of a select human experience. The origin of phenomenology is the work of German philosopher Husserl who argued that science needed to move beyond the external and explore the internal, revealing essences and meanings in human knowledge (Moustakas, 1994: Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The phenomenological movement was borne out of the work of Heidegger who emphasised the experience of *"being"* or *"Dasein"* in the world.

Moustakas (1994) recommends that in phenomenological exploration, researchers should have a personal interest in what they seek to explore as well as an intimate connection with the phenomenon in question. Christensen, Johnson, and Turner (2010) describe the main objective of a phenomenological study is to draw out the essence of the lived experiences of a person or a group of people around a specific phenomenon. I was interested in people's perceptions, experiences and meaning systems, enhancing understanding of subjective experiences through the inductive method of interviews. Inductive methods allow for observation of patterns from the data that can be built into theory. Thus, a phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study as I have a personal and intimate connection with mindfulness practice and was interested in studying individual experiences. I chose a hermeneutic phenomenological approach as opposed to descriptive phenomenology.

Moustakas (1994) described the heuristic process in the phenomenological analysis as including

the following:

1) Immersion; the researcher is involved in the world of the experience.

2) Incubation; a space for awareness, intuitive insights and understanding.

3) Illumination; an active process of knowing which expands the understanding of the experience.

4) Explication; reflective actions.

5) Creative synthesis; bringing together to show the patterns and relationships.

Moustakas' work of descriptive phenomenology is about capturing the *"essence"* or the *"universal essence"* of the participants' lived experience. Eastern traditions present rich understandings of dualism and consciousness. The western ideology of phenomenology might be the closest connection to eastern notions of consciousness and awareness (Kafle, 2011). For me, as researcher, phenomenology was akin to mindfulness; I could draw on mindfulness practice to release assumptions and to engage with the world of experience. In terms of ontology (the study of the nature of the world), my interest in eastern philosophies and Buddhism comes into play.

Although this approach was in alignment with mindfulness, hermeneutic phenomenology was more in alignment with my training as a psychologist. Capturing the universal *"essence"* is not claimed in hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges that each participant has their own interpretation of their lived experience, and the researcher also has his/her own interpretation of their experiences. I agree with Finlay (2009) who argues that description and interpretation are on a continuum and a piece of work may be more or less interpretive.

It was important to choose a method that acknowledged my own beliefs and assumptions about the topic, as my values and assumptions would implicate data collection and the interpretation of data. I decided to use an adapted Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach (IPA) as part of my analytic method, as its philosophical foundation is hermeneutic phenomenology. I combined this approach with thematic analysis in order to manage a larger number of interviews. Since, in research, our ontological, and epistemological assumptions influence our research approach, I will now reflect on my approach and assumptions.

3.4 Research assumptions

The research process needs to ensure rigour, and the researcher's personal interests and beliefs should be consciously reflected upon to reduce bias in the study. Morgan and Smircich (1980) argue that qualitative research is an approach as opposed to a set of techniques, and that it is an *"illusion"* that the methods generate the knowledge, as opposed to the human orientation of the researcher. In a similar vein, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that all answers in any given paradigm are human constructions and inventions of the human mind and therefore open to human error. As opposed to objective observation, it is more likely that the findings are created through the *"interaction of inquirer and phenomenon (which in the social sciences is usually people)"* (p. 106). Thus it is important to explicitly consider the nature of beliefs that are brought to the research topic. As scholars, we need to be reflexive about our roles, interests and perspectives (Van de Ven, 2007). This research is impacted by my identity as an English speaking, South African middle-class, and White female who has been involved in mindfulness training and teaching in the workplace since 2009. It is also impacted by my training as a psychologist.

In terms of epistemology, my position as researcher is a contextual constructionist position (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley 2000). As a psychologist, I was trained to believe in the varied interpretations that can be applied to reality, thus corresponding with relativist positions.

In a contextualist epistemology, the research and subject of research are *"both conscious beings interpreting and acting on the world around them within networks of cultural meaning"* where there is no *"one reality that is revealed through utilising correct methodology"* (Madill et al., 2000, p. 9). IPA specifies critical realism and contextualism as ontological and epistemological underpinnings (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Willig (2001) describes IPA as a contextual constructionist approach (a real world exists and our knowledge of it is socially constructed) and the approach resonated with my epistemology.

Our attempts to understand the real world are severely limited and can only be approximated. Facts, observation and data are embedded in language and phenomena in the social world are impacted by our values and perspectives. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that:

> *Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of – and between – the observer and the observed.* (p. 29)

A number of assumptions were made in my research. It was assumed that participants in the project would respond with a degree of honesty about their experience and would not be biased towards pleasing the researcher. I assumed that I would be able to examine the data, and include them all, whether they were supporting the value of mindfulness training in the organisational world or not. I believe my training as a psychologist assisted in being able to cultivate a safe space for participants where they could relate to me in an easy way. As a mindfulness trainer it is possible that this impacted what participants felt they could say or not say. I felt that the fact that I had trained some of the participants allowed for an ease of sharing with participants and my assumption was that this was of benefit for the research. However, participants might have felt that the interview was a test of their mindfulness skills. Because mindfulness can be subtle, participants may not be aware of the ways in which it is impacting them, or if it is, or how to articulate it. As such I needed to be skilled in encouraging their comments. I was limited by the fact that I only speak English when interviewing those for whom English was a second language.

My work with individuals as a psychologist, and with organisations as mindfulness trainer impacted my understanding of life in organisational contexts. As a psychologist I hear first-hand about individual struggles in organisations with issues of hierarchy, power, and also shadow material in the workplace. I had the concern that organisational contexts have the potential of diluting mindfulness, as I have been approached to teach practices in a diluted form. Organisations are paying more attention to human beings, but this can often be lip service and part of mission statements rather than a lived experience. I resonate with the words of Tweedy (2017) who asserts that modern capitalism grew out of the seventeenth century concept of man as a disconnected and disengaged self. This resulted in a sense of disconnection from self, other and the world. Psychiatrist and Professor of Political Science and Communications, Joel Kovel (1976), describes,

> *…the colossal burden of neurotic misery in the population, a weight that continually and palpably betrays the capitalist ideology, which maintains that commodity civilization promotes human happiness…if, given all this rationalization, comfort, fun, and choice, people are still wretched, unable to love, believe, or feel some integrity in their lives, they might also begin to draw the conclusion that something is seriously wrong with their social order* (p. 85).

I hypothesised that mindfulness practice offers possibilities of change in this burden and ideology, promoting enhanced connection with self and others as opposed to increased greed and competition. Furthermore, my ontology of social construction regards organisations as socially constructed and therefore potentially impacted by those in positions of power and how they might interpret or even misinterpret/dilute mindfulness practice. I resonate with the words of Loy (2007) who describes how large corporations are,

> *"new forms of impersonal collective self, which are very good at preserving themselves and increasing their power, quite apart from the personal motivations of the individuals who serve them."* (p. 20)

This of course is not the case in all organisations. I had to be aware of my assumptions that organisational contexts can be rife with issues of power and hierarchy, where capitalist systems can impact a more humane experience of the workplace. There are organisations that could promote and enhance the practices in unique ways that honour their origins and depths. The way that mindfulness could be used by individuals in organisations, and by organisations themselves, are more likely to be unique to each context.

I will now elaborate on the participants, interviews and ethical aspects of the study.

3.5 Participants

This study used qualitative in-depth interviews with participants who had been taught mindfulness practices. They were invited to reflect on their applications, understandings and perceived impact of the practices for them in the context of their work-lives.

The sample consisted of 53 adults who were employed, or self-employed, in middle to upper management positions, and who had been through and completed one of three different forms of mindfulness training.

This research drew on individuals who had undergone one (and in some cases two) of three different mindfulness interventions as described here:

1) A two-year Mindful Leadership programme at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business as part of an Executive MBA Programme (EMBA). Attendance of this programme is compulsory, with sessions of approximately three to five hours at the beginning and end of each module. There are five modules over the two-year programme; as programmes are variable, participants receive on average 40 hours of

mindfulness training per programme. Practices taught in the class ranged from 10 to 20 minutes. They were encouraged to practice mindfulness meditation formally and informally for the duration of their two-year EMBA programme.

2) A 4-module Training in Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Health Professionals at the University of Stellenbosch's Faculty of Medicine and Health Science. Run over two years, this training enables health professionals from a variety of contexts –doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses and gynaecologists – to run MBIs in their own fields. These participants apply for the programme and are assessed in a one-on-one interview before they join. Participants attend four in-depth meditation retreats; each retreat is five days long and there is one silent six-day retreat. Participants engage with extended daily meditation practices (40 minutes to an hour) and online teaching in four 8-week modules.

3) An 8-week MBSR programme, based on Jon Kabat-Zinn's original programme. Attendance on this programme is also voluntary and participants are assessed in a one-on-one interview before the programme. Participants who were interviewed are all working in organisational contexts and had approached the programme to enable them to enhance their management of work and life. Mindfulness practices taught on this programme ranged from 40 minutes to an hour a day.

The training approaches were either MBSR or were based on the 8-week MBSR programme. This approach delineates the use of formal meditation and informal mindfulness practices, as well as didactic teaching and inquiry (where the instructor invites participant reflections on their experiences). Formal practices consist of daily practicing sitting meditation, mindful movement, and body scanning. The formal practices of mountain meditation (using the qualities of the mountain to understand staying centred through all of life's weather patterns) and loving-kindness meditation (extending kindness to self and others) are also included. The skill of carefully paying attention *"moment-by-moment"* is developed and then applied to all activities of life (informal practice).

I used purposive sampling (Suri, 2011) to get rich exemplars of the data I needed, and because I had good access to this data. IPA suggests purposive sampling, finding closely defined groups for whom the research questions are relevant (Smith & Osborn, 2009). I used a form of purposive sampling known as criterion sampling. In terms of phenomenological studies,

criterion sampling, where all the individuals interviewed must have experienced the phenomenon, is recommended. Creswell (1998) advises researchers of the use of clear criteria and to provide rationales for their decisions as regards sampling. This approach allows the researcher to choose subjects using set criteria that allow for specific information to be gathered. I set the criterion to be the direct experience of a mindfulness-based training outside of the workplace. Participants had:

1) completed a well-established mindfulness training with a certified trainer;

2) been introduced to the practices, and the main themes of mindfulness-based programmes; and

3) been working in an organisation, or self-employed during and six months post-mindfulness training.

As the researcher is dependent on the views and experiences of participants, participants need to have lived the experience under study, and the trustworthiness of participants is crucial (Groenewald, 2004). I was able to choose participants from trainings I am deeply familiar with and I had known many participants from various programmes.

The number of cases advised for phenomenological studies varies. Silverman (2013) suggests between eight and 10 participants. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggest that 12 interviews per sample group is enough to reach saturation point. Creswell (1998) recommends five to 25 interviews for phenomenological studies. Finlay (2009) argues that if research aims for generality across the field, then a sample representing different aspects is necessary. I was exploring the experiences of participants who had done three different forms of mindfulness training of varying levels of depth and commitment. I aimed to interview 20 from each training group in order to derive a range of different experiences and to have the option of exploring differences across the three different trainings.

I wanted to explore participant experiences from a range of organisations, as well as from different mindfulness trainings. The range of professions would also provide a variety of perspectives. As much of the interest in mindfulness derives from research conducted in clinical contexts, which do not represent modern organisations (Reitz & Chaskalson, 2016), I targeted people who are working in organisations. Participants of the EMBA, MBSR and IMISA course tend to be middle to upper management employees. It would have been interesting to add a

diversity of occupations that included non-managerial and blue-collar workers, however, the groups I had targeted did not allow for that. Also, in my initial invitation to participants I was open to hear from participants who felt they had benefitted from the training and those who had not. Responses however came mostly from those who felt that they had benefitted or believed in the practice. I did suggest to those who I interviewed on the EMBA to encourage their classmates who did not find the training useful to approach me. However, as the majority of participants wanted to share their positive experiences, I chose then to focus on this sample group as a way of exploring the potential outliers who were impacted by the practice. The EMBA provided a diversity of races, genders and cultures. (MBSR participants tend to be White and upper to middle-class. IMISA participants are only slightly more diverse). One-on-one interviews allowed me to focus on the research area within real-setting dialogues with participants.

In qualitative studies, the concept of saturation gives an indication that interviews continue until there are no clearly new themes emerging. Mason (2010) points out that the point of saturation can be difficult to identify and that the point of cutting off emerging findings is *"elastic"* and *"inevitably arbitrary"*. Although there was repetition, I also discovered new threads emerging. I stopped at 53 interviews when I realised that a point of saturation had been reached across all three groups and adding new information was contributing little more to my findings. I was also then guided by Braun and Clarke (2016) who suggest that analysis of bigger samples runs the risk of missing nuances.

3.5.1 Details of participants

Seventy potential interviewees responded to the emails sent to invite participation. **(See Appendix B.)** From this, 53 interviews were conducted. There were 33 male participants and 20 female participants ranging from a wide range of professions including engineers, business owners, health professionals (doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and coaches), consultants, senior managers and human resource administrators. Ages ranged from 33 to 60. One participant was on a disability pension and one was about to be retrenched. All participants had been employed at the time of participating on a mindfulness programme. **(See Appendix E for Table of Demographics.)** Although intensity and duration of participant's formal practices varied, (and participants had been practising for varied lengths of time) I was interested in understanding participant's experiences and use of practice at work.

I wanted to allow for research results that offered both depth and breadth. MacLean et al. (2010) discuss how one might feel compelled to analyse data because of a feeling of responsibility for participants' efforts. However, I felt that each participant contributed to the richness of understanding in ways that were unique and individual. Of course, it is that analysis and interpretation of the data that gives it richness as opposed to the quantity.

3.5.2 Interview planning

Eisenhardt (1989) describes how open-ended questions allow the researcher to take advantage of emergent themes and explore them further, and Smith and Osborn (2009) emphasise how semi-structured interviews facilitate empathy, flexibility of coverage and can also access novel and rich data. There are advantages and disadvantages to the use of semi-structured interviews. Aberbach and Rockman (2002) advise that semi-structured interviews allow participants to answer within their own framework, which enhances the validity of answers. They argue that educated participants do not enjoy the rigidity of closed-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study since all the interviewees were educated and from a professional background. As for disadvantages, the data can be more difficult to process and analyse, and there is a greater time and cost associated with the approach (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2009). However, I felt that time taken as the interviewer would be valuable in terms of giving me a first-hand account of participant experiences and I was able to transcribe the interviews myself.

Developing an interview schedule before the interviews allows for clear thinking about what to cover and what difficulties and areas of sensitivity participants might encounter (Smith & Osborn, 2009). I developed an interview guide that ensured that I could cover specific areas of the initial research question while being open to new ideas and questions as the research evolved. This gave some structure to the interview whilst the interview was also framed as a conversation where I could draw out information.

Interview questions centred on the practices that people were implementing to support mindfulness, what they were noticing about the impact or the value of the practices, and in what ways they were exploring mindfulness in their workplaces. **(See Appendix A.)** As I prepared to interview, I was open to questions around the following broad themes or categories:

1) What practices are being used? How they were exploring both formal and informal practices, and ways in which they were sharing or not sharing their experiences?

2) What areas of their lives were being impacted? How did they feel it was coming into their work experience on a daily basis?

3) In which ways were they understanding the use of mindfulness both for themselves and in the workplace?

4) Questions were open-ended allowing for exploratory, in-depth work, and greater articulation of views (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002). I conducted a pilot interview with a mindfulness practitioner to gain feedback on the questions, and to become familiar with the interview. As suggested by Smith and Osborn (2009), this helped me learn the interview schedule so that I could refer to it less in subsequent interviews. For the full list of guiding themes and questions, **see Appendix A**.

3.5.3 Interview procedure

Participants responded via email and interviews were either in person, telephonically, or via Skype. All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder as the use of recordings allows for interviews to be replayed with no loss of evidence. In the interviews, key topic areas were explored. I encouraged further sharing by asking participants to expand upon their answers by sharing stories and experiences on related themes. My intention was to explore the applications and adaptations of mindfulness training for those in the organisational context, as well as to gain insight into their understandings and perceptions of the practices. All interviews were conducted in English.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the way that information is elicited in the interview helps with the credibility of the interview. The researcher needs to neither lead nor impose ideas. Charmaz (2006) writes about respecting one's subjects in the way we learn about their views and actions and trying to understand life from their perspective. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) reflect on the researcher as a bricoleur who understands the research is interactive and shaped by both researcher and participant. Similarly, Silverman (2013) suggests that the interview is actually co-constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee. I found these views on interviewing resonant with my own experience. Interviewing was a learning journey for me. I used the responsive interviewing model (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 36) to support the interview process. The characteristics of this model are:

1) The personality style and beliefs of the interviewer matter, as the interview is an exchange. The relationship is meaningful even if it is temporary. The interviewer is contributing and, therefore, must be aware of his/her beliefs, opinions, cultural definitions and prejudices.

2) The interviewer has obligations to protect the interviewee because the nature of the interview may result in the exchange of private and personal information. The interviewer is also imposing on the time and energy of the participant and therefore owes them loyalty and protection.

3) Interviewers should not impose their views on interviewees, asking broad questions so that participants are not limited in their responses. They should modify questions to explore what they are hearing, rather than what their expectations were prior to the interview.

4) The process is adaptive and flexible. Interviewers need to be able to change course based on what is heard, and to change who they decide to talk to as they find out more about their research questions.

Interviewers are not expected to be neutral and they develop their own style that matches their personalities (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interviewer and interviewee influence each other, and the interviewer needs to examine his/her own biases and awareness. I found that my style and capacity as an interviewer grew over the course of the interview process as I became more experienced in holding the space of open-endedness, and more aware of how I was co-constructing the interview just by how and when I chose to comment or question further. Transcribing post-interview allowed me to review my comments and questions. I conducted the interviews myself to promote consistency. Each interview supported my understanding of the next and improved my skills as an interviewer. Interviews generally lasted an hour, with some interviews extending to two hours. While transcribing I also wrote notes on how I felt the interview went and any other thoughts that emerged from it.

As themes developed through interaction with the data, the questioning shifted slightly to include new dimensions and aspects of the literature and emergent themes. The questions were focused on work, and as there is no easy boundary between work and home, sometimes they spoke about life in general. To be thorough, I used comments and questions to encourage sharing of examples, clarifying of details and elaboration, in order to learn about the

participants' reflections and experiences. I had to learn to encourage the participant to speak with as little prompting from myself as possible, as suggested by Smith and Osborn (2009), and to re-draft certain questions in ways that were less biased and that could open participants to providing good feedback. I found that it was valuable to hold a mindful space where I said less.

I was aware how my role was to facilitate and guide rather than to dictate (Smith & Osborn, 2009) although this sometimes would lead to participants going off track and having to be nudged back in the direction of my lines of questioning. At the same time I had to be cautious about not pushing participants with my lines of questioning only and thus limiting novel responses or not entering the experience of the participant fully. I also found it harder on skype calls to monitor non-verbal behaviour and expressions. Some of the sessions were conducted later at night when participants (and researcher) had had a long day at work, and these sessions lead at times to less effective interviewing. The level of thoroughness depended on how much time they had available.

Reb and Atkins (2015) highlight the importance of researchers in this field having their own mindfulness practice and being *"in the soup"* (p. 14) in terms of living more mindfully. At the same time, the authors highlight the importance of being open and unbiased, and not assuming that mindfulness is always a good thing. I tried to pay attention to my own bias. I meditated prior to each interview in order to be more neutral and aware. I journaled and reflected on findings with fellow practitioners. My daily meditation practice also contributed to my understandings, as I considered Sikh and Spence (2016), who claim textual interpretation combined with regular practice may enable deepening of understanding that embraces the non-dualistic and non-conceptual nature of mindfulness.

Morrow (2005) mentions how the challenge for qualitative interviewers who are both psychologists and researchers is the potential for the boundaries between research and therapy to be confused. Initially, it was difficult to suspend my role as therapist or teacher. I found it useful to disclose this to participants directly so that they would be aware that I would be relating to them in a more impartial manner. For some, I offered some support around their practice post-interview. Interestingly, a few commented that it was valuable just to be able to reflect on their practice.

I set out to interview 70 willing participants who responded. I decided to stop at 53 interviews, as at that point the data as themes were being repeated and only small details of core themes

were emerging. As I continued to interview people from the three different mindfulness interventions, conversations became more repetitive and by interview 53, I recognised I had reached "*saturation point*" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Following the suggestions of Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2005), I transcribed as soon after each session (within 24 hours) as possible to enhance memory of more subtle nonverbal details, and indications of laughter, pauses, and interruptions to the interview.

3.5.4 Ethical aspects and procedures

The research was in accordance with the University of Cape Town's Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Policy and commenced once it had been approved by the relevant committee. **(See Appendix C.)** I ensured participants' confidentiality regarding the secure handling and storing of data, and the use of pseudonyms. Participation in the study was voluntary and respondents had the right to withdraw at any time.

Once ethical clearance was obtained, the sample was contacted by means of an email letter providing background to the research and inviting them to share their experiences. Email invitations were sent to the databases of the three different programmes. Interviews were open to both those who felt they benefitted from and embraced the practices and those who felt they did not, in the hopes that the study would gather a range of different views and understandings. Participants signed consent forms, which explained the research, prior to their interviews. **(See Appendix B.)** To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants, they were assured that no sensitive information would be divulged (unless the researcher in her capacity as a psychologist was concerned about the safety of the participants). Informed consent was necessary in every case and participants were assured of their psychological safety. Data was kept on a password protected hard-drive and interviews were transcribed solely by the researcher.

The research has the following ethical considerations in the research process and reporting of research findings. Many of my students were interviewed; the interviews were not anonymous, and in many cases, there was already an established relationship. I was aware of the possible power-dynamics in these relationships and willingness to please me, or to hide certain aspects. This was managed by interviewing some students who have been taught by another certified teacher.

The nature of mindfulness practice is that it allows individuals to attend to their emotional landscape more closely, which would result in the possibility of sharing issues of a personal nature. Participation was voluntary and participants were encouraged to answer only what they were comfortable with. If extensive portions of the interview were used in the thesis, participants might become recognisable. They needed to be informed of this, and that caution would be taken as regards what is quoted. Interviewees had the right to review their material. Furthermore, as researcher, I was restrained from providing any psychological support during the interview process. If there was a request for further assistance or support, I reassured participants that I could offer that after the interview.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

I considered grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Suddaby, 2006) at the start of my study, as I was interested in a multidimensional theory of how mindfulness might impact work behaviour. However, I had previously read much of the literature available in the field of mindfulness in organisations and was interested in participant experiences, as opposed to only theory building.

I adapted the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach and used it as a foundation for the study as I wanted to explore how participants were experiencing and understanding the practices. With IPA, findings are cross-referenced against pre-existing theories, in order to confirm, develop or refute them (Draper-Clarke, 2014) and I was interested in contributing to theoretical understandings. I concur with Starks and Trinidad (2007) that the boundaries between these approaches are *"porous"* (p. 1373). I used basic thematic analysis as a tool of analysis, in order to work with a larger number of interviews and to keep closely connected to the data.

3.6.1 An adapted IPA approach

IPA is a more frequently used approach in qualitative psychology and thus it resonates with me as a psychologist. Now used to address questions beyond psychology, it attempts to capture personal lived experience, recognising at the same time the process is interpretative and impacted by hermeneutics. Each case is examined in depth in its own term before moving to the next. As a later step there is room to moving to more general claims based on examination of similarities and differences between different participant's experiences. IPA understands both researcher and participant as engaged in a process of meaning making.

In IPA there is no single correct way of collecting data, however, the most common way is the in-depth semi-structured interview. This kind of interview gives the researcher freedom to respond to the participants' unfolding descriptions and experience, by going more deeply when the opportunity arises. In terms of analysis, there is also no prescribed process, but a general approach is to examine the first case, extracting themes and patterns, and then looking for the same or similar themes or patterns as well as new ones across all the cases. Key to IPA is a commitment to understanding the participant's lived experience and adopting a psychological focus on personal meaning-making. The hermeneutic circle is part of IPA and means that in interpretation one moves through the transcripts in a non-linear manner in an interactive approach. In the double hermeneutic, the research aims to make sense of the participant who is trying to make sense of their own experience using memory and language (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2011b).

Thus, IPA is both phenomenological in its aim to extract the human lived experience of phenomena, and psychological in its meaning making and hermeneutic interpretation. As mentioned, description and interpretation can be seen as a continuum (Finlay, 2009). The approach is descriptive because it notes how things appear, and interpretative because *"it recognises there is no such thing as an un-interpreted phenomenon"* (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 8).

This approach resonated with me as a psychologist who is interested in meaning-making and a meditation teacher interested in lived experience. The method was also congruent with my understanding of mindfulness itself, as described by Varela, Thompson & Rosch (1991) who took the phenomenological work of Merleau-Ponty (1962) into their research, and who also refer to the embodied mind, viewing reflecting as both a process and an experience.

IPA encourages detailed examination of particular potent extracts in an interview, which provides insight both for the individual participant and for the group as a whole. Smith (2011a) calls this the *"gem"*, which prompts further analytic work and shines a light on the body of work as a whole. To engage in phenomenology, one needs to engage in hermeneutics, as the phenomenologist is involved in helping the gem come through and in making sense of it as it emerges. Smith (2011a) describes the spectrum of gems, from shining, to suggestive to secret. The shining gem is clearly seen and easily articulated by the participant. In the middle is the suggestive gem that is indicating something but not clearly, where the participant has some awareness of some of the meaning. The secret gem is easy to miss, and the participant may be

unconscious of it. As researcher I tried to extract these gems both by probing further in the course of interviews, and also by taking time with the data.

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) explain how a researcher must decide at an early stage whether they want to present a more general account on a group or specific population or to report in depth on a particular participant's experiences. They also explain how IPA explores the depth of experience as opposed to breadth. IPA allows for some insight into populations more generally by exploring the specifics for individuals (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). For example, it might allow for an understanding of what kinds of practices people find useful at work, and then further research can be applied to larger populations using nomothetic approaches. Since experience of mindfulness is different for everyone, my focus was on experience and meaning as opposed to causality. At the same time, I was able to explore general themes regarding the qualities and capacities developed through mindfulness.

Smith (2011b) suggested that IPA has been pre-occupied with human suffering and psychological distress and encouraged more focus on describing experiences of participants who are in programmes that promote health and well-being. This is resonant with the field of positive psychology and POS, and again is in line with the aims of the current study to explore the experiences of mindfulness in the workplace.

The focus of IPA is also on perception, complexity, process and novelty, all of which are relevant to the use of mindfulness practice in the workplace. It is idiographic, starting with an individual case, and inductive as unexpected themes can emerge. It is also interrogative as findings can be discussed with cross-reference to the literature, which allows for pre-existing theories to be questioned, developed or refuted (Draper-Clarke, 2014). An adapted IPA approach allowed for exploration of the meaning and impact of mindfulness training for the participants. As we explored their lived experience of a phenomenon (mindfulness practice), it allowed for extraction of new understandings of the applications of such trainings in the workplace**.**

Larkin et al. (2006) state that "*it may be more appropriate to understand IPA as a stance or perspective from which to approach the task of qualitative data analysis, rather than a distinct method"* (p. 104). Thus, my approach was inspired by IPA, however, as IPA is usually better suited for smaller samples, I utilised thematic analysis to analyse the data.

3.6.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis can be underpinned by phenomenology as well as by other theories. It can also be used to address a wide range of research questions including those about people's experiences. Thematic Analysis focuses on patterning of meaning across participants and can also capture divergence.

Although there is less substantial literature on thematic analysis compared to other methods of analysis (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017), it can also be considered to be a method in its own right (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004; Nowell et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe how thematic analysis is a valuable research tool as it is flexible and simultaneously can allow for rich and complex descriptions of data. It is also accessible to researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research. It is a useful method when working in a participatory research paradigm with participants as collaborators. It enables one to summarise key features of a large body of data, and it can highlight similarities and differences across the data set. The authors also note that it can generate unanticipated insight as it allows for social and psychological interpretations of data and it can be useful for producing analysis that can inform policy development. I felt that these points were all relevant to myself as a researcher and to the aims and nature of the research; it would allow me to summarise the key features from a relatively large body of interviews. As I was returning to academia after 20 years it would provide me a way of re-entering the world of research.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as being independent of theory and epistemology, and that it can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches. It can be essentialist (reporting meanings and reality of participants), constructionist (ways in which events, experience are the effects of many discourses) or contextualist. In this research I use thematic analysis from a contextualist position (we make meaning of experience and at the same time the social context impacts those meanings). As stated by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can both reflect reality and *"unpick"* the surface of reality.

Braun and Clarke (2006) also discuss the importance of determining the kind of analysis one wants to do and the claims you want to make. I wanted to provide a thematic description of my data set so that I could offer a sense of important (not always prevalent) themes to provide an overall description of the field. This is useful when exploring areas which are not highly

researched or where views are less known. I chose an inductive approach exploring latent themes.

I chose to provide a thematic description of my entire data set, exploring key themes that are an accurate reflection of participants' experiences. Thematic analysis was conducted inductively as I developed themes directly from the data without trying to fit them into a preconceived theoretical framework. Alhojailan (2012) suggests that thematic analysis can support generating theory; a theory building capacity was appropriate for this study whilst also allowing for rich description of experiences. I went through the **six** steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1) **Familiarising myself with the data:** By transcribing each interview myself I not only became more aware of what was said, but also began to think analytically about what was being said. Thus, transcribing was an interpretive act (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Once the interviews were transcribed, I printed them out and familiarised myself with their contents by reading them through. In this phase of the analysis I began to journal around what in the data was confirming what I knew and what was surprising. I grouped initial headings into the broad categories of applications of practice, understandings of practice and perceived impact of practice.

2) **Generating initial codes:** I read and became familiar with the interviews and created a preliminary list of codes. Creswell (2014) describes the process of coding data in which specific statements from participants are analysed and categorised into themes that reflect the phenomenon being explored. Codes are the building blocks of themes. Themes describe different aspects of an idea. Coding was done manually (making notes on transcripts) and although data driven, I did have the questions of application, adaptation and perceived impact of mindfulness in mind. I worked through the transcripts paying attention to areas of interest and repeated patterns. Following the advice of Braun and Clarke (2006), I coded for many themes, kept surrounding data so that context remained and tried to keep in mind extracts that departed from the dominant story (e.g., staying open to what were the struggles and negatives of mindfulness or unusual understandings of the practice). As I identified the codes, I matched up all the data that corresponded with that code in a word document.

3) **Searching for themes:** I began to sort codes into themes and collated all the data extracts into the themes. I also worked with collating different codes into overarching

themes. I used mind-maps and post-it notes to explore patterns, looking at the relationship between codes, themes, overarching themes and sub-themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe how a theme is not necessarily quantifiable but rather it captures something important in relationship to the overall research question. Rubin and Rubin (2005) argue that analysis is not about how often a theme appears but on the strength of evidence on which the themes and concepts depend. It was thus important to use my own capacities for reflection and analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2016) argue that themes do not just emerge but come from the active reflection of the researcher and I was beginning to see the significance of certain individual themes. I was left with a list of themes and sub-themes and the data was coded in relation to these themes and sub-themes. I also kept a miscellaneous theme to be open to themes beyond the research question.

4) **Reviewing themes:** I reviewed whether the themes and the coded extracts worked and began to generate a thematic map of the study that provided the overall story of the analysis. Themes that did not have enough data to support them were removed and other themes were combined with each other. For example, I combined codes such as managing the mind, noticing thoughts, observer, wandering mind into a theme code called *"meta-cognition"*. The codes *"anxiety"*, *"fear"*, *"anger"*, *"vulnerability"*, *"turning towards"*, were summed into the code *"turning towards unpleasant"*. I developed an initial thematic map that delineated the applications of formal and informal practices and the process of change resulting from mindfulness training. I re-read the data in order to ensure that it was collected under appropriate themes, which enabled me to have a sense of the overall story being told by the data. For example, I could see that there were some key individual capacities developed as a result of mindfulness training, and some interesting themes in terms of transformation of work (e.g., power, productivity). I also went back to the data to check and reflect on any data that I did not use in analysis. For example, I did not use any data that showed changes in levels of sleep and well-being as I felt these have been well-documented in other studies.

5) **Defining and naming themes:** This phase involved refining themes, removing themes, and collecting themes into each other. I looked at the extracts from participants under each theme to see if it fit there or if the theme needed to change. I then could consider

some initial thematic maps of the data set as a whole. Although I manually coded the data **(see Appendix F)**, I also input the data into ATLAS.ti to see if it could generate new ways of seeing. Using ATLAS.ti allowed me to revisit the interviews and to see if there were any points I had missed in the manual coding process. Computer programmes still require human interpretation; as expressed by Rubin and Rubin (2005), *"there is no way to substitute for your own decisions as to what makes sense in your data"*. I found that ATLAS.ti reinforced my previous manual thematic analysis.

I organised data extracts into a consistent account with accompanying narrative. This allowed me to write a more detailed analysis of each theme. I consulted with peers in the fields of mindfulness and organisational work at various points to discuss if the definitions of themes were making sense. King (2004) suggests that one can continue to modify definitions of themes and that there is a need to finalise this process. I tried to order the themes in the way that could best illustrate the data and to name the themes in a way that captured the words of the participants, as suggested by Nowell et al. (2017).

6) **Generating the report:** This involved generating strong extracts of data and relating back to the research question, and the literature, in order to report on the overall data and their analysis. The thematic analysis was written up to provide an account of the ways in which participants engaged with the practices post-training and the capacities that were developed. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the write up should provide a non-repetitive and interesting account of the data. I provided direct quotes from participants, as an essential component of my report (King, 2004). More extensive quotes provided a sense of the original transcripts and short quotes helped to demonstrate prevalence of themes and specific points (Nowell et al., 2017). I looked at results that were unexpected as well as those that I had expected. I attempted to move beyond description towards interpretation and showing patterns, as described by King (2004) with broader implications in relationship to the literature being brought in as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). As a final step, I presented the analyses to participants for their feedback.

Reflecting on this process of data analysis, I found it to resonate with the Nowell et al. (2017) description of thematic analysis as an iterative and reflective process that develops over time and involves a movement between these six phases. Despite these recorded positive attributes of thematic analysis, Nowell et al. (2017) highlight the disadvantages of thematic analysis,

noticing that it does not allow the researcher to make claims about language use, and that the flexibility can lead to lack of coherence. In order to mitigate this and promote consistency and cohesion, they name the importance of establishing an epistemological position (as I have done earlier).

3.7 Issues of trustworthiness

This study explored the lived experiences of participants of mindfulness programmes in terms of how they apply, understand, and are impacted by mindfulness practices. Since qualitative research finds categories of meaning from the individuals studied, it leads to different kinds of knowledge claims to quantitative data. Qualitative research framed in an interpretative paradigm needs to consider issues of trustworthiness as opposed to conventional positivistic criteria of external and internal validity, reliability and objectivity.

Davies and Dodd (2002) argue that rigour, which they refer to as the reliability and validity of the research, needs to be re-thought in terms that are more appropriate to qualitative research. The reliability is reflected in the consistency and care in the application of research practices, an open account that is mindful of the limits and partiality of qualitative results. In their re-conceptualisation, ethics is integral to the research approach, in terms of the way we approach questions, respond to answers and reflect on the material in a way that is trustworthy, careful and respectful, even when it is seemingly disordered. This also involves locating the researcher within the process and understanding an interview as a social exchange that is impacted by its context and topic. The researcher's reflexivity allows for self-examination of ideas; we need to acknowledge and reflect unexpected responses that challenge our own ideas.

Being an expert with perfect professional composure might miss the creation of trust and it may be preferable to acknowledge fallibility. This might give more space to changes in power relationships as regards the interviewer and allow more trust for ideas to be expressed. I found this approach reassuring as I explored the territory of interviewing. I resonated with the argument that attentiveness, empathy, carefulness, sensitivity, respect, honesty, reflection, conscientiousness, engagement, openness and even including fallibility provide new ways by which we can achieve rigor in research.

In terms of managing subjectivity, Heshusius (1994) discusses the concept of participatory consciousness (an awareness of a deeper level of connection between the knower and the known), and the disenchantment of knowing that has led to technological advances but has also

led to alienation from one another, nature and ourselves. The author refers to allocentric knowing that requires a complete turning towards and *"being with"* the other. As a researcher trained in mindfulness, I was aware of my own embodiment as researcher or what Heshusius (1994) refers to as somatic knowing. I was aware of my own reactions or distractions, and in that awareness, used embodiment to again be with the interviewee. As described by Heshusius (1994), becoming *"embedded in what one wants to understand…renders the act of knowing an ethical act"* (p. 19). This gave me a different understanding of rigor, in which the sense of embodiment and kinship as researcher, akin to the capacities of mindfulness, could facilitate new ways of knowing.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) reflect on credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as being the four factors to be considered in creating trustworthiness in a qualitative study.

To ensure credibility, I followed some of Morrow's (2005) suggestions, namely prolonged engagement with participants, persistent observation in the field, regular peer de-briefing and participant checks. I included my reflections on the process of this study in my journaling. Handwritten notes and diagrams allowed me to map out connections and themes, and to highlight key points of interest. Member checks also enhance credibility (Guba & Lincoln 1989). Shenton (2004) recommends member-checking where informants check that their words were correctly captured, and a second element where they can verify the investigator's emerging theories. Participants in this study were invited to read the first draft (only findings and discussion) to check their quotations to see if their words matched what was intended and whether my emerging interpretations were meaningful to them. **(See Appendix D.)** Fifteen participants replied either telephonically or via email, and aside from some corrections due to language differences, were satisfied with both the quotes used and the commentary made. A few of them read the entire document, one offering some positive feedback on the whole document. I was struck by their level of care and encouragement.

Dependability refers to the stability of findings over time and is guided by reliability to represent the interview data fairly and to shed light on the research questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Here, the research process should be explicit and repeatable (as far as is possible), which is supported by tracking the research design and noting what might have influenced the data collection and analysis, emerging themes, categories and models (Morrow, 2005). I have attempted to track and describe these factors as described in **Sections 3.5 and 3.6.**

Qualitative data cannot be said to be transferable given the smaller sample sizes and lack of statistical analyses. I have attempted, as suggested by Morrow (2005), to provide sufficient information about the context, process, participants and the researcher-participant relationship to allow readers to ascertain how the findings might transfer to other contexts. I also present findings with *"thick"* descriptions of the phenomena of mindfulness in the organisational space. I had a broad spectrum of representatives in terms of gender, age, position, years in their position, employment sector and years of mindfulness practice. Although I was exploring such practices in the South African context, it is hoped that this work will be understood in similar contexts.

Finally, the findings of qualitative research need to incorporate the data in a way that enables the reader to confirm the findings. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define confirmability as the internal coherence of the data in relation to the findings and interpretations. This again depends on capacity for reflection and an audit trail. I have spent a fair amount of time in reflection and in the writing of this research in a way that, through participant quotations, the reader can confirm the findings.

This chapter presented the research methodology. The use of qualitative research using an adapted IPA approach, the process of data collection via semi-structured interviews, and transcription and thematic analysis for data analysis, were discussed. The aim of the study was to foreground the voices of participants who had completed mindfulness programmes and are working in organisational spaces. The study explored ways in which participants, derived from three different mindfulness trainings, experienced mindfulness in the workspace. Participants were all working in South Africa, however, the dynamics and challenges they experienced might be found in organisational spaces worldwide. In some cases, their experiences reflect how mindfulness is explored in complex environments. I have presented my role as the researcher as well as the assumptions of the study. I discuss the limitations of the study in **Section 8.3**.

Having described the gaps in the literature, research questions and methodology, I will now present the findings. As this is a qualitative study, I have chosen to combine findings and discussion together. I use predominant themes to build an understanding and a model of mindfulness in the workplace.

To provide a roadmap for the findings and discussion, **Chapter Four** explores participant

applications, adaptations and understandings of mindfulness practice and the ways in which they shared it with others at work and at home. **Chapter Five** highlights the development of key mindfulness meta-capacities which allowed for the ability to turn towards pleasant, unpleasant and neutral experiences. **Chapter Six** describes how through the meta-capacities, participants developed individual capacities; enhanced resilience, sense of self and openness to multiple perspectives and possibilities. **Chapter Seven** looks how these individual capacities allow for participant and workplace transformation, in the areas of productivity, power and relationality. It also presents some profiles of mindful leaders/managers in order to highlight their experiences and challenges. In **Chapter Eight**, I offer a more comprehensive discussion of findings and present theoretical and pedagogical contributions of this study as well as highlighting limitations and strengths of the study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: Participants' application and experience of mindfulness practice

Chapter Four aims to provide a thorough overview of how participants applied, shared and experienced the mindfulness practice at work. Participants reflected on formal practices where they take time out daily for practice in the form of sitting meditation, mindful movement, or body scanning. They also described their informal practice where mindfulness is brought to other activities of daily life (e.g., brushing teeth, driving, showering).

This chapter offers preliminary data to address the gap in the literature regarding how participants who have learnt the practices outside of the workplace commit to and explore the practices at work. I present three different aspects of applying and experiencing mindfulness namely: the barriers and facilitators of mindfulness formal practice, experiences of formal and informal practice at work, and ways in which participants shared (or resisted sharing) mindfulness with other. In so doing I provide an overview of participants practice, in answer to the question "how do individuals apply and understand and share mindfulness practice" in their work-lives?

This chapter forms a foundation for Chapters Five, Six and Seven where I illustrate the perceived impact of the practice.

4.1 Barriers to formal practice

Formal daily practice is an important part of any Mindfulness-Based Intervention. Home practice is encouraged when participants start programmes and as they progress through the sessions (McCown et al., 2011). Home practice is considered to be essential to enhance therapeutic effects but has been under-investigated (Lloyd et al., 2017).

Although my study is not a follow-up study in terms of maintenance (as people had been practising for different lengths of time) the results echo earlier studies (Bondolfi et al., 2009; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1986; Miller et al., 1997) with respect to commitment to practices.

Whilst many programmes emphasise the importance of daily practice, few studies explore why participants do struggle with practicing daily (Carmody & Baer, 2007; Rosenzweig et al., 2010). This is relevant in the workplace where it is possible that asking too much of participants at work may lead to less compliance (Reb & Choi, 2014).

Believing in the practice of mindfulness is not enough to encourage practice. Participants described many obstacles to practice; namely external demands, fears of loss of control,

practising alone, cultural/religious barriers, internal expectations and dealing with difficulty and unconscious material. I will highlight these obstacles:

Belief that practice is not enough

Participants had been practising various meditations from a few months to many years and showed different levels of commitment to daily practice. Despite current questioning as to whether longer-term training (which includes daily home practice) is necessary for the workplace (Hafenbrack, 2017), participants understood the value in commitment to practice, and its link to being more aware during the day. For example, one participant had completed a mindfulness course where participants were taught short practices, and another course where she engaged in longer practices. Janine comments on the difference between the two:

> *…[forty-five]-minute body scans, that's necessary if you want any change at all, and I could just see it, I could see there were no epiphanies whatsoever, it felt like just putting plasters on people, rather than giving them real tools to see themselves more clearly.* (Janine)

Similarly, Bella compares herself with those who practiced consistently:

> *[I] really battle with this, the discipline…I definitely didn't get it right to do the practice every day, and I could see the people who did, how much more they benefitted than someone like me who didn't commit 100 percent.* (Bella)

Despite understanding the value of mindfulness many participants resisted committing to daily practice. Vanya, self-employed and disciplined in other areas of her life, reflects on this struggle:

> *[I] am completely perplexed and confused…if I compare it to my running training or whatever else I am doing, you have breaks, ebb, and flow, but I don't panic that if I haven't run for a few days that I am never going to run again.… How come is it not the same? Can I not just go, okay so that didn't work out so well today, so maybe I will sit for ten minutes tomorrow?… Why can't I just get up, spend ten minutes on the mindfulness. It's not as if I am like 'this is a complete waste of time', I can completely see the benefits.* (Vanya)

Participants could see how mindfulness might transform reactivity, but some still struggled to be consistent in their practice. Abel explains how he would still bark out instructions at work:

> *[I] know full well that if I took just two, three minutes, I could just calm down. I could have the conversation, I would be able to be more present and not have to make jarring communication with the other person. And then I say to myself, 'hold on, I actually don't have another minute'.… When I recognise it I say, 'I don't care just get on with it.'* (Abel)

Abel understands the practice might help him be mindful of his reactivity and recognises the paradox; he doesn't have enough time to be mindful. The mode of getting things done prevents him from slowing down. Bella, like Abel, felt that mindfulness might help her cope better. Yet she struggled to practice, paradoxically noticing her reactivity with her domestic worker:

> *[S]hame I do it to poor my domestic. The other day I was actually screaming at her too, and I think it is also because you know I am driving home, and I am thinking about 10 thousand and one things and everything just overwhelms you.… I have all these good intentions…but I do other things.* (Bella)

Thus, having a belief that practice would improve their lives was not indicative of adherence to practice. Similarly, enthusiasm, and having a positive intention to practice was not always translated into discipline, as in Gena's story:

> *[I] took an intention as they say in Buddhism, to try and meditate for at least 15 minutes every day. I am finding it extraordinarily difficult. I tried to make it a priority and it was for a while…and it does help. But it has fallen apart. But suppose it is like any other practice. You turn your attention back to it.* (Gena)

Even Mindfulness coaches, teachers and trainers who were steeped in the practice and enthusiastic about teaching mindfulness, named the struggle. Christopher, a coach, reflects:

> *[I] still find it very difficult to practice as diligently as I want. How would my client be able to stick to a practice routine, unless it is their last resort.… Am I asking the impossible of my clients? Am I asking them to engage in new habits as if it is just a conscious choice?* (Christopher)

Christopher points to the role of the unconscious in engaging new habits. Mindfulness practice can remain a good idea, but hard to actualise.

External demands

One struggling participant could not engage with daily practice, post-MBSR, highlighting the conflict between being active in the world and valuing solitary time:

> *[I]s it just me being resistant to the quieter ranges or is there some accuracy to my resistance?…in this cycle of my life, I feel what is important for me right now is actually more proactive energies.… I am actually feeling a need to be in the world…what might be called radiant expression and really taking your leadership out there in the world, which feels quite different energetically to mindfulness which to me feels like retreat from the world to go deeply into self.* (Vivienne)

> Some participants were guilty about slowing down or taking time out from work or from family. The awareness of guilt or the difficulty in taking time is in itself a valuable learning for participants. In a fast-paced world, asking others for space to practice is not always easy:

> *[Y]ou know that 3-minute breathing space, I thought okay I will try at home, I parked the car and thought okay I am going to do this before I go upstairs, I put it on, and I hear Nicole [wife] saying 'Benjamin, where are you, why you not here' I can't even have a 3-minute breathing space.* (Benjamin)

> *[S]topping maybe for 10 minutes to just do nothing and look at the leaves on the trees, I don't do.… I don't give myself permission to stop in that way even though I know it is the right thing to do.* (Gideon)

> *[I] might like taking myself away so much that I keep doing it and I separate myself from others…* (Justin)

> *[I]t would feel almost like stealing time.* (Bella)

This resonates with studies such as Beckman et al. (2012) where health professionals struggled to give themselves permission to take time for personal growth. For those at work finding time is difficult (Reitz et al., 2016).

Fear of loss of control and silence

There was a need to stay busy, and a resistance to being quiet:

> *[I] find it hard to make the choice to take myself away from what is happening particularly if it has an external quality or let's say the distractions.… If I come home in the evening and I am a bit frazzled…there is a part of me that would rather be in the busyness. Being in the busyness is quite comfortable, quite easy.* (Justin)

> *…there is a part of me that is fearful of too much quietness.* (Stanley)

This difficulty in being quieter, for some, might be linked to fear of what might be found in the silence, or not fully understanding the value of silence. Being able to sit in silence or quietness might provide new ways of being with the complexity of our busy work lives. As the poet David Whyte (2001) writes,

> *Silence is like a cradle holding our endeavours and our will; a silent spaciousness sustains us in our work and at the same time connects us to larger worlds that, in the busyness of our daily struggle to achieve, we have not yet investigated.* (p. 176)

<u>Practicing on one's own</u>

Justin had time to use mindfulness practice to manage his anxiety when he moved to a new company and was feeling underutilised. However he struggled to do so:

> *[I] was being forgotten in a back corner and not having enough opportunity to demonstrate what I can do and sinking behind the radar…but I didn't take myself off and manage the anxiety with a mindfulness practice and in fact, it could have been a very good opportunity to have done a daily practice at that time.* (Justin)

Eventually Justin found a way, highlighting the need for group support:

> *[I] went to a yoga class rather than try and find a quiet place to sit.* (Justin)

Despite teachers encouraging daily practice, resistance for those in busy lives is normal. Offering support and advice around the struggles and obstacles to practice and informing participants that lapses and facing difficulties are a normal part of the practice, can support teaching. Lack of support to deal with the obstacles to practising formally may obscure deeper understandings of the essence of the practice.

Cultural and religious resistance.

Thando (an EMBA student where the practice was compulsory) highlights some reasons why there is a lack of diversity in MBSR programmes in South Africa:

> *[I] remember at GSB when we started this journey, this is not for me, you know, you see this is a White person's thing, we didn't grow up like this, why? I didn't come here for meditation and all that. So there was an element of resistance until I told myself let me try it, maybe it won't do any harm especially the way I was brought up. I was very cautious and observant of some form of rituals you know because I come from a family that is has a very strong religious background.* (Thando)

Aside from cultural and religious concerns, there were some fears of engaging with the practice. Thando's expectation evoked fear of loss of control:

> *[I] always like to be in control, so somehow I had this perception that I would lose my control, and I don't like that. I always like to be in charge and make a decision with a conscious mind.… So that took a lot out of me, and I mean after trying that mindfulness and meditation in the process, I still felt I was in control. I am in control so there is no harm, instead, there are benefits.* (Thando)

Internal expectations

Participants may have expectations of the practice and a competitive aspect can emerge where mindfulness practice is seen as a performance or achievement.

> *[W]hen you come to the second time around everything is harder, you are competing with yourself again and you have got all these expectations, and maybe that's it, its 'oh this is hard, it should be easy'.* (Vanya)

Some participants had expectations that mindfulness should be pleasant or easy. Miles described expectations of meditation being easy, and found himself judging his practice:

> *[I] am trying to find a flow where all of a sudden it just works, it's not a chore, and everything just comes. And at the moment, it is feeling like a chore…it was an excitement; it was an event I was looking forward to. And now is something I make myself do…there is judgment, that's the problem, there is 'why can't you concentrate properly, and you*

> *thinking about that again, and pull your mind back'. I used to be very good at it…and now my mind is all over the place.* (Miles)

Practitioners can be set up for disappointment if they perceive the goal of the practice to be calm. Mindfulness trainings in the workplace (and out of it) will often mention the capacity for calm as an outcome, omitting explanation of what can happen in the early stages of practice – an increased awareness of levels of anxiety or stress. Hortynska (2011), in her study of clinicians' journeys to become mindfulness practitioners, suggests that misunderstandings of mindfulness are typical and even normative in the meditator's journey. Expectations that the practice should be easy or peaceful may get in the way of meditation being understood more deeply and holistically.

Dealing with difficulty and unconscious material

The challenges encountered resonate with Cohen-Katz, Wiley, Capuano, Baker, and Shapiro (2005) exploring MBSR training for nurses, with challenges including restlessness, pain and difficult emotions. Increased levels of fatigue or restlessness correspond to the torpor and agitation discussed in Buddhist texts (Gunaratana, 2002). Buddhist texts explain that meditation practice is about relaxed alertness and thus must balance between extremes of hyper-arousal, agitation and restlessness, and on the other side mental dullness, excessive relaxation and sleep (Britton, Lindahl, Cahn, Davis, & Goldman, 2014). Recognising tiredness levels in organisations that promote long work hours and high levels of productivity might be difficult if the organisation does not truly value rest or time out. High levels of fatigue might make the practice itself difficult as participants notice levels of stress and tiredness. For some, the more stressed they felt the less they were able to practice. Participants may struggle to recognise levels of fatigue:

> *[I]f I am very tired, or I have a lot of different stressors going…maybe in relationships and at work and at home or something like that. It eats all your capacity and you don't have any capacity left over to kind of observe yourself. Which is kind of ironic, it's like a catch 22.… If there is a lot of work and a lot of other things in my life, this is likely to be the first thing to go.* (Glen)

Similarly, they may struggle with hyper-arousal, as Vanya explained:

> *[I] have done this before, why is this so hard and I am fidgeting and you know, something is aching.* (Vanya)

Both Buddhist texts and current research indicate the early stages of practice need more effort and result in more fatigue than later stages. This leads to participants being disinclined to practice. In current formulations of meditation, the importance of relaxation is often emphasised as opposed to the skill of being able to be present and awake to both the relaxation and hyper-arousal. When mindfulness at work is just sold as stress reduction, the importance of this wakefulness, the original Buddhist goal of awakening (Britton et al., 2014), might be missed.

Morgan (2002) describes meditation practice as a *"series of narcissistic injuries from the beginning right through to the end"*, explaining that we have *"a lot invested in the separate self"* (para. 5). The author highlights that as we begin our mindfulness practice the practice moves from being a good idea to recognising that we are not particularly good at meditation. As we become aware of the nature of the wandering mind and areas of discomfort in our experience, we become more adept at recognising that we can tolerate more of our experiences. The sense of self becomes more flexible and less solid. As awareness develops, we can see our sense of self as constructed. The discovery of levels of discomfort can be difficult. As we move deeper into practice, the deeper shadow material emerges. This can be both uncomfortable, and a challenge to identify.

Morgan (2002) explains how resistance to change and the attempt to keep automatic and dysfunctional patterns is central to systems theory, cognitive-behavioural thought, and psychodynamic theories. Thus, resistance to practice and to change is inevitable even for advocates of the practice. What is not often explained to participants is that noticing resistance is part of meditation practice; working with resistance to and within the practice has the potential to provide valuable insights about other areas of resistance in our lives. For those in the workspace, the impact of resistance to change, developing a less solid self, and encountering one's shadow material has been little explored.

Buddhist scholars describe five obstacles to practice, namely desire, aversion, lethargy, doubt and agitation (Gunaratana, 2012). These obstacles are encountered during practice and practitioners of meditation need to learn how to navigate them. Since many participants found daily practice difficult, translation of these obstacles into modern psychological language might be useful. Participants in this study experienced these five obstacles, in particular lethargy and

agitation (restlessness). The Buddhist five obstacles may allude to the unconscious material that participants struggled with. However, they have named some other valuable obstacles in the modern work external demands of family and work are barriers. So too are the external barriers of culture and religions. Furthermore, fears of loss of control and silence were named. Internal expectation that the practice should be easy or that they should be good at it might also be particularly Western values.

A deeper understanding of the barriers to practice might offer strategies, attitudes and other factors that might support adherence. I now explore strategies adopted by those who were more able to adhere to the practices and elaborate on themes around commitment.

4.1.1 Facilitators in committing to formal practice

Some participants committed to longer formal practice in various forms; sitting practice, yoga, walking meditation and body-scanning were used both at work and at home. Some key issues were supportive of commitment to practice; breaking it down into more manageable practice sessions, using it to manage a life challenge, holding a strong intention or reason to practice, being willing to work with discomfort, and an attitude of kindness/equanimity.

Shorter, more manageable practices

Whilst to benefit mindfulness practice needs to occur on a regular basis, for many participants, short practices during the day were impactful (ranging from one to 10 minutes long):

> *[I] go into our little meditation garden and sit…just to sit and notice and breath, and I notice that I have to tell myself that this is of value, it's enough just to do that for five or 10 minutes. There is a part of me that wonders whether I am kidding myself, but that is partly the judgment that I am delivering on my own minuscule practices.* (Sascha)

> *[I] park the car at home, I switch the engine off and I sit in the car in silence for about a minute.* (Tony)

Participant experiences concur with studies that show that even short practices can improve self-regulation, cognitive resources and executive attention (Moore et al., 2012: Watier & Dubois, 2016).

Managing life challenges and holding strong intention

Some form of suffering might enhance commitment or motivation as a way of coping. In the case of MBSR participants often come to practice motivated to deal with something. In this study joining a programme and adherence to daily formal practice was often motivated by a difficult life circumstance. Sheila, who had lost her husband, explained:

> *[T]he more desperate that you are the more willing you are to do the work. If your life isn't that bad and it's just a little bit chaotic, you are not going to bother. But when you are really suffering on a deep level, you are going to do the work. And that's a place I have come from. Very deep suffering.* (Sheila)

Widaan was highly motivated through managing an addiction. He was committed to the practice daily as part of his 12 steps and had learnt the value of:

> *[T]ime taken totally inwards, looking at myself, reflecting with myself.* (Widaan)

Richard used the practice to manage an approaching retrenchment, waking early to practice before work:

> *[S]o the whole day just shifted by an hour, so where I would go at nine o'clock to bed, I am now in bed by eight o'clock…and then tomorrow morning at five o clock I wake up and do what I need to do.* (Richard)

Similarly, a doctor, returning to work after a burn-out, practices before her family awakens:

> *[I] have been quite disciplined in doing the mindfulness…changing my routine around so I can wake up early in the morning before anyone moves. Which is a challenge because sometimes even at half past five if I move the rest of the house starts.* (Megan)

Those on the IMISA Teacher Training committed to mindfulness were not necessarily dealing with a particular life challenge but they were engaging with long daily formal practices. They were motivated by an intention to teach and they were aware as mindfulness facilitators of the integrity of maintaining their practice.

Those on the EMBA had were attending the programme as it was compulsory to do so as part of their two-year programme. They were all dealing with the particular life challenge of doing a part-time EMBA programme whilst still working and dealing with family life.

Working with difficulty

Participants who were able to commit regularly reflected on what it took to build up the practice, to engage with the difficulties, and to build capacity over time. Jack and Janice, in describing their developing capacity, reflect their understanding that mindfulness practice does not have to be pleasant or easy:

> *[I] said to myself I will just do five minutes every day following the breath and I promised myself I wouldn't try more than five minutes until I couldn't resist it. I think after two months I was doing it every day and I knew it was solid now because it felt wrong if it didn't happen and then I grew to ten minutes and then by the end of the year I got to fifty.* (Jack)

Jack highlights the struggle by describing:

> *[I] can sit down for my hour and it is just this turbine grinding away…* (Jack)

Similarly, Janice's reflection shows an understanding of being able to work with resistance during practice:

> *[I] think the more I sit, the easier it is. Once I am down for ten minutes I will carry on sitting for another ten minutes after the bells ring because I want to, it's more of a choice, it is not necessarily a pleasant space.… If I don't do it, it feels like I am more likely to lose touch during the day.* (Janice)

She shares the value of intentionality to be present, and persistence:

> *[W]ho knows what that is, what part of me it is that says, just carry on. I can go back. It's the starting again thing. Just start again. Go back. Start again, it's okay. For me, in some ways, it is quite profound that intention has stayed for as long as it has.* (Janice)

Changes for participants are often gradual. Scharf (2015) refers to the 8th century Tang dynasty Buddhist scholar who is quoted as saying "*while awakening from delusion is sudden, the transformation of an unenlightened person to an enlightened person is gradual*" (p. 477). Capacity and skill grow through repeated practice and a degree of hard work is involved.

Attitudes of kindness and equanimity

As described by Shapiro et al. (2006), intention to practice and maintaining an attitude of kindness supported practice:

> *[I] have also said to myself, be kind, be compassionate, even if it is difficult now, as long as you have the intention to practice and you keep trying the space will open up for you to do it.* (Gena)

Janice and Thando describe the discipline of practice via images of a life-raft and a marathon, reflecting the supportive capacities of mindfulness that grow through practice, in a self-generating cycle:

> *[W]hen one is more desperate, you cling to it more, like a life raft but when things are good, I still feel that there is this still small voice pushing me on.* (Janice)

> *[I]t takes a lot in terms of getting to become a habit, it's like running. The first time it is difficult to run a kilometre, then you keep on doing it, from a kilometre you run, two, three and so forth. Like this year it was my first 56km Two Oceans race, so it's the same*. (Thando)

There was a wide range of experience: from some participants struggling to do the practice, to others feeling they embodied it, feeling that it had become a way of being. Burch's four stages of competence model (Figure 8) helps to demonstrate how participants move from the discomfort of unconscious incompetence, and conscious incompetence. Abel describes conscious incompetence as being mindful in an adrenaline-filled workplace:

> *[I] am not equipped to be mindful enough through this whole process, whilst still achieving what I need to. So, therefore, I have to take a shortcut. I do not have the tools. I believe you cannot be present in every situation. There are times when I say I don't have the tools now actually and I just have to get on with it.* (Abel)

In movement to conscious competence, participants see the link between formal and informal practice:

> *[I] start breathing and…I can feel it immediately starting to work. That feeling I didn't get for a long time in the beginning.… Now in a very short time, you can actually get into*

> *a space where you can…really feel your whole body…it makes it more effective, so you don't have to spend twenty minutes to get into the zone.… I think the formal practice probably gives you the practice, it's the enabler that allows you to do the short in-betweeners.* (Herman)

> *…it is not necessarily the longest of daily practices, but it is a daily check in with myself, and that definitely has an impact on expanding more into your everyday.* (Janice)

For those who were able to commit more fully there was a movement towards growing skilfulness, and unconscious competence. They described how they absorbed the practice – it had become more of a way of being:

> *[I]t is becoming more like second nature. I am just doing it, I will notice people, I will notice myself, I will notice my thoughts… I notice how I react to certain people in situations and other people in situations. I notice that I am being more of my authentic self and other situations, where I am being less.* (Cedric)

> *[E]very opportunity where I can stop…I think okay well it's a moment so let me use this moment and close my eyes, breathe a bit and get calm and just get connected with where I am…it's like a reinforcing loop, the more you do it, the more you see its value.* (Herman)

Stage models of behaviour change, such as the Trans-Theoretical Model (Figure 9) (Noar, 2017), resonate here. The cycles of change were non-linear and lapses in behaviour were part of the process (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). Participants reported integrating mindfulness more skilfully over time:

> *[E]very opportunity where I can stop…I think…let me use this moment and close my eyes…it's like a reinforcing loop.* (Herman)

The more participants were able to commit to practice and work with resistance, the more they were able to sustain themselves during mindfulness practice, and to sustain the practice itself. These results reinforce the importance of intention (Shapiro et al., 2006). Experiencing the benefits of increased calm and capacity to cope allows steadiness in commitment. This is congruent with Chatzisarantis and Hagger (2007) who claim that mindfulness moderates the intention-behaviour relationship. The more mindful an individual becomes the more they can maintain the behaviour. This becomes a self-generating cycle. Longer practices such as those

used in MBSR and MBCT can encourage a deeper commitment as participants increase mindfulness. However, short practices also have an impact.

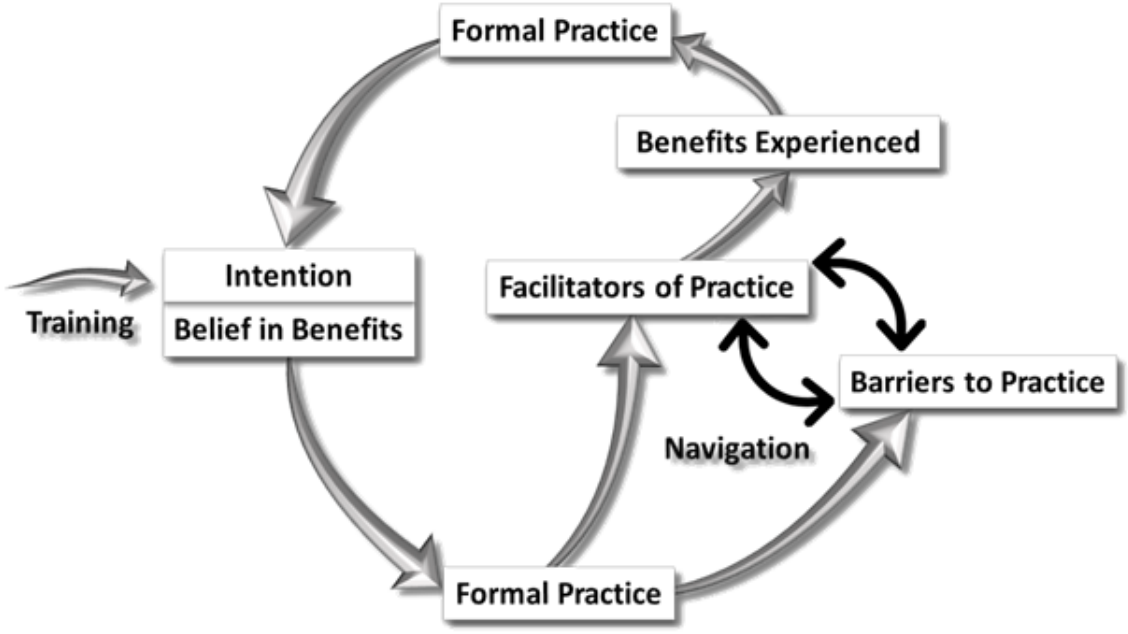

Figure 10: Positive Cycle of Formal Practice

Figure 10 depicts the positive cycle of formal practice developed from experiences of this sample group. Post mindfulness training participants have an intention and a belief in the practice which results in formal practice. In cultivating this daily discipline participants need to navigate the barriers to practice. Barriers included external demands, fear of loss of control/silence, practising alone, culture, religion and shadow material. The facilitators of practice (managing life's challenges, intention, attitudes of equanimity and kindness, willingness to tolerate discomfort) allowed these barriers to be overcome. This resulted in a heightened belief in the benefits, a strengthening of intention. This navigation between barriers and facilitators, promoted more practice.

4.2 Experiences of practicing mindfulness formally and informally at work

Consistent with other workplace research (Reb & Narayan, 2013), this study indicates that participants perceived positive impact engaging in short or informal practices. As programmes have different emphasis on length of time practising, this was variable for participants. There were creative and skilful ways of practising mindfulness, even if it was for just a few minutes.

The impact of mindfulness practice can be illustrated in this ancient story:

> An aging master grew tired of his apprentice complaining, and so, one morning, sent him for some salt. When the apprentice returned, the master instructed the unhappy young man to put a handful of salt in a glass of water and then to drink it. *'How does it taste?'* the master asked.
>
> *'Bitter'* spit the apprentice.
>
> The master chuckled and then asked the young man to take the same handful of salt and put it in the lake. The two walked in silence to the nearby lake, and once the apprentice swirled his handful of salt in the water, the old man said, *'Now drink from the lake.'*
>
> As the water dripped down the young man's chin, the master asked, *'How does it taste?' 'Fresh,'* remarked the apprentice. *'Do you taste the salt?'* asked the master. *'No,'* said the young man.
>
> At this, the master sat beside this serious young man who so reminded him of himself and took his hands, offering, *'The pain of life is pure salt; no more, no less. The amount of pain in life remains the same, exactly the same. But the amount of bitterness we taste depends on the container we put the pain in. So, when you are in pain, the only thing you can do is to enlarge your sense of things…stop being a glass. Become a lake.'* (Nepo, 2000, p. 8)

Work-life can be complex, and mindfulness practice can be seen as a container that allows new ways of being at work. There were diverse ways in which participants explored, maintained and experienced the practice both formally and informally at work. I will now highlight participant experience of practicing mindfulness formally and informally at work highlighting the ways in which they experienced practice and the kinds of practices used.

Participants understood that mindfulness practice was not the *"magic bullet"* that (Sauer & Kohls, 2011) alluded to, but rather a longer-term practice:

> *…it's not just you go on a two-day course and now it is done, and you ticked the box and now you go and practice it for two weeks, and everyone is ra ra, it has to be like an on-going process…it's a slow change thing.* (Rodney)

They used their formal practices in a number of ways.

Practice was used by participants to get ready for the day

Janice presents an image of preparing for the *"world of stress"*:

> *[I] see myself as creating the positive hormones…putting the oxytocin, pumping it out there. Thinking about the things, thinking about the heart. Literally, it's almost like fortifying my system with a couple of the good hormones before I head off into the 'world of stress' and anxiety.* (Janice)

Janice used a loving-kindness practice, to set an intention of compassion for the rest of the day. Even if that intention was not sustained, she was mindful of the chaos and reactivity during the day:

> *[I] usually end it with a bit of a loving-kindness meditation, and also like a bit of a 'may as I stay as open-hearted and compassionate and in the present moment as possible' so I set that intention for the day…and then I walk my dog, which is also fairly meditative. Then I enter the maelstrom of the day, and I start drinking coffee!! And I am definitely not necessarily mindful in those moments because a lot of my days are just fighting fires and reacting.* (Janice)

Like Janice, for Alice, starting the day with morning practice could impact the rest of the day at work:

> *[I] just get really irritable and cantankerous and less forgiving of other people's impingement on my processes. You know when you get to work and your folders aren't ready. If I have started the day quietly, I can let it go, and if I haven't I usually get really mad. There is definitely a connection between the two.* (Alice)

Practice was an anchor in the rush of work demands

There is a story of Antwood (the only one in the organisation with that name) who rushes in late for a meeting and asks, *'Has anyone seen Antwood?'* This story highlights how mindfulness can become an anchor, as participants used short practices as a way to reconnect with themselves in the midst of work challenges:

> *[I] am busy on three different projects at the same time and they are all calling now…so I start to get really stressed about it because this one wants this and that one wants that, and I think stop, just relax and spend some time just breathing, and then go back and plan it from there.* (Noelene)

> *[I]n situations where I maybe have got to do a presentation and I am a little bit nervous, I just sit and relax, get my breathing sorted out.* (Sascha)

This reconnection sometimes presented in interesting combinations of practices – and the *"doing-mode"* was evident; for example, Abel combined walking and smoking as a practice!

> *[I] am a great time saver, so for me, walking and smoking go well together. And it is exercise and I know that a few moments by myself, always unlocks new thinkings. It's as if there are five things locked into one practice. I don't find myself losing that value of any one of those things…it fits in so nicely with my smoking habit. Between meetings when I have a moment, I connect the two…and that is the time when I will slow my pace down. I need to disconnect the smoking from that at some point.* (Abel)

Bella described another unusual combination:

> *[S]o now what I do is, I usually have muesli, and fruit salad and yoghurt for breakfast in the morning, and I used to just wolf everything down. So now what I do is I eat in the car on the way to work, and it takes me an hour to get to work, and it is so nice because then you savour it.* (Bella)

Abel and Bella illustrate that bringing mindfulness practice into the fast pace of the workday is challenging. Participants spoke of times they consciously turned to formal practice. Nadine, Noelene and Sheila found spaces at work to do so:

> *[S]ometimes when I am freaking out at work, I know that there is a gym downstairs and I know that it is the only place that is quiet…and I go in there for 15 to 25 minutes and I do just a breathing meditation.* (Nadine)

> *[I] suppose it is when times are tough at work and then I just do it at my desk with my headphones on. When you have headphones on then people think you are on a call and I take 10 minutes out of the day.* (Noelene)

[I] go to the bathroom, and just do a 10-min pause type of thing. (Sheila)

These participants demonstrate valuing mindfulness enough to find a way to practice in their workspace. Brendon practices walking meditation, despite what others might think:

[I] walk almost every day, so halfway through the day. I walk out the office and I will walk for 10 or 15 minutes. I actually love that part of it. People must think I am quite strange at the office park, strolling around… 'there he is again walking, hands behind his back, at a slow pace, what is he thinking, it's weird'. (Brendon)

Practice was used as refuge

The experience of meditation translated into an internal safety that could allow for management of a complex world. As in the lake and glass story, they were enlarging their container. A doctor working at a clinic in Khayelitsha (an informal settlement in Cape Town), explored the practice of leaving the chaos at the clinic to find refuge on a beach and more recently could find refuge inside himself whilst being at work:

[T]he suffering and the blood and the guts, and the chaos.… For many years it was a love-hate relationship, you would go there but you wouldn't really want to be there. I would get on my bike and ride somewhere to a quiet place, to the beach. I often would do that, during my breaks…one still needs that you know, exposure to solitude, beauty, getting away from the hustle and bustle…interestingly in the last few years, it has been just this amazing acceptance of this is it, and there is nothing wrong with what is, and the noise and the chaos, and the suffering. (Yash)

In another example of creating practice space to deal with difficulties at work, Anna described her practice as a *"liminal space"*, allowing her to cope:

[I] have a yoga mat in my office so I would lock the door and put the lights off and I would actually lie flat…I may even burn a candle and set my timer, and take the phone off the hook, lock the door and just drop into whatever time I have to practice…the structure of the practice helps because it is just this is what I am doing now, I am moving into a particular space, I am embodied in a very particular way…there is something about rolling up the yoga mat…to move from my office chair to somewhere where I feel safer…if I sit in my chair there is not a delineation. (Anna)

When asked to elaborate on liminal space, she offers a further understanding of the practice as a ritual and a sanctuary, a space within a space:

> *[M]oving between particular delineation, you know this is my office and I don't want to be here, I want to feel better. You do that through practicing mindfulness and through practicing sitting meditation or lying meditation but if I do this right here in this chair where I am, that is possible but if we can, I can create a space within a space by just doing a ritual.* (Anna)

Unlike Anna's sense of sanctuary, some participants felt unsafe to practice in companies that do not understand or support mindfulness practice. They struggled to practice at work because of a fear of judgment from their employees and employers and could not find a safe space to do so. Justin and Tony described this fear:

> *[Y]ou can go to a boardroom but with glass walls and stuff, and what if a client sees you.…because if you are doing it you are seen as the minority…it's a sort of internal discomfort or is it okay to be in here, am I safe, if I close my eyes and start settling into that space, that meditative space, and then suddenly the door opens, is that okay? So, there is a sense of permission that is absent.* (Justin)

> *[I] lay down on the floor of my office…I thought I was going to get busted…I would be judged as a slacker…* (Tony)

> Thus, mindfulness formal practice was used as a way to prepare for the day, as well as an anchor and a form of refuge during the day.

Experience of informal practice at work

The poet David Whyte (2001) writes, *"the great tragedy of speed as an answer to the complexities and responsibilities of existence is that soon we cannot recognise anything or anyone who is not travelling at the same velocity as we are"* (p. 118). Formal practice can support a change in pace. Incorporating informal practices into their work-lives can also facilitate a slowing down. At various points during the day many participants found ways of doing so. Predominately, participants found themselves using their breath in that moment of pause. Breath was utilised in numerous ways. Participants found the breath during and between office meetings:

> *[W]hen I feel I am getting rushed I say, 'okay well you are rushed, stop, breath, get calm and just don't rush'.…even if I am late for a meeting, I would rather take a minute just to sit and breathe and get calm and be a minute even later. But I will arrive late very calm…instead of arriving late in chaos.* (Herman)

> *[T]o just stop before I move into the next patient. I breathe and I just try and centre myself again. And then when I walk down the passage to meet the next patient, I try and do that slowly, and also two deep breaths before I introduce myself.* (Megan)

At stressful points during the day participants could turn towards their breath, and take a conscious pause:

> *[S]o that is how I mostly engage and sometimes if I find I am getting really stressed during the day I will usually just focus on my breathing for a couple of seconds and go back to work.* (Benjamin)

Participants also felt the breath as a way to manage thinking:

> *[B]ringing it back to the breathing just opens up easiness and focusing your thinking. My thinking then encompasses so much more information…and the outcome of my choices are much smarter*. (Natalie)

The ability to pause was a key capacity developed both through formal and informal practice. Aside from feeling the breath, participants used an array of other short informal practices at work:

> *[I] started to set my phone now for 90-minute intervals and then I have to take a break. I will try and be mindful of that time.… I will do some colouring or mindfully drink a cup of tea, or sometimes I would read a book.… I actually have a bell at work, and I used to ring it in the morning and just sit while it rings.* (Janine)

> *[T]he, almost formulaic but actually very helpful repeating almost, 'Okay, okay there is a lot, here I am', it's the bringing back of my attention into the here and now.* (Sascha)

> *[I] do…a little bit of yoga. Not like a full flow but a few poses.* (Naomi)

The experience of work could in itself become a practice, as described by this laundry owner:

> *[I]n my line of work, it is about attention to detail. How do the sides of a sheet meet? How do the sides of pillow-case look? … If my mind is wandering how can I bring the two corners together? So, it is the attention to detail, it's being present that works here.* (Gideon)

The capacity to draw on formal and informal practices to slow down, encourages a change in relationship to work. David Whyte (2001) shares, *"speed by itself has never been associated with good work by those who have achieved mastery in any given field"* (p. 118).

The ways in which informal practice can translate into a "way of being" and allow for transformation at work is under-explored. Both inside and outside of work, informal practice was frequently used. At work it allowed them to reconnect, centre and ground before and during work. Given that work stress remains one of the largest health problems amongst South African professionals according to the 2017 Profmed Stress Index, at the very least, informal practice might provide new means of managing stress at work (Profmed, 2017). Of course, these effects also spilled over into managing stress at home and the crossover of informal practice into daily life beyond work was evident. I will provide just a few examples to highlight that there is no artificial separation between the impact at work and at home.

Sascha highlights the potential for balance, and the re-visioning of the work/family-life trade-off that can occur:

> *[J]ust the ordinariness of travelling an ordinary day with my very lovely small people and being able to be present to them just sitting in the car, having a conversation or just sitting at home, instead of thinking 'oh I should be doing this other thing or let me get this over and done with quickly so I can get back to my computer'…since that shift, the quality of my relating with them, and of our home life…has just become the most precious thing.* (Sascha)

The practice impacted on those who were parents as they used it to enhance relationships. Justin is aware of his habitual responses to his teenager:

> *[I]f my daughter says, 'Dad can I', remembering to say, 'I will come back to you on that one' rather than giving an instant answer…actually kind of do it differently and listen to the request.* (Justin)

Interestingly there was also a reverse effect, when family members would remind participants of the practice:

> *[I] have an argument with my wife or I would be really irritated, and both my sons, seven and four…on many occasions have said to me 'dad I think you should just breath' or 'you should be nice and apologise to mom because you are raising your voice and being angry'.* (Evan)

Focussing on only formal practice might miss what McCown et al. (2011) name the horizontal dimensions of *"having"* as measured by clock and calendar time versus the vertical dimension of *"being"*, as described in the following quote,

> *…having a mindfulness practice is reducible to how many days, months, years, you've practised…yet 'being' mindful is irreducible…participants who have a six-day-a-week, 45-minutes a day meditation practice and participants who simply are mindful at some moment, both access the vertical dimension. And both can change their lives.* (p. 144)

Many participants struggled with formal daily practice, but the vertical dimension of "being" continued for all participants. Whatever the level of practice there is value in bringing more awareness into work and home life, as suggested by Elliot (2011),

> *The challenge is to seek mindful engagement in the ordinary occupations of living. Mindful practice should not be reserved for a perfect time and place; rather it is practised through the involvement in daily life activities. This practice suggests we 'wake up' and participate in non-doing, cultivating methods to eliminate mindless interactions and to discover the potential stillness in the present moment. Mindfulness in both its informal and formal practice is new and highly relevant terrain for occupational science to embrace.* (p. 374)

Figure 11 highlights how through the formal and informal practices participants enhance levels of awareness. With only informal practice, the training is more likely to be seen as a tool that can be used at times of stress. I use the word tool here to delineate how the practice can be used as a tool for productivity as opposed to a way of being. However, consistent informal practice shows how participants might open up to new ways of being. For those using both formal and informal practices, there is a stronger likelihood that mindfulness becomes a way of being and deeply embedded into participants home and work-lives.

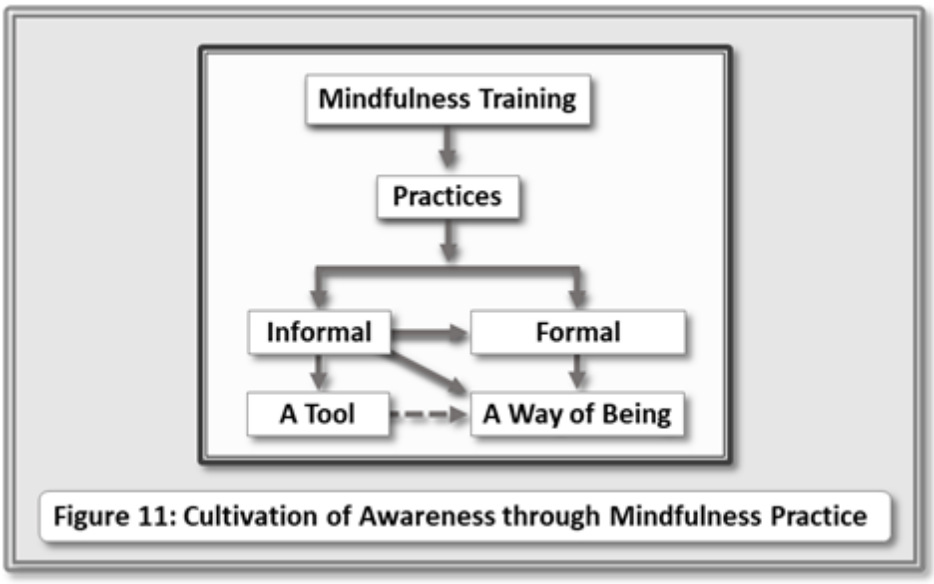

Figure 11: Cultivation of Awareness through Mindfulness Practice

4.3 Sharing mindfulness with others

Given the current popularity of mindfulness, it was interesting to explore whether participants felt comfortable to share their experience and practices with others, particularly in the workplace. There was a range of responses from hiding it, all the way to teaching it at work as I will now illustrate.

Despite the growth in popularity of mindfulness, there were some participants in this study who were still reticent to share the practices with others despite their enthusiasm or engagement with it. Some kept the practices entirely to themselves. Some reasons given were fear of judgment and that this would be seen as *"soft"* or a *"joke"*. Stanley and Benjamin highlight this concern:

> *[T]o get my staff in, a psychologist sitting on a pillow doesn't seem practical yet, I do know 50 percent of my office would love it but the other two advisors would find it uncomfortable. It's quite a severe marriage, bringing the pillow, the soft stuff, I am not sure if corporates are ready for that.* (Stanley)

> *[S]omebody actually made a joke out of it completely. I told both my partners I was doing it, and then there was a joke for "fun Fridays", maybe we should do mindfulness meditation, and everybody said "no, there is no ways we are doing any of that!"* (Benjamin)

Some participants were willing to share some of the practices with family and friends, and with others around them in their close circles:

[M]y wife now, she has got the book, she wants to read about mindfulness. My two sons, they want to. And my sisters…every now and then I will send them something…hopefully, they will see, and they will think wow there is something happening with dad and I want a bit of that. (Richard)

[I] am trying to incorporate it into my parenting…so they know now that if they start crying that they have to breathe! (Megan)

There were participants who were doubtful of bringing it into their contexts but found subtle ways, skilfully dealing with religious and social barriers. A healthcare worker in the public sector shared in a small way with her patients from low socio-economic groups, mothers with premature babies:

[T]here needs to be a certain baseline of understanding about what we do before we can bring mindfulness in…my patients are poor.… I have a group of kangaroo maternal care moms and I (explore) with them the body sensation and the emotion and we talk about what it means, and I speak about how when you focus on your body you are not capable of thinking. So, in a small way, I suppose I do. (Alice)

Alice, who works at an NGO was concerned about religious barriers to practice, but found small ways to introduce mindfulness into workshops:

[I] don't do too much meditation because I think it is quite confrontational to people with other religious persuasions so we just do it very briefly but then I try rather and do a body meditation; how are you standing, let's correct it, can you feel the difference, can you feel the nuance of change. (Alice)

Paradoxically, some participants became annoyed with others who are less mindful. Rodney, a manager, did not discuss mindfulness at work, but demanded more attention in meetings:

[I] am talking and they will pick up their cell phones…I will just stop talking until they finish whereas previously it would probably have really annoyed me. It still does annoy me.… I maybe impose it a bit on other people. I will say 'I don't think you are really concentrating here so either put your phone away or.… 'No, no, no, I am listening, I am listening'. And I am like 'ya, but not to the extent I want you to be'. (Rodney)

A manager in a toxic work environment shared her experience in supporting an employee. Presence in itself offered a healing balm:

> *[I] had a direct report to me and I took her on because she was having a nervous breakdown and I sat with her and told her what I do. She said it made such a difference in her life; she is now doing it all the time…she had been with (company's name) for 18 years, and they started bullying her.… She would be in tears every single day. I would take her somewhere and get a cup of coffee, and I would say we are just going to be quiet, and I would hold her hand. And she said it is the best thing she has ever done*. (Jo-Anne)

Some participants were willing to share the benefits of their experiences and practice even if they knew they might encounter resistance or judgment:

> *[T]o this one particular colleague…we have both found all this fraught environment very hard. So, I have told him, this is how I manage to be in the space, and he didn't comment, he just listened and sort of smiled. So, I don't really know what he felt about it.* (Sascha)

An engineer attempting to teach work colleagues reflected the kinds of resistance that can come up in environments where toughness was valued:

> *[I] said come have coffee with me and before we do that, we will do this meditation. These guys from Pretoria, eating meat saying what nonsense is this! Buff guys. I started the meditation and I came out of it…he said, 'what was that I went to this place' he did it twice with me and said, 'when you leave, leave the CDs with me'. He told my other friend, but he said, 'no I don't do that kind of thing'.… It is a macho thing…they were scared of becoming soft.* (Charles)

Some participants encouraged their staff members to practice. Miles encouraged his PA to meditate as a way of coping with him!

> *[M]y PA is trying to get through this week with me has been trying to do it every morning.… I caught her this morning and I said you have been meditating haven't you? … So, I can see the difference when she does and when she doesn't. When she doesn't, she just bursts into tears all the time because I am terrible…* (Miles)

He also provided apps and reading material to his managers and tried to speak to others above him, demonstrating how one individual committed to practice can try to influence a team:

> *[I] have got six managers, three of them have the app. One of them I have given readings because I think they are ready, some are just not ready for this, and in the general management team I know I have given it to our head of risk, our 2IC (2nd in charge) in finance.… I have spoken to our training people a lot, skills development, leadership development and such-like.* (Miles)

Dutton and Ashford (1993) refers to how an issue selling perspective underscores the roles that middle level employees play in meaning creation processes. Lower level managers in organisations can be taught these skills to create more adaptive organisations (p. 422) Miles is a good example of how upwards and downwards influence can help people grasp the importance of mindfulness.

Finally, some participants brought mindfulness into their workplace formally by trying to teach their teams or groups. This is perhaps easier in smaller companies where the boss, like Alan, encourages practice:

> *[I] can get my staff involved and get them enthusiastic, then it becomes a natural thing. When we share our chairmanships of the meetings, and one of the other staff will say 'hey, come on guys, let's do a little mindfulness exercise'.… I opened my eyes just a little bit just to see if they were all laughing in the background or falling asleep or whatever. There was concentration, there was focus, so I think I had the same sort of dedication from them that I myself would have given.* (Alan)

Janine, a university lecturer tried to teach it to her students by procuring books for them, and also created group sessions for her staff. Her struggle, perhaps due to her lack of training as a teacher, and also the importance of having time and space to share the practice, is evident:

> *[I] did it a few times but I found it really hard to organise. Because I do all this at work already, sending emails around to get people in place…I thought I can't handle this, I don't want to do this, so I stopped doing it.* (Janine)

Interestingly, although there is risk of dilution of the practice as it is shared (with good intention) with others by those not trained as mindfulness trainers, this study highlights some benefits to work colleagues in the direction of reduction of suffering.

4.4 Conclusion

I have provided an overview of how participants are applied and experienced mindfulness practice. The voices of participants paint a textured and rich picture of their challenges and experiences in committing to practice, both formal and informal. I have described the barriers and facilitators to practice, participant experiences of formal and informal practice and also how they share their practice with others at work.

Carrol (2010) refers to the inside-out leader, where *"open vulnerability is not a weakness but a wisdom that is poised, skilful, and astute"* (para. 10). Mindfulness practice allows us to exercise this capacity to open fully to ourselves and others at work. I now illustrate how the increased awareness that arises from formal and informal practices develops some important internal capacities for participants.

CHAPTER FIVE: Development of key meta-capacities through mindfulness practice

As mindfulness can only be understood from the inside out (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Charters, 2013), the voices of participants can support understanding the mechanisms at work in any mindfulness intervention. Goleman and Davidson (2017) refer to altered traits, new characteristics that arise from meditation practice that endure beyond meditation. These traits shape our daily behaviour.

The following section describes **four** key meta-capacities developed with mindfulness training in this study, attributed to formal and informal mindfulness practice, namely (i) **meta-cognition**, (ii) **kindness**, (iii) **embodiment**, and (iv) **equanimity**. These meta-capacities were experienced to varying degrees, by both novice and adept practitioners. Although separated into four emergent meta-capacities, they blend into and support each other. I suggest that the combination of these meta-capacities is central to the potential internal transformation and change in the workplace. Although mechanisms like meta-cognition are not novel in mindfulness research, it is the cultivation of all four of these qualities that might underlie transformation in the workplace from an individual level into an organisational level.

I outline them in Figure 12 in no particular order. I will elaborate on each capacity.

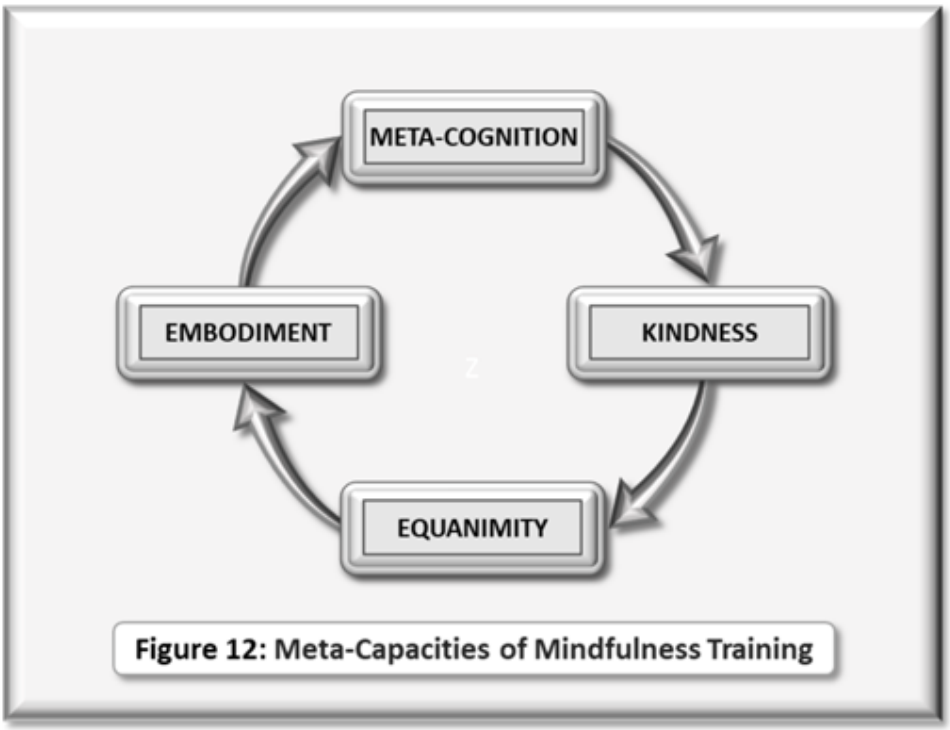

Figure 12: Meta-Capacities of Mindfulness Training

5.1 Meta-cognition

I describe the quality of meta-cognitive awareness and how it was experienced and applied by participants. Meta-cognitive awareness is considered to be a prime component of change and at the core of therapies such as MBCT and MBSR. Practitioners of MBIs develop and use meta-cognitive awareness to intercept difficult thoughts and respond more skilfully (Grabovac et al., 2011). As described by Glen:

> *[I]t's kind of getting that level of meta-cognition where you are aware of your own thoughts and own reactions and being able to be aware of them. Being able to actually manage that, to calm down when you need to calm down, or not react aggressively when your instinct is to do that, but it would not help you in that particular situation.* (Glen)

This capacity is also included in *"decentering"* (Safran & Segal, 1990) or reperceiving (Shapiro et al., 2006), the ability to shift perspective and to stand back and witness the story in one's mind.

> *[I] think some of us are genetically programmed to have more active minds, and for me, that is the challenge.… Just to calm it down, and…think four things in one second instead of forty...* (Alice)

Some participants described this new-found capacity in a light and humorous way:

> *[T]he mind is like this young child…in the sweet aisle.… You don't want to…tell him you are not supposed to look at all the sweets. All that you want is for this little boy to see all the sweets and smile…you just want that the mind doesn't pull you around for its sake.* (Richard)

They notice nature of the busy mind, and its impact on the body, Noticing the mind opened some participants up to new ways of perceiving:

> *…suddenly I could identify my thoughts and I was like oh that's a thought, and that's a thought…and that just broke the cycle… yes I have an asthmatic condition, but I am not my asthma…* (Janine)

Lyddy and Good (2017) explain the process of becoming entangled in thought, becoming disentangled, and remaining disentangled. The authors label experiences when individuals are

unable to activate the Being Mode while Doing as Entanglement, and the capacity to simultaneously experience Being and Doing as Disentanglement. They name this as an important resource; in conceptual processing mode, which is central to organisational life, thought dominates to continuously evaluate what is perceived. With meta-cognition, we can observe what occupies the mind in what is known as experiential processing. In my study participants realise that they may not be able to control the mind, but they can observe the mind, whether calm or not. This disentanglement is not always easy, as participants notice the impact of the busy mind more. Through practice, the state of remaining untangled became more possible, offering new ways of being and doing:

> *[A] huge awareness, greater self-awareness, almost like there is a meta-me that follows me around.… I have myself watching myself, all the time and watching what I am feeling, what I am thinking, how I am reacting. Particularly how I am reacting has been a big thing.* (Mark)

Lyddy and Good's (2017) description emphasizes attaining a goal of discontinuity, as opposed to becoming more familiar with the states of mind that cause suffering. The current study reflects how, with training, individuals learn to notice the impermanence of their thoughts and that thoughts are not actual threats that necessitate escape or avoidance. They can dance between entanglement and disentanglement:

> *[T]here are days that I can, where I can be still, and be quiet and in the moment, without any assistance and the other days there is no way.… I just don't feel so desperate when today I can't be calm, I can't be quiet, I can't take things in my stride, and even the acceptance helps it happen.* (Alice)

Noticing the wandering mind allows for movement from a self-centred interpretation of reality to one that is less self-centred:

> *[I]t is so much about…there is the "me" and the "you" and the separation, is all about dichotomies, it's about categorisation, and so it's being present, it's about the opposite, it's just here now, there is not me…there is no category…no separation, so it really accesses that space.* (Jack)

Participants are more able to notice judgemental thoughts. Initially, it is difficult to notice, particularly when participants have an increased awareness of their negative thoughts. This can

be uncomfortable and also empowering. Participants develop the possibility of non-identification with labels, and judgments held over time. They become more skilful in addressing self-judgment. As described by Nadine:

> *[B]eing able to stop that loop, the conversations that I had on loop and they were archaic conversations, some two decades old and I had them going almost full time all day. So I have been able to pause most of them, and when they come up I know what to do about it.* (Nadine)

Over time, participants can develop a less judgmental stance. The capacity to recognise the negative impact of some thoughts can allow for an increased sense of empowerment and agency:

> *[N]oticing what is happening in my mind and body is the only thing I have control over.* (Gideon)

> *[G]od has given this life to us and my journey is to conquer my thoughts, to own my thoughts, not to be ruled by my thoughts.* (Stanley)

This can impact experience of work. Here a university lecturer speaks about how she deals with judgmental thoughts about her performance, demonstrating increasing agency:

> *[W]alking into a lecture theatre full of students…I feel I need to impress…they will be critical, but it is also my job to teach them.… I have found mindfulness really useful to deal with that anxiety that just comes up even when I am prepared, even when it is a normal lecture, and to…disarm the judgment or the…criticism in my head about my own performance.* (Sascha)

Given the high levels of anxiety and depression in the modern-day workplace and our lack of understanding of its impact, mindfulness training may offer support for employees struggling with negative thoughts:

> *[B]ut in any depressive cycle I find…other stuff floods in, and I become particularly hard on myself and all sorts of noise from the past comes in…negative self-talk…so being able to see it and catch it and name it and intellectually reverse yourself out of it. So it is uncomfortable to recognise the destructive nature of this self-talk and then it is empowering…* (Mark)

Participants also recognise that this capacity to witness thought can create space for self-reflection:

> *[M]indfulness gave me the ability to think about what I am thinking and to kind of reflect and to give myself context.* (Vanya)

Wilson et al. (2014) commented on the value of techniques such as meditation to manage the awareness of the wandering mind. *"Without such training, people prefer doing to thinking.… The untutored mind does not like to be alone with itself"*. Participants recognise through their formal and informal practices that the mind wanders. Although the process of mind-wandering itself is not always negative and can facilitate the incubation of creative ideas (Baird et al., 2012), with meta-cognition participants realise that thoughts are just thoughts. They distinguish better what is actually happening as opposed to their appraisal or story about the situation and start to see thoughts differently.

5.2 Enhancing kindness

Participants in this study were *"tutored"* to notice their thoughts. In noticing the nature of the busy mind, they were also more aware of self-judgmental thoughts. In some cases they become less identified with the *"I"*. The capacity to notice thoughts without judgment leads to enhanced kindness. Mindfulness practice encourages an attitude of caring non-judgment. In this section I relate how participants shared their experience of mindfulness practice enhancing kindness to themselves and others.

The Buddhist understanding of compassion and self-compassion has contributed to Western psychological understandings of mental health, offering an alternative to the constructs of self-esteem, and to the overemphasis on separation for which psychology is often criticised. Neff et al. (2007) describe self-compassion as a healthy form of self-acceptance that entails (i) kindness to self in the face of suffering or perceived inadequacy, (ii) a sense of common humanity and the recognition that suffering is part of what we all share, and (iii) a balanced way of facing one's emotions. Compassion, defined as the heart that trembles in the face of suffering in classical Buddhist teachings is seen as the motivation underlying meditative paths, and a response to the inevitable adversity all humans will encounter (Feldman & Kuyken, 2011). I have used the term *"kindness"* to encapsulate participants' capacities to extend compassion to self and others, both generally and in times of suffering and difficulty. Halifax (2012) defines *"kindness"* as *"leaning toward another or even oneself with tenderness and concern"*.

When asked for their understanding of mindfulness, kindness was imbued in participant's explanations, as is evident for Alice:

> *[P]art of the training is also a kindness to oneself…we are taught to be kind to other people and be kind and accepting of what we are able to do at that particular time.* (Alice)

Similarly, Frances describes how her definition and understanding of mindfulness changed from a mental model, towards an understanding that involved the capacities of the heart:

> *[I] approached it from quite a mental perspective so for me, it was about being in the present on purpose with non-judgment. There is a subtle shift for me to saying being present in the moment with heart…it opens much more to that loving-kindness energy towards myself and it is a much gentler space to land in.* (Frances)

Participants reflected that mindfulness was more than just attention, it involved an attitudinal stance of kindness:

> *[M]y definition of mindfulness changes all the time.… Awareness is top of my list. Love, definitely, love and that came with my family. Respect. Acceptance. Being non-judgmental. The big one…to actually see what is not obvious. Giving people the benefit of the doubt comes to mind. Looking for the good…there is definitely good in everyone.* (Widaan)

These comments are in line with Buddhist understandings of mindfulness, which embrace more than attentional capacity, including kindness, compassion and an open curiosity, as described by Gunaratana (2002). In the words of the Hindu spiritual leader Amma Mata Amritanandamayi,

> *Don't think meditation means sitting only with your eyes closed. A smiling face, a kind word, a compassionate glance, all of this is part of meditation. Through meditation, our hearts should become compassionate.* (Amma, 2017)

For some, the impact of this leaning towards oneself with tenderness was profound in the recognition that they did not have to be perfect:

> *[K]indness, compassion towards myself has absolutely trebled, actually, there was none so I can't say that it has trebled, as there was a deficit.* (Nadine)

[I]t sort of felt like a burden had been lifted.… It was okay just to be where I was, okay just to be imperfect. That was pretty transformative. (Janice)

Participant comments highlight the capacity to notice self-critical thoughts, and to enhance self-kindness. Instead of an attitude of criticising themselves, there was an increased capacity to acknowledge themselves. Although sometimes seen in corporate spaces as weak or self-centred, self-compassion can be regarded as a human strength that can invoke feelings of inter-connectedness, kindness and hope (Neff et al., 2007). It is interesting to note that participants view this shift favourably:

[I] think it is a lot gentler on myself to say 'you are human, you can't operate like that all the time, you are going to make mistakes, and you need to be more accepting of that'. (Brendon)

[I] moved out of what felt like quite a punitive mental space into a much more compassionate heart-centred space in a way that didn't detract from my mental capacities but actually mentored them.…it wasn't just about only going into the heart space, without a capacity for critical thinking and analysis but it added both together. (Frances)

With enhanced self-compassion, participants were able to care for themselves, as opposed to pushing themselves more. Jo-Anne reflects these changes:

[I] am human, number one, because I used to treat my body and myself as if I was an absolute whatever…it taught me I am vulnerable, and I need to look after me…that was a big thing…my lifestyle and the hectic pace at which I used to work. (Jo-Anne)

Participants also learn to discern when boundaries are appropriate:

[I] get quite overwhelmed by an open heart, I get quite flooded. I think some fierce compassion is what I have learnt.… There was a question around the need for some discernment in situations. (Nadine)

Like Nadine, some felt the compassionate response was to be less accommodating of others. Lynette described this:

[I] don't feel as much pressure to be something that I am not and to be nice to everybody and accepting of everything. So it is probably a bit more boundaried. I feel like I am able

to say no to things, I am able to have respect for myself as much as for everyone else. (Lynette)

Self-compassion has been linked to numerous benefits such as reduced self-criticism, anxiety, depression, neurotic perfectionism and enhanced health. As a healthy attitude to Self is developed, participants could translate being gentler towards themselves, to more caring behaviours towards others, in a self-generating positive cycle:

[A]s much as I thought I have and I had compassion for others, it was always undermined, closed down, diminished by this internalised harshness.…the more softness and personal kindness I can find, they seem to dovetail. (Kevin)

[I] don't think I am so hard on my clients. I think that there is more space around my insight to them and so I can see kind of intuitively and see patterns in them. But then also drop down into my heart, and communicate that first with compassion for myself and for them, recognising that what is in the room is also in me… (Frances)

In the workplace this has potentially profound implications. For Abel, as manager in a new job, kindness extended into the capacity to show forgiveness to an employee who reported him to management:

[I] was showing compassion. I told her I am understanding that she can be rest assured that those things are okay, now can we actually talk about the issues at hand.… I would have never recovered from a situation like that. Literally someone backstabbing you, a feeling of mistrust for that person and how do you work with that person? I can work with her brilliantly now, there is better rapport, there is more trust, all of those things. (Abel)

Kindness may begin to bring changes into organisational culture. Jack, a psychiatrist, introduced some practices into his workspace. This brought about a change in how his staff responded to permission to recognise their own suffering, something that is often not allowed in busy medical environments, particularly in the over-burdened South African context. He noted:

[Y]ou know people are very burnt out, they are feeling very uncared for, they are working in a system where the model is self-sacrifice. You must suffer, so other people can be looked after…it has been very moving working with people and just seeing the penny

drop…when they feel 'I am allowed to care for myself, I am allowed to acknowledge my own suffering'. (Jack)

Although not targeted in my interview questions, there was some mention about kindness towards extended society:

[I]n this country we could really do with compassion, and for myself I think it has been a switch from almost something of anger developing around White guilt, and then a switch to compassion. (Megan)

The development of mindfulness includes the attitude of kindness, and this leads to a deeper awareness of whether any action will lead to being of benefit to oneself or others (Amaro, 2015). This is what Monteiro et al. (2015) term *"Right mindfulness"*, and this deeper awareness was evident as participants used the practice to enhance kindness at work. Change in organisational culture could come through in a more compassionate way rather than fuelled by adrenaline:

…there are some things that are not going to change with any amount of adrenaline, but it might shift slowly with another way…we are not going to invade places or bomb people! It's going to come through a more compassionate way. (Megan)

There are some challenges in cultivating kindness at work. Compassion to oneself may be used as a defence against actually completing tasks that need to be done, as highlighted in the comment by Herman's wife:

[O]ne thing I have noticed (is) that I am extremely hard on myself, I find myself sometimes saying okay that's interesting really, lighten up a little bit, my wife has seen the shift and she is saying, 'Herman are you going to finish this because you don't seem to worry that much'. (Herman)

Brandon recognised the paradox of bringing compassion to high performance organisations recommending a balance between firmness and kindness:

[S]o I think that there is a balance because we often speak about a high-performing environment…at this stage my understanding of competitive high-performing environment…clashes with things like gentleness, compassion, understanding…how do we create a great working, gentle, encouraging environment, while pushing people? Because people need to be pushed. (Brendon)

Mostly, the understandings of kindness practice were clear but not always easy. For Janine, loving-kindness practice visualising her colleague was extremely difficult. She imagined him being gagged! This allowed her to be kinder to him in person but to still speak badly about him behind his back. She was aware of this paradox:

> *[I] tied him up to a chair in my head…I blindfolded him, and I made sure he had a gag and then I put his children on his knees because I wanted to remind myself that he is human, which is rather hard. So I did that for about a week or so, and then I don't know but he started being really nice to me …I might say bad things about him behind his back, but I am much nicer to him to his face.* (Janine)

Participants were able to understand, cultivate and explore the attitude of kindness. Kindness might offer an alternative to the emphasis on individuation and self-esteem that has been used to define mental health and may provide an increased capacity for concern for self and for others at work. Self-compassion and compassion for others may also be key in enhancing High-Quality connections at work.

5.3 Developing equanimity

> *'Suzuki Roshi, I have been listening to your lectures for years,' a student said during the question and answer time following a lecture, 'but I just don't understand. Could you just please put it in a nutshell? Can you reduce Buddhism to one phrase?'*
> *Everyone laughed. Suzuki laughed.*
> *'Everything changes,' he said.* (Chadwick, 2001, p. 37)

This section expands on how participants experienced and developed the quality of equanimity. In a lived experience of *"everything changes"* participants experienced being able to be present to both the good and the difficult moments with a sense of balance. Grabovac et al. (2011) define equanimity as a quality of awareness that can view cognitive or sensory objects with neither aversion nor attachment. It is a balanced state of mind, where equal interest is taken in pleasant, neutral and unpleasant experiences. It is both a mental attitude of openness and even-mindedness that one cultivates in practice and an enduring state or trait. As it helps to prevent identification with experiences, equanimity might provide stability in the midst of complex emotions, relationships and situations.

> *[I] realised that for me there is not anymore about comfortable and uncomfortable. Its groundless, it's choiceful in my thinking what is comfortable or not. And I just stretched those boundaries so that there is no limit for me about uncomfortableness. It's just a thought and now…you have the ability to shift in your thinking…* (Natalie)

> *…connecting with whatever's happening whether it be good or bad, it does not necessarily have to be good.* (Sheila)

Equanimity is also defined as *"neither a thought nor an emotion, it is rather the steady conscious realization of reality's transience"* (Halifax, 2012, p. 3). Participants reflect this innate understanding of impermanence, the changing nature of life and a capacity to manage the *"bad"* days or moments.

> *[I] am aware of when it is good, and when it is really good, yes you have to allow…you have to say to yourself 'it's good'. You mustn't get carried away; it's again the middle way…knowing and accepting that life does not just consist of one [thing].* (Richard)

Equanimity allowed a way of managing emotionally difficult situations with more balance at work. For example, the oncology doctor quoted below, felt mindfulness provided a means of redefining hope and allowed her to have honest conversations with patients:

> *[I] think that people say we need to stay positive for our patients otherwise we take away their hope. But I think that often that is unrealistic because the hope is for a cure and for living and that is not realistic. So how to switch that, and how to recreate that concept of hope, and I think that mindfulness will go a long way in assisting with that, redefining hope and what that means.* (Megan)

Similarly, in Richard's reflection, there is equanimity in dealing with the reality of his retrenchment. He is more able to dis-identify from the mind's stories about this:

> *[T]he Buddha sent so many things on my path to teach me patience; my son, my wife, all these things, and this is just one of them again. I want to be in a different space…but I am here now, and I can only be me. Whether 'me' is something that the mind is happy with or not…* (Richard)

Equanimity might also be the counter-balance to over-caring or investing too much into work. For Sascha when things were imploding at work there was value in being able to step back, and this was not separate from caring:

> *[T]o detach doesn't mean not [to] care, but to be detached even while caring. Not to care too much and not to be over-invested, in that my sense of self is located there…particularly in this moment where things are just imploding so much.* (Sascha).

As participants are more able to manage difficult emotions with equanimity, they also may be able to feel empathy Desbordes et al. (2014) explain that equanimity includes a sense of care. It is not indifference, nor does it mean suppressing emotions. Halifax (2012) emphasises that equanimity is not dry or neutral but rather produces *"warmth of being"*, and that it *"supports empathy"* (p. 3), the capacity to attune to another.

For example, for Bella, equanimity allowed her to notice how at work meetings everyone was needing to have their say. She could see how previously she too was on her own *"ego trip"* and responded differently:

> *[Y]ou know what, they are all on their own ego trips, like I was too. So everyone just wants to get their things out there, and no one actually sits back. I think I am the only one now…you sit back, and you watch everyone else.* (Bella)

Sascha was able to bring equanimity to very difficult work dynamics, being able to firstly be present to and manage her own anxiety, skilfully noticing what is happening before reacting. This helps in a work conflict:

> *[J]ust learning to notice what I am feeling before I put in action the response to those feelings…which I think of as not passivity. Although in one particular meeting I was blamed for not having said anything by somebody who wanted me to make this outward display of loyalty.… I thought it's just not useful to enter the fray. So I was able to sit, and in that meeting what I noticed is that I felt nauseous with anxiety…in the past I might have responded to that anxiety.… I could just go, oh that's interesting, look how nauseous I am feeling right now.* (Sascha)

Jack, a psychiatrist, described how he was applying mindfulness to the levels of burnout and work stress in the psychiatric hospital. As opposed to using mindfulness passively, it allowed him to face up to what was happening more realistically:

> *[P]eople understand that just because you can now make peace with what is going, it doesn't mean you just accept it, and in fact it is quite the opposite, the ability to see what is wrong and more effectively deal with it. It gives you this wisdom…it's not this evil thing in the suitcase…we can now see what is in the suitcase…* (Jack)

Justin described how mindfulness might mean initially managing situations that don't work for him; it ultimately allowed for better management of change:

> *[W]hile on the one hand (mindfulness) does allow me to manage something that is not necessarily right or doesn't fit or doesn't work for me…it also gives me the opportunity to recognise when the time is right from a felt sense to do something about it.… There might be a variety of different coping mechanisms and the reaction to the sustainability could be quite explosive and cause harder to manage change or less effective change.* (Justin)

There can be some confusion between equanimity and acceptance. Equanimity at work could be misunderstood to be accepting everything as *"OK"*, or just becoming an observer of experience as a means of numbing. Amaro (2015) clarifies the concept of detachment, describing the three aspects of the term *"sati"*, or mindfulness. The first, (i) sati, is *"the act of paying attention to an object or action"*. The second, (ii) *"sati-sampajanna"*, means *"mindfulness and clear comprehension"*. The third, (iii) *"sati-panna"*, means *"mindfulness that is linked to wisdom and allows for human flourishing"*.

Participants' comments here provided insight into the difference between being detached from emotions or passive, versus being able to deal with their emotions by feeling them; being able to tolerate the good and the bad. Justin demonstrates this difference in not reacting to a new job where he was feeling under-utilised:

> *[I] might have three months earlier started to rattle cages. And it might have been too soon, and it might have been driven out of an anxiety around of slipping into a corner. Rather than from a time of now is my time, from a knowing place or a place of recognising opportunity*. (Justin)

Participants' comments are congruent with Amaro's (2015) description of sati-panna or mindfulness that is joined with wisdom, in which the practitioners can experience in a non-judgmental unbiased way. They describe dealing with work and life with more mental and

emotional composure, particularly in difficult situations. Mark sums this up as follows:

> *[W]here you can hold a number of things in your hands in one go, without the need to cope by dismissing them or making quick decisions or the ability to be able to wrestle with things a bit more, see the next iteration or derivative of what the situation might hold.* (Mark)

Desbordes et al. (2014) propose that equanimity is potentially the most important psychological element in the improvement of well-being. This may be relevant in the workplace as many participants demonstrated equanimity in complex and demanding work situations.

5.4 Embodiment

> *The body is a river in which every cell is a drop of water, and all of them are in constant transformation and movement. There is also a river of feelings in us, in which every feeling is a drop of water. Each of these feelings – pleasant, unpleasant, neutral – relies on all other feelings to be born, mature, and disappear.* Thich Nhat Hanh (2012, p. 69)

Thich Nhat Hanh (2012) reminds us that the body is the place from which feelings and sensations are known and experienced. The capacities for proprioception (ability to sense movement and spatial orientation in the body, to know where the body is in space) and interoception (capacity to sense sensations from internal organs) are enhanced in mindfulness practice. Michalak, Burg, and Heidenreich (2012) highlight two definitions of embodiment. Firstly, body actions or anatomy play an important causal role in cognition and emotion. Secondly, cognitive and emotional material is impacted by information stored in the body.

This section describes how through practice, participants notice and acknowledge the body and body sensations, the causal role in cognition and emotion, and how their experience is impacted by bodily information.

Stanley and Tony recognise they are connecting with the body:

> *[T]hose six breaths, three deep breaths you feel the breath, and then you breathe into the face was one, and then the chest and then the stomach. The breathing into the face amazes me every time because you feel little pinpricks of your cheeks come alive, and you are like damn that's my face, that's part of my body. Those six breaths let me know I am living in a body that I have forgotten about.* (Tony)

> *[I] am trying to pay less attention to my mind and be more human, more physical.* (Stanley)

Participants become more familiar with the territory of the somatic, opening to feeling the body moment-to-moment. This process was noted by Herman and Brendon:

> *[Y]ou start becoming not addicted to it, but your body becomes, it's kind of like the feeling of being in a content space, I am not saying it is a happy space, it's a content space, and it's a very nice space to be.* (Herman)

> *[B]eing very present to what is happening right here, right now. How does it make me feel? How was it internally? How is it affecting my body? There is intelligence in that, it is affecting my body.… I can feel what it is, it's good, it's bad, frustration. It's reconnecting with that all the time.* (Brendon)

Participants' increased connection with the body corresponds with the Buddhist teachings, with the first foundation of mindfulness being the foundation of the body. Naomi notices becoming more embodied and able to feel. Her comments show a more refined awareness of the difference between thinking and feeling, and her growing capacity to articulate difficult-to-define felt experiences:

> *[I] was very much a head person, and my way of resolving difficult issues was to think them through…I suppose when the practice and the experience with it began to impact was when I could without saying 'I think I feel', feel, and not just feeling but being able to name that feeling…it wasn't easy because it is a different language…I was trying to explain just the physical feeling…like almost an opening of the chest area…* (Naomi)

Increased connection to the body also gives participants more access to an understanding of the mind/body connection. Glen makes the connection that his bodily tension might be related to what might be going on in his mind.

> *[S]o as you become tense physically, you have this tension in your mind and that increases the physical tension. Whereas if one kind of notices it and says okay, calm down, relax, open your shoulders, maybe take a few deep breaths, the actual addressing the physical can help address the mental and vice versa for me.* (Glen)

A product of increased body awareness is the capacity to self-regulate and better manage one's lifestyle. In the following excerpt, a participant reflects on his smoking habit and understands that he has not respected his body:

> *[D]oes my body support my ambition, my life force? My body is my life force.… My body does not support me and it's my fault. When I say fault, I am not blaming myself, I have not respected my body enough.* (Abel)

Although participants on a mindfulness-based programme are not given instructions for healthy eating and living, changes occur. For Bella there is an increased awareness of her body, with some capacity to self-regulate:

> *[I] never really listen to my body. My poor body just gets abused; you know I expect all sorts of things of it. And now when I wake up, I lie there and check in with my body and I make sure that I am looking after it.… I think it is just being more aware.* (Bella)

Participants reported an increased capacity to recognise reactivity through changes in the body. They notice discomfort in relationship to events and relationships at work. They learn to regulate by noticing reactions in the body or through feeling the breath:

> *[I]n any situation, be it people walking in and interrupting me or a particular stress that a client has presented, the first thing I am aware of acutely is what is happening in my body, what is happening to my breath? Because I know most of my stress in my stomach, I notice what is going on there, I will feel my core muscles tighten up.… If I can't come back to my current surroundings, I use the breath as a way to focus inwardly, control that which I can control, slow the pace down and deal with each situation.* (Gideon)

> *[L]ike when I was so cross last week, I can actually feel that my neck gets all red…just to watch and see what you are doing to yourself.* (Bella)

With this increased awareness of discomfort in body, sensations, and feelings, there is a growing capacity to notice when there is disconnection, or a need to avoid noticing their bodies, and emotional landscapes. Laura refers to the *"guests in the guesthouse"*, a recognition of the uncomfortable emotions that she is blocking off:

> *[M]y signal is pain and feeling it, some emotion, like I know it is connected with something that is happening around me. And I mean so recently in my whole deep-down*

funk becoming a hermit and watching TV and drinking too much. I can feel that it is this huge big wall.… I am feeling miserable and stuck and uncomfortable, and this hurts and that hurts and that makes it feel better…letting all the guests into the guesthouse. Even if I don't know what their names are. (Laura)

Although not easy, over time participants acknowledge what is felt in their bodies in terms of sensations and feelings and manage situations better. This impacts on sense of agency. Brendon's increased bodily awareness allows him to notice his emotions, to choose how to react and hold his ground at work. As he notes:

[I]t's sensitivity to how I act, how I make decisions, that make me feel a certain way, the sensations would be shortness of breath, anxiety, maybe a little bit of anger…when I can feel those moments coming, I realise here is a moment where I can feel this. I have acknowledged…these situations…because I can feel them.… I have a language to speak about them, now it the case of sitting back and saying what are my choices? (Brendon)

Cedric describes feeling into his body during meetings and the increased sense of agency in the face of being challenged. He notices his bodily and in so doing he can open to relating to others:

[O]ne thing that actually stunned me, it actually scared me…I started to notice that when someone is challenging me almost in an aggressive attack mode, I withdraw, but I could physically feel it, and I could probably physically feel it because I was paying attention where I felt a knot in my tummy. I felt myself slouch into my chair, I felt my mouth getting dry.… it helped me to say, slow down, relax, listen to what the person is saying…it's a phenomenal feeling that you can feel more in control… (Cedric)

This capacity to notice bodily feelings and sensations allowed for an increased ability to manage reactivity and to respond to situations. The data also resonates with fMRI studies (Tang & Leve, 2016) that reflect an enhanced balance between brain systems associated with emotion and those networks connected to bodily sensations.

The growing capacity for felt-sense might link to being able to make decisions that are in integrity for them. Vanya describes being able to feel her *"gut feelings"* in turning down work that did not feel right, accessing a moral compass that is felt somatically:

[M]y gut instincts more, so if I think something is not right…I was like I just don't like the people.… On my moral compass, they would have been too far away for me to do a

good job…just to trust your radar, when something seems off-kilter, there is a reason for you thinking that. (Vanya)

Interestingly participants also develop response-flexibility, being able to choose where to place their attention. In one striking case Jo-Anne, who was recovering from chemotherapy, chose to feel her body less:

[I] would find a way to almost be looking at me from the roof down, at me, and saying you know, and trying to get out of my body because if I concentrated on my body the nausea was there.… But if I was looking down on myself, then I could cope with the nausea. (Jo-Anne)

Our bodies are the vehicles from which we conduct our work, and our relationships and can add new dimensions in the workplace. Burbank (2013) describes this capacity for embodiment as an ability to relate to others in a grounded and attentive way, understanding interconnectedness and being open to possibilities. Burbank asserts we are a tipping point where we need new solutions to personal and social transformation. Western culture *"needs the very things we distrust as a society – heartfelt/gut knowledge"* that can help us understand issues of power and identity. Because systems resist change, *"transformative leaders need the strength offered by the substantial but not measurable energy generated by integrative embodiment"* (para. 5).

Through the body participants are more aware of environment. Gideon and Glen's comments below tie in with the understanding of the embodiment of Thompson and Varela, (2001), where brain, body and environment are seen as mutually embedded systems:

[M]indfulness is about being present to my body and my mind and the current situation around me. (Gideon)

[It] is both observing what is happening in the physical…and the social world around you but also what is happening in your own head and your own body… (Glen)

Participants opened to understanding interconnection and to new ways of seeing and doing, reflecting the potential of embodiment on agency and action. Chari (2016) refers to mindful embodiment where practices such as those used by the Occupy movement can be seen as more than contemplation *"holding space in this sense may be experienced as a somatic and psychic*

resonance that contains significant implications for subjects' capacities to innovate new ways of being together" (p. 239).

Few studies to date have explored the dimension of *"embodiment"* in the workplace. Hindmarsh and Pilnick (2007) explored the role of *"intercorporeal knowing"* in the real-time coordination of an anaesthetic team at work. Mindfulness training offers a means of embodied learning for participants, allowing for a reconnection with the experience of the body. This also allows for experiencing emotions in new ways (Didonna, 2009; Michalak et al., 2012). The understanding of the transformative capacity of embodied mindfulness, where consciousness is seen as the interaction between the mind, body and external world has been under-explored (Khoury et al, 2017).

This section highlights participant experiences and reflections on embodiment.

5.5 The interweaving of the four key meta-capacities

I have described the four key meta-capacities of mindfulness training; meta-cognition, equanimity, kindness and embodiment. These capacities do not always work in a singular fashion. Participants could draw on different aspects of these capacities, sometimes separately and together. Each capacity builds on the next and together they combine to create new capacities to cope in complex and oftentimes challenging environments. To illustrate, for Glen, there was an interweaving of kindness and equanimity, and more clarity in noticing his thoughts:

> *[T]he best thing you can is actually take a step back…trying to be kind to yourself. I think that is also something I tend to struggle with a lot. I tend to beat myself up.… Which of course just make things worse because now you are not only stressed, you are angry with yourself for getting yourself into the situation in the first place and none of that helps.* (Glen)

The four meta-capacities of (i) **kindness**, (ii) **equanimity**, (iii) **embodiment**, and (iv) **meta-cognition** facilitate and support a further capacity; **the ability to be with unpleasant, neutral and pleasant thoughts, feelings, and sensations**.

5.6 Capacity to turn towards unpleasant, pleasant and neutral thoughts, feelings and sensations

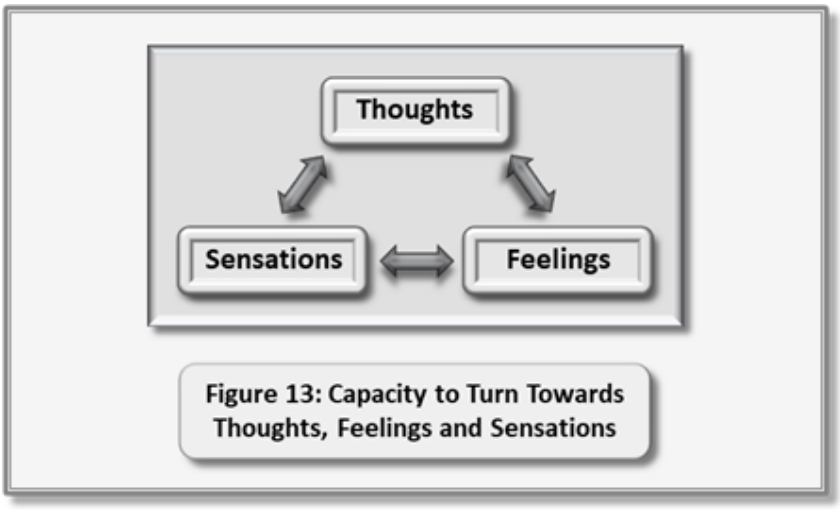

Figure 13: Capacity to Turn Towards Thoughts, Feelings and Sensations

As participants experience the moment that they are in, the meta-capacities lay a foundation for new ways of experiencing work. In this next section, I will illustrate how the capacities allow participants to take a *"pause"* and notice more clearly what is happening in the moment, by turning their attention towards thoughts, feelings or sensations. As illustrated in Figure 13, thoughts, feelings and sensations are interrelated and the understanding of this is evident in participants' feedback.

The Vietnamese meditation teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh (1990, p. 66), describes how,

> *To observe the feelings is to sit on the bank of the river of feelings and identify each feelin1g as it arises, matures and disappears.… Our feelings usually play an important part in directing our thoughts and our minds. Our thoughts arise and become linked to each other around the feelings that are present. When we are mindful of our feelings, the situation begins to change. The feeling is no longer the only thing present in us, and it is transformed under the light of our awareness. Therefore, it no longer sweeps us along the way it did before there was mindfulness of the feeling. If we continue to observe the feeling mindfully, we will be able to see its substance and its roots. This kind of seeing empowers the observer.* (p. 66)

This section describes how participants were more able to sit on the bank of the river with their feelings; to notice or *"turn towards"* whatever is present, whether pleasant, neutral or uncomfortable. This capacity to be present to all experiences is described in neuroscience as

activation of the prefrontal cortex and capacities for approach behaviours (Davidson et al., 2003). In this chapter I outline how in this capacity to "turn towards", participants are more able to experience managing difficult emotions and shadow material. The poet T.S. Elliot (1925) writes:

Beyond the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

Participants were more present to both inner and outer difficulty. This section illustrates how they were able to **identify, describe** and **label** emotions, experience more **granularity** and more **insight** into their thoughts, feelings and sensations. The emotions most commonly mentioned were those of anxiety, fear, and anger. Being present to thoughts, sensations and feelings might allow more awareness of unconscious feelings and dynamics such as power strivings, anger, greed and envy. I highlight the challenges in turning towards unpleasant experiences in the workplace. I also describe the value of being able to turn towards pleasant experiences.

5.6.1 Turning towards unpleasant experiences

Participants named the **momentary pause**, which allows for a re-orientation to recognise, accept, and manage difficulty. This allows for a transformational noticing, moving participants out of habitual reactions. As Sascha describes below:

> *[T]hat gap, the observer, has made it possible for me to just be in that space, witness what has been happening without feeling absolutely full of turmoil myself or reacting too quickly, just because I want to make it better, or make right.* (Sascha)

As stated by Malinowski and Lim (2015), the capacity to step back from habitual reactions to distress was the mindfulness facet most central in predicting work engagement and well-being. De-automatisation from habitual thought and emotional patterns can increase response flexibility in managing difficult emotions:

> *[M]y thought process has been; always be present, evaluate your thoughts based on facts, feelings or emotions, and the third part is to monitor your feelings and concentrate on*

your breathing. When you realise you are not in the situation, you are external to it and can guide it. (Charles)

[I] think my behaviour might be calm even though I am aware of sort of inner turmoil of emotions, but I am able to manage it better.… I quite like the image or the metaphor of the lizard-monkey vs. human brain. While something is going on, I will say 'bloody lizard brain, quiet down'. (Merle)

Although momentary, the capacity to pause and notice supports management of difficult emotions. Participants reflect on being able to feel rather than suppress:

[B]eing able to listen to, for example, a flight and fight response and being able to say 'why am I having this, is it something that I should react to, or is it something that is inappropriate in this circumstance?' Not suppress but to reinterpret if you like. (Glen)

As described by Chodron (2000), this capacity to be present to discomfort is a key aspect gained through meditation practice;

Generally speaking, we regard discomfort in any form as bad news…true, feelings like disappointment, embarrassment, irritation, resentment, anger, jealousy, and fear, instead of being bad news, are actually very clear moments that teach us where it is that we are holding back. They teach us to perk up and lean in when we feel we'd rather collapse and back away. (p. 16)

Participants shared many examples of this capacity. In managing his retrenchment, Richard is more able to embrace all emotions:

[I] am starting to understand that all emotions are good and that embracing them is the way forward. (Richard)

He notices jealousy when friends or colleagues are offered jobs and is aware of not suppressing emotions:

[I] wanted them to have jobs but every time one of them gets a job it's like a stab for me…if someone tells me he got another phone call there is another stab.… You want to be happy and there is a part of you that wants to jump but there is a part of you that feels stabbed the moment you hear that someone has got a job, the mind wants to be a little bit

sad…it doesn't help you saying you are not supposed to think about these things. (Richard)

Workplaces require the capacity to manage difficult emotions and are impacted by the world of unexpressed feelings (Burrows, 2013). In being able to manage, participants become familiar with noticing low-level anxiety and everyday stress at work and develop insight about their emotional landscape. The capacity to notice difficulty extends all the way to more frightening and life-threatening experiences (see section on resilience). Participants find ways of being with anxiety and fear, illustrated in these examples:

[A]nxiety is my flashpoint to know that I am out of the moment…usually catastrophising anticipation is what makes me anxious and stressed and that's when I know I am not in the moment. (Alice)

[I]'m not anxious about nothing, I'm anxious about cash flow…about dissatisfied clients, it's all like normal things…I'm not trying to do anything with it, I'm just trying to lean into it, and befriend it a little bit, allow it to be there. (Janice)

The capacity to be with anxiety, while accessing a relaxed state, is an important aspect of practice (Lindahl et al., 2017). Participants demonstrate an increased ability to **notice and name emotions** with clarity:

[I] can feel my reaction welling up, and instead of it being something that I can't control I feel that I am quite empowered now to recognise what it is. Sort of recognise anger or frustration or hatred or whatever it is and label it as such. And just that act is, I find empowering, it's like okay so that is what it is, then. (Mark)

This links with Baer (2003) and Dekeyser et al. (2008) who highlight increased capacity in identifying, describing, and labelling emotions for those who are more mindful. Participants also learn to experience emotions with more **granularity**, to discern the nuances between different emotions and to have insight into the nature of their emotional landscapes. Participants reflect with **insight** on the connection between emotions. For example, a more refined awareness of the link between fear and anger is described by Glen and Christopher:

[W]hat is your sort of internal knot? … For me it's often a fear thing, I have come to observe, you know often when I am getting stressed or angry it is usually when I am afraid of things…you can actually say let me just acknowledge this fear. (Glen)

> *[I] go towards anything but it is based in fear and it is just another way of running away. So it looks very brave to most people, it looks very confident…but it is just fear-based so it is not different to somebody running in the opposite direction, the mindfulness helped me to turn toward (it)…maybe I don't have to go towards through attacking. It might look exactly the same from the outside, but it is very different from the inside.* (Christopher)

This capacity to turn towards and manage fear might be critical in terms of staying present to shadow material and, in particular, the potent shadow of power in organisations. Wheatley (2009a) writes, *"What is important is to notice what we do with our fear. We can withdraw or distract or numb ourselves. Or we can recognize the fear and the step forward anyway. Fearlessness simply means that we do not give fear the power to silence or stop us"* (p.152).

Similarly, participants are aware of and able to acknowledge their anger. They recognise the destructive nature of anger at work and the possibility of a different response:

> *[I]f you are sitting in a meeting and you are getting angry about what somebody is saying, you can say to yourself 'don't get angry'…you have realised you are thinking, go back to the breath…listen to what's being said.* (Gena)

> *[W]hen I am really stressed, what I normally do is I shout, I rant and rave, I throw things on the floor. I really throw a tantrum to get attention, and then…I try to remove myself from the work environment, to go for a walk, I try to retain my lost breath…to be able to reconsider my thoughts and my presence and the reason of what has really got my soul on fire…then go back to my daily work with a peaceful and more calm mind.* (Darren)

Individuals who experience emotions with more granularity (precision and specificity) are more able to cope without maladaptive behaviours (Kashdan, Barrett, & McKnight, 2015; Tugade, Fredrickson, & Feldman-Barret, 2004). Kang et al. (2012) state that a mindful person relies on conscious and deliberate thought processing by having an open and flexible attitude, which can lead to non-judgmental acceptance of multiple context-dependent variables. The ability to attend to unpleasant, pleasant and neutral allows for cognitive flexibility to deal with new and unpredicted situations. This is particularly useful, increasing agency in complex work environments:

> *[M]y choices in the past have been to either overreact or under-react…it's the ability to choose to react in a way you think is going to help.* (Brendon)

> *[M]y experience is that it helps me feel a little less overwhelmed…the ability to be able to wrestle with things a bit more, see the next iteration or derivative of what the situation might hold…that is a massive positive.* (Mark)

Awareness itself can allow an embracing of the fullness and multiple complexities of work-life, as Yash describes managing micro moments in a chaotic work environment:

> *[I] am sitting and I am doing this audit…I will actually be mindful, I am feeling my feet on the ground, I am breathing into my body, I am noticing my fingers on the computer and I am actually paying attention and that has to lead to increased efficiency. And then when I leave that and a nurse walks in and asks me a question, I am literally able to drop from there and really be able to pay attention to the person that has come in and then to be able to shift from there to looking at the numbers again.… And if a medical student presents to you, you realise that it's this amazing fragile person and relating to that person with love and with attention and giving them slightly more on top of it than what they are used to and you can see them brightening up.* (Yash)

In summary participants develop some key skills in managing emotions namely; pausing, being with their emotions in a relaxed state, being able to **identify, describe** and **label**, experiencing more **granularity** and more **insight** into their experiences and behaviours at work. Participants show how awareness of one's emotional state can influence perception and reactions to complex environmental circumstances which can, in turn, affect judgments and decision making (Hu, Wang, Pang, Xu, & Guo, 2015; LeBlanc, McConnell, & Monterio, 2015).

5.6.2 Challenges of turning towards unpleasant experiences at work

Participants reflect the potential of being in touch with the emotional undercurrents at work. In being able to see more clearly in this way, they were more equipped to respond rather than react, particularly in the face of anxiety, fear and anger. Although this might allow for more effective management of crisis and complexity, there are challenges turning towards unpleasant experiences. Participants experienced the value and the struggle. As opposed to feeling less or better, Abel explained:

> *[T]his being mindful and stuff.… It's painful, it's painful, I am serious.… So what do you do when you are noticing, if you sit with yourself you have to feel it. If you don't know*

how to deal with it you can you can go mad…so what do you do when you are noticing… (Abel)

The discomfort that one encounters during mindfulness practice is often underplayed in organisational trainings. As Merle and Abel described:

[I]t's the same with mindfulness in general, you wander along in this happy blur of non-mindfulness. When you start becoming more aware of yourself you think I am a mess…this turmoil of emotions.… It is like opening Pandora's Box. (Merle)

[W]hat do you do? You notice hungry people, sad people, mad people, that are painful emotionally and that rather, draining emotionally.… There is a small percent of that and then you have to block off and that's fine. And then there is whole other painful, the noticing, and the painful because you don't know what to do with stuff. (Abel)

Desbordes et al. (2014) makes the distinction that in some instances with mindfulness practice, the emotional response to a stimulus may actually be larger but more transient. This can be confusing for novice meditators. Being more present to discomfort might bring about further stress in being more aware of what is there. For example, participants, both of whom dealing with depression, there was an awareness of the benefits of practice but at the same time an increased level of stress in noticing. As Mark explained:

[I]t is almost like in the long run I trust that it will be very helpful but in the short term, I found it very difficult so there is an added level of stress associated with it. Even with that said, on balance it is something I welcome because I certainly feel the benefits but there is an unintended consequence perhaps of the practice. (Mark)

Furthermore, there can be another source of frustration with this increased awareness, namely a level of self-judgment when participants notice common patterns of behaviour but feel unable to change them. This is described by Bella:

[S]o before I go into a meeting, I will practice the breathing and get myself centred, and then I will go in, and I just slow down a bit. I tend to run my life at one hang of a pace. And it's also avoidance in a way, it's also something I realised there because I keep myself so busy, so I don't have to think about who I am and where it is that I am going. But this is where I also feel like I am very shallow because I know I am still making the same mistakes that I have always made but I not doing anything to correct them. (Bella)

Bella is more able to notice and slow down, noticing her avoidance of connecting with herself. This might be related to a further difficulty for some; an increased connection to emotions can be perceived as a weakness in the workplace. Jack, a psychiatrist, described how expressing fear and emotion in the workplace for his registrars was seen as unacceptable, especially when it comes to the fear of being sued in sensitive cases. He noted how difficult it was to remain open-hearted at work:

> *[A]ll we have ever been taught is how no one wants to take responsibility for this, and I am saying bring it to me, it's more important to be human than to be closed…within psychiatry, there is this kind of fear that I will get caught out and I will get sued.* (Jack)

Other participants echoed the challenge in becoming open-hearted at work, and concerns regarding their increased levels of sensitivity:

> *…it has made me…very sensitive and almost oversensitive to things and that has been unsettling.* (Brendon)

> *[I]t could be possible to almost become too aware and too sensitive so that you are so aware and so sensitive to everything that is around you all the time that you almost can't do anything else. Or you over-react, you almost become oversensitive to things and you react to them out of proportion.… You could almost become a little oversensitive or want to please people or address things when actually it is just okay to let them ride.* (Glen)

The capacity to regulate anger might be interpreted as an increased passivity or suppression. The concern is that employees would no longer be in touch with a sense of moral anger as regards what is right or wrong in terms of what is happening in their organisations, or the amount of work/overwork they are forced to do. Lindebaum and Geddes (2016) highlight the pro-social function of anger, where many expressions of anger can be justified and without harmful intention. If allowed and addressed with interest and concern, displays of anger might lead to improved organisational practice. Participants experienced being more in touch with their anger (as opposed to less), and at the same time being able to manage it more skilfully or wisely. They were also more able to hear each other's anger.

Whilst in many work situations employees need to regulate their emotions, there is a difference between what is known as surface acting, a form of emotional regulation that has been shown to be negatively related to employee health and well-being (Alberts & Hülsheger, 2015), and

mindfulness-based emotional coping. In the latter, employees are able to feel and experience their emotions and stay in contact with their feelings, while at the same time not react to their emotional landscape. Mindfulness-Based Coping has been shown to be more impactful than control-based strategies of suppression (Alberts, Schneider, & Martijn, 2012).

Despite the struggles and paradoxes of noticing the unpleasant, participants commented that there were benefits to doing so. They felt the capacity would be of value in the long term in terms of noticing emotions and sensations with more acuity and managing shadow material:

> *[Y]ou are releasing your demons and if they weren't scary why would you have chained them down and locked them away so…you make friends with them while you release them.* (Jack)

> *[I] am recognising difficult stuff, it is not easy to deal with, but it is necessary to deal with. I am saying that is the territory. It hasn't put me off at all. It's another dagger point where you have to say I have got to make some changes in your life.* (Mark)

> …*when you are a lot more sensitive, things are in multicolour…* (Brendon)

The nature of mindfulness practice is that it heals as it reveals. This is sometimes understated in organisational settings and would need to be carefully managed for some individuals who find themselves far more aware and sensitive of themselves and their shadow material, and of others.

5.6.3 Present to pleasant events

The ability to turn towards pleasant events is also a valuable resource for participants. There were more reports of the capacity to be with unpleasant experiences than pleasant experiences. This ties in with research that shows it is difficult to direct our minds to pleasant directions and keep them there (Wilson et al., 2014). The following examples highlight the connection between presence and positivity at work:

> *[I] am aware when I walk through the hospital that I love my job, of loving where I am. It's not a practice as such but I think, it's a feeling of aware gratitude, is a kind of a thing.* (Alice)

> *[W]hile I am busy, I appreciate the important things…I try and slow my breath down…and I try and treat each day as a very important day.* (Darren)

> *[T]o look up at the trees and to notice and be mindful of how extraordinarily beautiful they are…that brings me joy. And that may come from the realisation that you need to slow down.* (Gena)

Fredrickson (2001), in the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, argues that positive emotions appear to build enduring personal resources and widen thought-action repertoires. Darren and Gena demonstrate the capacity to notice positive emotions and experiences which can allow for a broadened mindset in which positive emotions promote discovery of new actions, ideas and social bonds that can enhance individual resources, building resilience, health and well-being (Fredrickson 2001, 2004; Tugade et al., 2004).In a skilful use of cognitive flexibility, turning towards the positive was also used to help manage stressful situations. In one vivid example, Jo-Anne consciously used her capacity to turn towards pleasant moments in her life to manage a toxic work environment:

> *[F]or me it was extremely difficult to block out specifically the work environment, because of the hurt, anxiety, watching friends of mine die in the office due to these toxic bullies. It was horrific and I thought I am going to have to save myself and I thought I would, you know little things, I used to have a meal on the plane and a glass of wine, and then I didn't do anything, I didn't open anything, I put my laptop on top above me in the seat where I couldn't see it…* (Jo-Anne)

Similarly, Sascha describes her increasing capacity to notice the pleasant amidst the chaos of daily life. She found herself running late whilst driving her daughter somewhere in amidst family demands:

> *[W]e were in the car, and I started just noticing okay I am very agitated…so I started verbalising it so she can hear. I just sort of smiled and said isn't it funny, one thinks that mindfulness is there for when you are peaceful and actually it's not, it's here for when you are really agitated. She laughed and said, 'yes mom I can see you are really agitated', and I said 'yes, so can I, and yet here I am and I am sitting next to my girl whom I adore and we are on our way in the car and all is good, and how lucky am I'. Just expressing and bringing us both into that very tiny space of that car and just connectedness as we sat.* (Sascha)

The ability to be present to all experiences was enhanced by engaging capacities for equanimity, with kindness, embodiment and ability to notice the wandering mind.

5.7 Conclusion: Development of key meta-capacities through mindfulness practice

Through the four key meta-capacities of kindness, equanimity, meta-cognition, and embodiment, participants are more present to experiences, noticing thoughts, feelings and sensations with more capacity and acuity. This capacity plays a key role in response flexibility and in the potentiality to recognise what is happening in complex spaces and navigate them. As suggested by Kang et al. (2012), mindfulness allows for a process of de-automatisation, which ultimately promotes adaptive self-regulatory strategies. This ability is built up through both formal and informal practices. Participants can better tolerate levels of both emotional and physical discomfort and comfort. They can also experience more positive or pleasant moments.

There are some struggles post-training, however, and the potential *"Pandora's Box"* that can be revealed is not often named in workplace trainings (relevant in the South African context where levels of trauma are high and may go unnoticed in the workplace). Mindfulness training might also promote greater levels of sensitivity in participants, which is not always supported in the workplace. However, participants felt that the practice of mindfulness was worthwhile, allowing them to manage themselves and complexity more effectively. This is supported by Kang et al. (2012) who describe how non-judgmental awareness can facilitate the discontinuation of maladaptive thought process and habitual patterns of cognitive and emotional reactivity. Glomb et al. (2011) refer to the enhanced capacity for response flexibility, and the ability to engage with habitual and automatic patterns in new ways.

This section has also highlighted the difference between suppressing or surface acting and Mindfulness-Based Coping. Mindful awareness allows for a different relationship with their emotions, where the emotions and are accepted as part of their experience, and at the same time understood as transient. As Wheatley (2009b) suggests, *"I still get angry, enraged and frustrated. But I no longer want my activities to be driven by these powerful destructive emotions. I've learned to pause…take no actions until I can trust my interior state"* (p. 82).

In the following section, I will describe how this capacity of opening to the moment, being able to be present thoughts, feelings and sensations can result in the growth of three main qualities: resilience, sense of self and multiple perspectives.

CHAPTER SIX: Individual capacities of mindfulness training: resilience, sense of self, multiple perspectives and possibilities

I have explored the **four meta-capacities** developed (meta-cognition, equanimity, embodiment and kindness), and the key ability to turn towards thought, feelings and sensations. An analogy often used in mindfulness practice is that of building muscles in the same way as one might go to the gym to train. Drawing on this analogy, the four capacities, and the ability to *"turn towards"* might be compared to particular mindfulness muscles developed through mindfulness training. From training at the gym, one might then be able to engage in other activities such as running a marathon. In the same way, the four capacities allow participants to develop new resources that may over time transform their work worlds.

Participants reflected on the growth of **individual capacities** in **three** key areas (Figure 14): **increased resilience, awareness of sense of self,** and **ability to embrace multiple perspectives and possibility.** These individual capacities are inter-related and can impact and enhance each other.

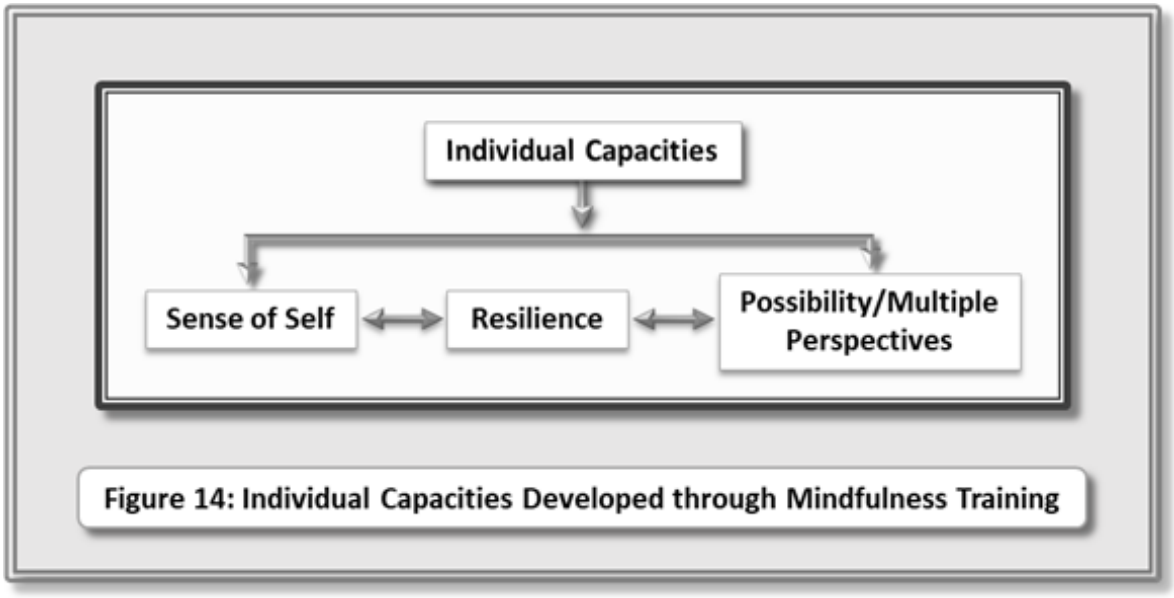

Figure 14: Individual Capacities Developed through Mindfulness Training

6.1 Growth of resilience

Resilience has been identified as an important trait to manage the negative personal and performance outcomes of stress (Rees, Breen, Cusack, & Hegney, 2015). There were a surprising number of participants who declared that mindfulness "saved their lives", or in some cases, the life of someone else. The practice helped them turn towards moments of extreme crisis and to manage such moments skilfully. Their resilience may be derived from the capacity

utilise the four qualities developed: **metacognition** (recognising maladaptive patterns of thought), **kindness, equanimity and embodiment**, even in the face of complexity and crisis.

In this study, participants reported resilience was enhanced, supporting Good et al. (2015) proposal that resilience is one pathway by which mindfulness affects well-being at work. I have chosen to present a range of experiences, as the examples are striking, and demonstrate increased capacity to be present to difficulty.

Christopher used mindfulness to cope with a 19-day stay in ICU following an arterial bleed and noted his capacity to engage with the pain, using his ability to *"turn towards"* his pain:

> *[I]t's called the sledgehammer pain, the worst headache you can get, and how I tried to fight that thing that was uncontrollable, and I really felt I was going to go mad, and then thank goodness to mindfulness I realised there might be another solution here for me. Just sitting with it and going towards it and being fascinated and investigative of this pain and that voice just changed my experience of ICU…to really encounter the pain and befriend it.* (Christopher)

Despite struggling with his daily formal practice, Alan found himself using mindfulness of breathing before an operation to remove a cancerous tumour:

> *[I] am always a bit nervous about hospitals, they are not my favourite places, they sort of wheel you into the operating theatre…I am very nervous about the whole thing but you know I just said to myself as I was lying in bed, 'just relax, just close your eyes, and just practice, getting that breathing sorted out' and just relaxing and just savouring the moment.* (Alan)

Natalie describes working skilfully with discomfort and pain whilst in hospital post-chemotherapy. Struggling to eat her porridge, she forced herself to be present, spoon-by-spoon in order to survive. This led to an increased sense of agency:

> *[M]y initial thought was just pushing it away you have had enough. And then something said to me 'it is about what is good for you, not the nice thing to do.' I chose that option not to push it away and I never looked up again and I focused on finishing my porridge.… That moment in the simple life lesson of eating your porridge or not eating it. I think it made a shift in my whole experience of 'I can shift my thinking'. If I can do it in this situation I can do it in many others. And I did it in my chemo many times when you really*

feel like pulling it out and you can't deal with that pain just to know this is good for you. And the resilience you build…makes you stronger. (Natalie)

Another participant described helping someone in a car accident. Here, she alludes to her surprise that she was able to do so mindfully, despite struggling to commit to formal daily practice:

[Y]esterday…I saw a car accident, the car in front of me hit into a pedestrian on the main road…that mindfulness training…did help me have…a space of calm to actually be helpful in the situation, and I ended up assisting for an hour. (Vanya)

Lynette, a mindfulness trainer, shared a further example of presence in extreme circumstances. She recalled the response of a young participant in a mindfulness group, who described dealing with the sudden death of her nephew:

[S]he was just sobbing because it had happened literally a few days before we had the session. She literally panicked but then she took a breath and came back to herself. She shared that if it wasn't for the mindfulness, learning that skill to manage the emotion, she thinks she would have spun out. But she had the presence to get the little child…to the hospital, but unfortunately there was nothing they could do. (Lynette)

As participants develop a de-centred approach, they are less threatened by work stressors, which results in increased energy for well-being. There might also be a shift in the perception of stressors, with participants finding growth in the experience of challenge. The examples shared resonate with the Mindful Coping Model (Garland et al., 2009). Participants found capacity to face threats both at work and in their personal lives and this enhanced confidence in their abilities to cope and to reframe some difficult situations. Through a changing relationship with stress, participants can recover more effectively. Thando demonstrates responding to and recovering from a life-threatening situation through wise action. Thando experienced an instance of road-rage while taking his children to school. Another driver overtook Thando and then applied his brakes causing a near miss accident. Thando responded calmly:

[I] looked at him. I was still amazed 'what's wrong with this guy?'… It's got nothing to do with me. It's just that now he is venting out on me. Because at the end of the day I could also be upset and aggressive and we end up fighting but is that what I want? Is that what I want to teach my children, that you resolve your issues by fighting? And I am

telling you I was calm, and I looked at the guy and he banged my car.… I consciously told myself…let me just keep quiet and he swears at me, then after a few minutes, he just left. (Thando)

The resilience was also evident in the capacity of certain participants to manage loss and periods of grief in their lives with equanimity. Sheila had lost her life partner a year previously, after a long and stressful period of illness:

[L]ots of trauma and lots of things happened to me while he was so sick, and then I had to still deal with his loss. So that is when I am feeling the anxiety, mostly anxiety, or sadness arising, and I can't shake it myself, that's when I would use something like mindfulness.… I am now aware of the feelings arising in my body, and I am aware of what I can do to bring them back down. (Sheila)

Similarly, Richard was able to manage his anxiety mentally and emotionally after a series of retrenchments, using the capacities of awareness of wandering mind and embodiment learnt through mindfulness practice:

[I] handled it really well. There were times when it was really hard, you know like fear for the unknown, what's going to happen…for a week it was here in the stomach…and I just faced it. (Richard)

[Y]ou are actually just a little bit too fearful, exaggerating what can happen, bad things can happen too, but this is life. Again, it doesn't mean all the bad things are going to happen but if they do, then they do, and then you will just have to handle them. (Richard)

Richard and Sheila show how mindfulness practice helped in navigating personal loss with equanimity and acceptance.

In the workplace there were further powerful examples. Asides from managing their own crisis, participants were also able to manage others. One manager (Charles) described:

[T]here were a few stressful situations, one guy tried to commit suicide. I found him on the floor. Another had an accident, another was in tears in his early sixties thought he had Alzheimer's and I had to fly him out, and luckily, he had a cyst on his brain and was okay. Another colleague drove a car over a pavement and broke his back and I had to get him to South Africa. For some or other reason people phoned me for help. The HR

manager even commented on it. You had to keep cool and calm. If I hadn't gone through the transition of mindfulness and meditation and all the things I have been doing, I would not have been so calm. (Charles)

Charles exemplifies Good et al. (2015) proposal that as mindful individuals show increased response flexibility their confidence and resilience to deal with difficult work situations might grow. This increased resilience was not always easy to integrate, and Charles described some guilt in his new-found capacity:

[T]o a certain extent you feel selfish. Your colleague is lying on the floor and you are not panicking… (Charles)

In another example of resilience in supporting others in complex times, an oncologist demonstrates increased sensitivity in breaking bad news and having difficult conversations with her patients. She attunes to her patients' distress and her own emotions with more skill:

[B]eing mindful in that difficult space, that conversational space, has helped me be more comfortable with their pain and their anxiety, and not having that urge to try and solve it. I can just be there, and breathe, and acknowledge their emotion whereas previously it was hard to do that. (Megan)

There is concern that mindfulness might evoke acceptance of situations that need to be changed, or that participants might also re-experience the unpleasantness of the situation because they are more aware (Good et al., 2015). Furthermore, would individuals habituate to unpleasant aspects of their work because of this increased resilience? However, rather than resulting in passivity, mindfulness training allowed them to behave in adaptive ways. One participant used the practice to manage intense office bullying in a very toxic work environment. According to the interviewee, a number of people died on the job all at the same time, due to stress encountered at work:

[I]n every meeting that you went to, somebody was recording somebody and then they would use it against them as a grievance.… I got fired publicly three times. And then I got sick but what I did six months before I landed up in hospital, I used to fly to Jo'burg (in South Africa) every Sunday night fly back every Friday night…I got to a point where I said no this is ridiculous, and I meditated. I would get off the plane just like I had a good night sleep. And it certainly made it much easier for me to get back into the office, on a

> *Monday morning, with my head focused and not getting involved with all this horrible, horrible, toxic stuff around me.… Every single day I would walk out the office for about 10 or 15 minutes and I would walk around the block and I would just take everything out of my head and then go back in like I had had a breath of fresh air.* (Jo-Anne)

In another example a university lecturer in an organisation undergoing complex change highlighted her capacity to deal with a chaotic work environment, consciously using her mindfulness practice. She described how the rector shouted at a new dean who had come from another city. The dean immediately left the situation *"with her handbag"*. Anna describes how, unlike the dean, her response is to roll out her yoga mat:

> *[Y]ou have a toolkit of these practices…it makes me feel as if I am strong enough to cope with things that other people may not be able to cope with. You know if somebody shouts at me in this institution, I will not take my handbag and go somewhere else, I will roll out my mat.* (Anna)

Participants were more aware of unpleasant aspects at work and, although more sensitive to these aspects, they reflected calm and confidence in difficult and complex situations. This is in keeping with research that suggests mindfulness and a more accepting orientation to one's experience may promote psychological resilience and psychological capital following trauma (Thompson et al., 2011) and across a variety of occupations, including managers and entrepreneurs (Roche, Haar, & Luthans, 2014), those in live combat simulations (Jha et al., 2010; Jha et al., 2017) and healthcare professionals to prevent burnout, (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Positive emotions might be more prevalent in mindful individuals even in difficult situations (Good et al., 2015). The capacity of participants in this programme to manage difficult states provides counter concerns from critics such as Brendel (2015), who suggest that participants run the risk of avoiding difficult situations. Rather, mindfulness might offer resources for individual resilience and self-management in the absence of transformational leadership.

In the face of severe stress, participants reflected increased internal resources and agency to cope inside and outside of the workplace. Hafenbrack (2017) suggests that mindfulness may reduce self-focus, making it more difficult to feel threats to the self. This change in sense of self in the direction of increased agency is highlighted in the following section.

6.2 Sense of self: Self-confidence, self-acceptance and authenticity

Both Western and Buddhist psychologies acknowledge the role of distorted self-narratives in mental health. Whilst Western thought believes in the strengthening of the individual self, Buddhist thought understands optimal well-being as coming from a deconstruction of this sense of self (Coventry, 2015). Miller (2016) describes how Buddhist psychology questions *"the usefulness of cherishing the tentative output of what it considers deluded mind"*. In recognising these distorted *"mental proliferations"* or *"Kleshas"*, Buddhist psychology holds that one can wisely, compassionately and skilfully work with each moment. Wisdom and compassion are the foundations of *"genuine self-confidence and sustainable personal and collective well-being"* (Miller, 2016, p. 337).

This change in perspective on the self is seen as key in the process to enduring forms of happiness (Hölzel et al., 2011). Brown, Ryan, and Creswell (2007b) describe how,

> *…the very notion of 'intrusive' thought implies an egoic self that seeks to control what is occurring in the court of consciousness. In the mindfully observant state, however, the ego is in abeyance so there is no one to intrude upon; thought is just thought, and its demands for desire satisfaction and goal fulfilment need not be reacted to in knee-jerk fashion as a servant to royalty. When mindful awareness begins to predominate, ego-driven thought begins to lose its kingly power to dominate the conscious mind.* (p. 275)

Kernis (2003) suggests that optimal self-esteem, advanced through the unbiased processing of self-related information would lead us beyond self-esteem. Participants in my study volunteered reflections on how the practice transformed their self-perception: there was capacity to change perspective on the self, rather than just enhancing self-esteem. I have called this capacity **sense of self** and I will now highlight ways in which this was enhanced.

Firstly, participants reported increased **awareness of self-confidence** and the blocks to self-confidence. **Secondly**, they reported increased **self-acceptance**, embracing their vulnerabilities and strengths. **Thirdly**, they reported an enhanced sense of **authenticity** and capacity to draw boundaries to stay true to interior motives. These three factors allowed for an increased capacity to relate to themselves in a more positive and flexible way. I have illustrated this inter-relationship in Figure 15 where one's **sense of self** is impacted by all three capacities.

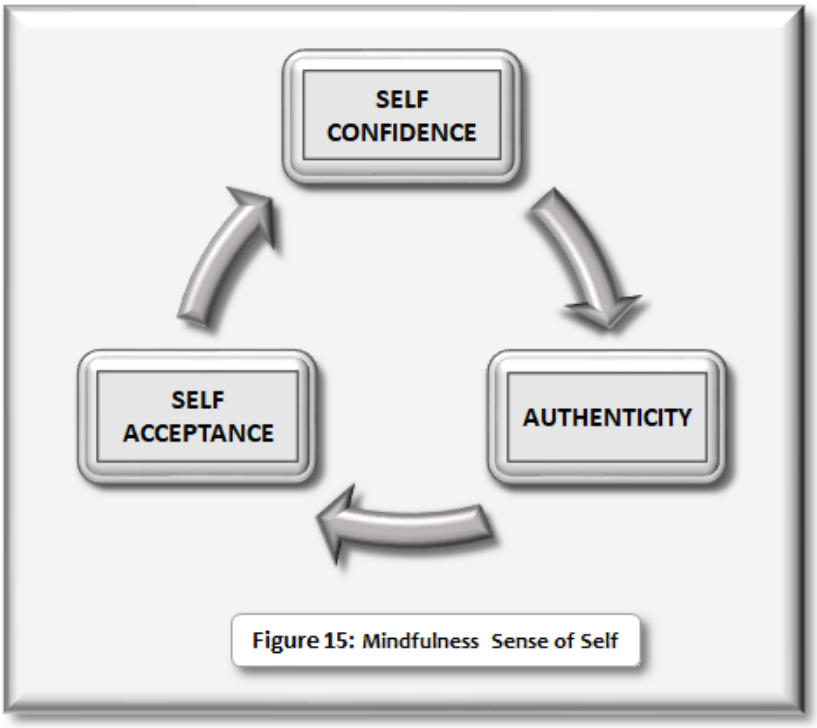

Figure 15: Mindfulness Sense of Self

6.2.1 Self-confidence

Participants reported increases in self-confidence through enhanced awareness. As Miles commented, *"It gives you an awareness of self so it can give you strength as well."* This is palpable in the comments that follow. Noelene initially used her practice to calm down in stressful situations. Her capacity to self-regulate her physiology and emotions enhanced self-confidence:

> *[B]eing able to calm down and relax in a situation…where I would normally be really stressed out…that started giving me confidence, I could then write an exam without freaking out, and slowly things started to fall into place after that, and that all helps with the self-confidence.* (Noelene)

For Noelene, being able make presentations to senior management became easier. Here, she articulates a sense of self-worth, derived from her new-found capacities to centre herself:

> *[T]o stand up in front of a room of people and talk to them is just something I would never have done a few years ago…this morning I was asked to do a whole team presentation and it was intimidating but I could do it…its self-confidence, it's being able to know that what I have to say has some worth, that I as a person have some worth and I think that has all come from doing the mindfulness.* (Noelene)

Here, Tony reflects on his anxiety in meetings, reflecting his growing confidence in his ability to think more clearly, and thus to participate more in meetings:

> *[T]here is this sort of fuzz, that hits my brain…you just think I don't have the capacity to take this all in … It happens in meetings when I am so out of my depth…I am so glad that I know that it's happening because I know that I can beat it a little bit more now…it happens in a management meeting…head of finance will speak, and…I think I don't know anything about finance.… Actually, the jargon is not terrifying, or you can get it, and ask a sensible question.* (Tony)

Miles explains he can see the barriers to his creativity more clearly. In recognising his fear of rejection, he hopes to express himself creatively at work and to take risks to try new things:

> *[I] struggle with confidence in many ways and I don't want to be seen to expose myself to possible retributions, or ridicule. I think something that mindfulness does do, is it gives you an awareness, so it can give you strength as well.… I am very conscious of where I am and of what my stumbling blocks are.… I suppose with continued mindfulness I will be able to overcome that.* (Miles)

One can see with Miles, Tony and Noelene the potential in an enhanced sense of agency in managing daily work activities and anxieties. This might be linked to how negative self-referential statements can be managed differently:

> *[W]hen I get into the thought spiral it is often around normality, and then when I can't do something the thoughts in my head are immediately around 'normal people can do this, why can't I do this?', and then the whole thing about questioning yourself, until you are down in the dumps. Mindfulness really helps me to stop that.* (Janine)

Mindfulness might challenge the ethos of performance and not making mistakes in organisations. Participants could better tolerate criticism:

> *[I] am probably more open to criticism…if someone does come up with something rather than backing myself into a corner and being defensive, I am probably more open to listening to them.* (Rodney)

Justin can tolerate and acknowledge mistakes:

> *…there are times when I see something and I will respond immediately with an email to say that's wrong, and then I come back and I realise that maybe I am the one that is wrong and needing to retract…if I had just spent a little bit longer, if I had managed my reaction to it, then I wouldn't have caused that to happen.* (Justin)

These comments resonate with Good et al. (2015) who suggest that reduced reactivity to negative feedback can result in less self-criticism and less chance of past or future-based emotional responses to goal failure (such as guilt and embarrassment). This is also reflective of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2017) where participants are open to learning and criticism. Participants experienced increased equanimity around issues of self-esteem, allowing for more accurate self-evaluation. Miller (2016) names how *"reducing cognitive-affective fixation on self-narratives of exceptionality or brokenness increases capacity for accurate self-evaluation and self-regulation"* (p. 337). Ryan and Brown (2003) describe how Buddhist approaches view both high and low self-esteem as problematic. This is evident as Richard and Charles show a more balanced estimation of their capacities:

> *[W]hen it goes bad, if you are not good enough you are not good enough, that's okay. Rather have that reality than have a false reality in thinking you are good enough and thinking that you are something that you are not…* (Richard)

> *[B]efore when I was good at something, for example, maths or academics I would be overconfident. Mindfulness gives you the anchor where you are not over-confident or under-confident…being able to do whatever it is you can.* (Charles)

The ability to notice thoughts allows for a shift in the way that people perceive themselves, even in times of difficulty. They can see themselves in flexible and positive ways. Richard uses the practice to navigate his pending retrenchment. He describes managing the ups and downs; the ability to notice thoughts allows for a shift in self-perception in a less personal way:

> *[W]hen it is dark then you think the bad is about you. And that where the philosophy and thinking about it, it's not about you, this is just life…the day when you feel good, you pick all the good things, and the day when you feel bad you pick all of the bad things. But it is just life. It just happens.* (Richard)

Richard recognises the impact of a capitalistic society. In his acceptance of his retrenchment as not being personal, but part of the society he has chosen, he feels more agency:

> *[I]n capitalism if you want to live in such a community, then there are retrenchments, companies decide differently and you can say you don't want it but that is a different system and, in that system, there are other things so you must now decide. So that was then my starting point and then it was I want this, I am the one today that other people are reading about.* (Richard)

Richard demonstrates what Ryan and Brown (2003) differentiate as contingent self-esteem and non-contingent self-esteem. With contingent self-esteem, individuals see their worth as being dependent on attaining certain standards and goals. Non-contingent self-esteem characterises those who fundamentally experience themselves as worthy of esteem and love, despite success or failures. In another example, Justin felt the practice might bring much-needed self-worth for those in junior levels doing less interesting work:

> *[I] think the benefit to people who are relatively junior and who are required to be machines in an organisation and required to do potentially quite dull work…and I think from a self-worth kind of perspective, a different access to self-worth.* (Justin)

Here Justin captures a new understanding of self-esteem:

> *[S]elf-worth was the word, it's one of the things that I have always found with the catch-all term which covers meditation and I suppose there is the self-enquiry which plays, and often the sense of self-love; self-worth has been missing for people and then they start to access this type of practice, access something different. A new way of being, a new way of thinking, a new perspective and often in that comes 'recognise how complete and beautiful you are', and 'here I am, I am me right now', and there is worth in that.* (Justin)

Participants were opening to a larger, deeper way of being, as alluded to by Snelling (Smith, 1997),

> *Once our minds have constructed the notion of 'I' it becomes our central reference point. We attach to it and identify with it totally. We attempt to advance what appears to be its interests, to defend it against real or apparent threats and menaces…we look for ego-affirmation at every turn: confirmation that we exist and are valued.… This is, however, a narrow and constricted way of being. Though we cannot see it when caught in the*

convolutions of ego, there is something in us that is larger and deeper; a wholly another way of being. (Day 21 January)

Western psychology suggests that high self-esteem is a foundation for success and happiness, an important resource, allowing for better management of the complexities of workplace dynamics and challenges. Randal, Pratt, and Bucci (2015) reviewed 32 mindfulness studies, finding a significant relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem; however, they recommend more robust research. The role of mindfulness and how it might impact one's sense of self and confidence in the workplace is under-explored. Participants in this study reflected changes in self-confidence borne out of the capacity to see their thoughts, their fears and their blocks to confidence more clearly.

6.2.2 Self-acceptance

Ellis (1996) taught that unconditional self-acceptance could be an alternative to self-esteem. Although participants in this study were not consciously working on their self-esteem or self-acceptance, they reported some changes in these areas. Herman describes an increased level of positivity about himself highlighting a stronger sense of self-acceptance:

[J]ust like doing a 5 or a 10-minute breathing exercise, and I move on. And what I find is it has definitely shifted the levels of contentment with me in life, and it has made me a much more positive person, making me feel more positive about myself. (Herman)

In this increased sense of self-acceptance comes the capacity for kindness, which allows for an increased ability to be with their vulnerabilities. Widaan describes this as he explains how he worked with insecurities that stemmed from his background:

[A]lthough I showed (brashness) and confidence and positiveness in what I do and who I was. …my racial background gave me insecurity. The fact I had never done anything tertiary-education wise…I would show to the world, here is my success, I am fine but there was a lot of insecurity inside. And that came forth through in dealing with people. I would be self-limiting because of my insecurities…mindfulness practice, being aware, and that level of acceptance has taken those insecurities away. I am very confident without wearing it on my shoulder or my arm, now of who I am. The fundamental reason of why I am confident is that through mindfulness I have come to love who I am. (Widaan)

Furthermore, in being able to accept their emotional landscapes they can see their own humanity. Glen can acknowledge his fears without feeling his masculinity is diminished:

> *[I] am meant to be a man and not scared.… It's not a bad thing to be scared, or a bad thing to be sad, it's part of being who you are as a human being.* (Glen)

Similarly, Janine began to question societal expectations on women. She refers to a side-effect of mindfulness training where she is no longer able to read women's magazines, highlighting a shift to more self-acceptance and rejection of external pressures:

> *[E]very time I look at a lady's magazine I can see that they are trying to sell us stuff, and they are trying to tell us that there is something wrong with us and I just can't stand people telling me that there is something wrong with me! So, I don't read them anymore.* (Janine)

Participants were more able to be aware of their difficulties and vulnerabilities and respond to them skilfully. This shift comes from the capacity for self-compassion **(see Section 5.2)** and their increased capacity to notice and work with judgmental thoughts (their own and others). This self-acceptance might be linked to increased authenticity.

6.2.3 Authenticity

With enhanced confidence and self-acceptance, some participants described a shift towards authenticity. This journey is described beautifully by meditation teacher Nairn (1998),

> *When we start looking, we discover there is a great deal we don't want to be with, don't want to know about, don't want to feel. Meditation reveals a paradoxical situation. We are travelling through life with a stranger who at some level is trying to communicate with us, yet we want to know only a limited aspect of that communication. We want to know only nice things about ourselves, whether we are happy, good-looking and enjoying things. If we experience anxiety, guilt, depression, jealousy and other unpleasant emotions, then we definitely don't want to know.* (p. 14)

Kernis (2003) defined authenticity as the *"unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise"* (p. 1). According to Avolio and Mhatre (2012), authentic leadership is a higher-order construct comprised of **self-awareness, relational transparency,**

internalised moral perspective and balanced processing. The following section highlights some of these qualities of authentic leadership.

Although authenticity is not always explicitly described as an outcome from mindfulness training at work, participant's comments indicate the potential of mindfulness. Cedric highlights the reciprocal relationship between **self-awareness** and authenticity:

> *[W]ho is the real Cedric and how does the real Cedric react, and it is coming through, but in a slow way? …yes there is a desire and I think more practice will help me get there. I notice a lot more when I am my authentic self, it is a snowball effect, the more I do it, the more mindful I get. The more mindful I get, the more authentic I become…* (Cedric)

Mindfulness has been found to be an antecedent to authentic functioning, and authentic functioning is also a possible antecedent of work engagement (Leroy et al., 2013). With self-awareness, Cedric articulates a link between creativity, courage and authenticity, as he feels more able to express himself:

> *[B]eing mindful you think a lot clearer and like that you can see things a lot better, and you come up with ideas…you become braver.… Creativity is by allowing your authentic self to surface…you can only be creative when you fit into your own mould.* (Cedric)

In terms of **relational transparency**, increased authenticity also allowed for more honest and boundaried relationships. As depicted by Lynette:

> *[I] think probably the biggest benefit has been that I feel a lot more authentic, I don't feel as much pressure to be something that I am not and to be nice to everybody…I feel like I am able to say no to things.* (Lynette)

In the same way, Naomi described how the practice helped her recognise where she was self-sabotaging and taking care of the needs of others as opposed to her own and could find her voice:

> *[K]nowing now better how you have self-sabotaged or how you constrained your way in terms of your ability to feel or express a feeling, find a voice…there were these people that I needed to support, so my own needs and my own or even knowing what I wanted, got sublimated.* (Naomi)

Similarly, Vanya, a freelance writer, explains how her increased sense of authenticity, borne out of her capacity for **balanced processing**, allowed her to be more true to her choice of work-life:

> *[M]indfulness has helped me.… I am living my version of my life…quite different to what you would expect a 41-year-old woman to be doing.… I was deeply unhappy with every company I worked for…so having that space to think has meant that I can look at the stuff.… It has really helped me with that, saying you know what, I am doing my own thing.… I need to work out what works for me.* (Vanya)

Thus Lynette, Naomi, Cedric and Vanya demonstrate the capacity to be open and non-defensive. Ryan and Brown (2003) suggest *"a person who is acting in an integrated, mindful way seeks not self-esteem, but rather, right action, all things considered"* (p. 75). Vanya reports setting boundaries with work that felt wrong for her, reflecting an **internalised moral compass and balanced processing** (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012):

> *[I] was like 'I cannot advise this and personally I won't do it'. I was like 'oh my gosh, I have never actually said that I have never actually said, I won't write that for you!'… I was so clear that this is something I don't want to do.… I was like well you have crossed a line there for me.… I realised why I was so angry, and I could figure out, how to navigate it…without that little space, without that gap of mindfulness, it is a very difficult thing to do.* (Vanya)

Vanya's comments resonate with The Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Brown, 2003) concept of health, explained as *"operating from one's true self the authentic, spontaneous and open integrative processes"*. SDT claims that action motivated by contingent self-esteem is inauthentic; we function authentically when acting from our interests and values. Mindfulness has been associated with autonomous orientation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Vanya realised that she can make an authentic difference in the world rather than feeling powerless:

> *[I]t's very, very easy to get completely overwhelmed and bogged down by all the shit that is happening in the world.… But it's through mindfulness, I have come to realise that…if I just as an individual lead my authentic life it does leave the world a better place.* (Vanya**)**

The move towards authenticity was not easy; Cedric shared his concern about what others might think of the changes in him:

> *[I]t's scary because everyone in the world that knows me, knows me as a certain person, so I think the fear of unknown and how are they going to react to somebody that seems different.* (Cedric)

Similarly, and, paradoxically, Miles was regarded by others at work as less authentic, highlighting the potential shadow in loss of spontaneous behaviour:

> *[I] carry it [mindfulness] with me wherever I go, which some people construe as being less authentic and more calculated which has been quite interesting because I am not as flippant as I used to be…so some people are like what are you hiding?…particular people in my team that I am close to, a slightly negative reaction from the whole thing because they don't understand why I am different.* (Miles)

Miles highlights how as participants change, they can encounter negative responses from those around them. As they explore their internal landscape, they can also fear the increased authenticity, and the changes the practice might bring, as named by Cedric:

> *…so, you are going deeper into yourself, you don't know what you are going to find…you don't know what your purpose means for the current way you live. Do I change my job? …it feels like it's easier to be in a place of mindlessness, it takes more effort to be mindful. It takes more energy. It seems like scarier to be in a mindful world.* (Cedric)

Miles and Cedric illustrate how although not comfortable, meditation can be a journey of reclaiming aspects of oneself.

Nepo (2005) expresses, *"are we here to achieve or experience, to be good or authentic?"* (p. 8). This section highlights how participants experienced qualities of authentic leadership such as **self-awareness, relational transparency, internalised moral perspective and balanced processing.**

6.3 Commentary: Sense of self

Participants in this study reflected on shifts in confidence and barriers to confidence. They reported an ability to evaluate themselves in more accurate ways, accept themselves more, and be more authentic. As opposed to being threatened by negative feedback, and needing external positive reinforcement, participants develop more of an internal sense of agency.

These changes may impact the kinds of actions people choose in the workplace and a core belief that they can affect changes by their actions. Mindfulness might lead to enhanced personal agency as defined by Bandura (1999) i.e., *"the capacity to exercise control over ones thought processes, motivation, affect and action"* (p. 154).

Good et al. (2015) explain that identity and self-concept are important and powerful schemas in Organisational Science as they drive the attitudes and behaviours of the workplace. In organisational studies, identity research focuses on the sense of self. Mindfulness might provide new ways of understanding identity as the capacity for meta-cognition develops; we can recognise the impact of thought. Thoughts, desires, memories and emotions all help to form, maintain, and extend the narrative that constitutes personal identity. As described by Gallagher (2000), *"the self is a rich amalgam of narratives that allows for the equivocations, contradictions, and self-deceptions of personal life"* (p. 1).

Brown et al. (2007b) suggest that bringing open awareness to subjective experience may foster a clearer recognition of the constructed nature of personal identity or the *"Me"* self. Is there potential for mindfulness at work to extend beyond emotional and physical self-regulation and, as Atkins and Styles (2015) suggest, to embrace the questions *"Who am I?"* and *"Am I really separate from you?"* Given the importance of identity in organisational studies (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008), the impact of mindfulness training on identity might transform workplaces in ways we have not yet explored.

As Kabat-Zinn (2017) says,

> *A recognition of the process of "selfing" …is essential for us to find a new way to transcend those mind states that distort experience and further separation as opposed to inclusion and a larger "at-home-ness" that allows for discomfort without it leading to scapegoating and violence, but rather more in the direction of kindness and mutual flourishing.* (p. 1129)

With the awareness that mental content continually arises, changes, and dissipates, the insubstantiality of the egoic self can be seen, permitting some dis-identification from it. When the functioning of the *"Me"* self can be observed, then one is clearly not that *"Me"*. Awareness of the narrative self and the increased ability to witness *"harmful thoughts of me and mine"* might impact workplace behaviours.

Shonin and Van Gordon (2014a) describe how in their study of an SG-MBI in the workplace, participants were more able to regulate ego-centric cognitive and behavioural response systems. This opens the possibility of less self-centred tendencies or behaviours, and more flexible and objective responses to workplace issues and dynamics. Theravada scholar, Rahula explains,

> *…the false notion of the self produces harmful thoughts of 'me' and 'mine' selfish desire, craving, attachment, hatred, ill-will, conceit, pride, egoism, and other defilements, impurities and problems. It is the source of all the troubles in this world from personal conflicts to wars between nations.* (p. 51)

6.4 Openness to multiple perspectives and new possibilities

> *If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.* – William Blake (Blake, 1906, p. 26)

The four capacities of mindfulness (meta-cognition, embodiment, kindness, equanimity), allow participants to notice what is occurring both externally and internally, opening the doors of perception. Karelaia and Reb (2015) describe the ability to take a step back and see oneself from a *"balcony"*. Participants reflected on their capacity to be open to multiple perspectives and new possibilities. They could notice their biases, areas of defensiveness, reactivity, automatic ways of being, and to open to new ways, both at work and at home. Evan explains:

> *[M]indfulness for me is also a trigger to stop and think about your biases. It's a trigger of understanding multiple perspectives…it's about knowing what to ask and to stop and to have a moment of hold on, it's okay, I don't have to just keep going on this particular path that I am on*. (Evan)

Managing complexities, and changes in responses at work, require seeing the world in multiple ways at once. This open and flexible attitude referred to by Kang et al. (2012) is evident in participant comments. Some participants became aware of their biases and how they might block further new options. They opened to new responses:

> *[I] would have characterised myself as someone who makes…snap judgments. If other people volunteered ideas, I would think I am so smart that I would say that's not really going to work because of 'b' and 'c' instead of okay that's interesting…to recognise it*

and say…don't be dismissive, ask another question about it or just understand why people think that. (Mark)

[Y]esterday we sat in a meeting and I have got my idea, I have already figured out that we don't need to ask for any additional information.… And then this young lady said that she wants this and this and this and that. And in my opinion, it was totally over the top, but then I said, 'okay well why do you want this?' Then she explained to me. And then I realised…if they give us a little bit of information, we can use what they were asking for anyway and deduct or calculate the information that we require…just putting your stuff down and being willing to listen. (Herman)

Even in difficult work relationships new ways can emerge. As Glen described:

[I] think it can be quite easy to just see it from your perspective and go 'why is this guy making my life hell?' When actually if you could see it more broadly and say 'let me understand why they are doing'. Even if it is malice in the end and you determine that, the reaction to that is going to be better if you are mindful. I could react and fight or I could try and understand it or bring this person around. (Glen)

Anton illustrated how mindfulness shifted his decision to fire one of his employees whom he felt was under-performing. He was able first to notice his automatic response to following conventional structures in her performance appraisal:

[I] breathed into it and thought, 'is there something more that I am missing?' In this final meeting with this person…I just was able to be released from the structure, from the constructs and allow the person to talk and for me to listen…deciding to retain the person who has turned out to be massively successful and reliable, stable.… Those opportunities are massive in the workplace…from a management perspective the dimensions of EQ and how that might couple with mindfulness practice to kind of create a more competent leader, integrated, more holistic instead of a one-sided structure or perspective. (Anton)

Participants are more open to seeing the other person's reactions with kindness and equanimity, even in quite difficult situations where they have been criticised. Abel describes how as a new boss of a team, one of the staff members reported him to HR:

[I] was able to be kind to my staff member who had done that, although it was very unfair of her. I was able to understand this is a new boss, she is feeling threatened.… Her place

was a place of fear or insecurity…we had the conversations, once she understood I recognised where it was coming from and I was willing to forgive her. (Abel)

Participants found a change not only in behaviour, but in their approach to work. Natalie describes how she has more perspective, dealing with her staff with increased ease and lightness. Interestingly, lightness and a sense of humour might be by-products of practice:

[T]he breathing gives you that space from a different point of view…how important is this right now and maybe take a little bit longer in making the choice.… I experience work in a lighter way. (Natalie)

Vanya described noticing what is not working for her and figuring what steps to take:

[M]indfulness has really helped me spot those and go okay, that one doesn't work so much for me.… I have been able to notice that something wasn't working out and then figure out what that was, and then figure out what to do about it.… Ten years ago I would have just continued bashing my head against the same brick wall. (Vanya)

Natalie and Vanya's reflections relate to the potential of mindfulness to allow for easier engagement with workplace stressors. This is valuable when things are complex, and overwhelming. Anna describes her agency as she notices her negative spirals of thinking:

[I]t is very easy to go into cognitions that are looping, you know negative loops of cognitions, 'why am I doing this, why are they asking me these things again…why don't the people who were supposed to do this work do this work?' …it is not helping you where you are…here you sit in this institution, fundamentally by choice. (Anna)

Of course, the shadow to each of these capacities developed might lead to staying in workplaces that are not healthy. However, it seems more likely that like Anna, participants would have more consciousness of the impact and of their range of choices.

Some participants consciously introduced mindfulness to others at work as a way of encouraging new responses. Nadine, working in an addiction's clinic, with difficult population groups, and high levels of stress, supported her colleagues by teaching a one minute breathing practice, encouraging new ways to deal with patients:

[P]eople trained in addiction work are quite hard and they are very into consequences. There seems to be a lack of kindness.… Like someone would go 'what I can't believe she hid that nougat!'… They are acting out because they are sick, and I would say to them, 'can we just before we call this child in for the ward round or before we think of this consequence, can we just sit for a minute and breathe'…as a counsellor, you get very undermined, you get very exhausted, sometimes you feel like you are going no-where.… So, I initiated that, and one of the counsellors she does that now, she says okay, Nadine said I must breathe. (Nadine)

Kofman (2006) describes how the problem at work is not that people think differently but rather that someone thinks he is right and therefore others are wrong. Participants in this study were more able to assess information and their situations with equanimity, recognise their biases and automatic patterns that might limit them and open to new possibilities.

This capacity to open to new possibilities might be linked to the shift in sense of self delineated in 6.2, Atkins and Styles (2015) refer to relational frame theory, which distinguishes between three functional uses of the term *"self"*, namely *"self-as-story"*, *"self-as-process"* and *"self-as-perspective"*. *"Self-as-process"* refers to the moment-to-moment experience of the unfolding of thoughts, feelings and sensations, allowing for a more dynamic expression of Self. *"Self-as-perspective"* allows for the self to be seen as an observer of experience. The authors propose that mindfulness training allows for a change in *"self-as-story"* statements it increases *"self-as-process"* and increases capacity for *"self-as-perspective"* statements. Thus mindfulness allows for a more dynamic understanding of self, and the potential of new ways of seeing and responding. As participants relate to themselves more dynamically, in the ways referred to by Atkins and Styles (2015), they may open to new ways of being at work.

6.5 Conclusion: Individual capacities of mindfulness training; resilience, sense of self, multiple perspectives and possibilities

Noticing and turning towards difficult thoughts, feelings and sensations provide a way of being able to appraise and manage situations in new ways. **The four meta-capacities of mindfulness** cultivated (**equanimity**, **embodiment**, **kindness** and **meta-cognition**) lead to being able to **turn towards comfortable, neutral and unpleasant moments**. Going back to the gym analogy at the beginning of this section, participants have exercised their mindfulness muscles and developed **individual capacities.** Participants have increased **resilience** in the face of life

stressors. They reflect on an **enhanced sense of self** in three key areas namely **self-confidence, self-acceptance and authenticity.** And they experience an **openness to multiple perspectives and new possibilities**. These individual capacities are inter-related. For example, enhanced resilience impacts one's sense of self, openness to multiple perspectives enhances resilience.

In considering how individuals might transform their work worlds and the kinds of resources that are needed, the four **meta-capacities** and subsequent **individual capacities** developed, lead to **workplace transformations**. I will highlight this using three predominant sub-themes: **relationship to productivity**, **awareness of power dynamics at work and relationship to self and others**.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Participant and workplace transformations: productivity, power, and relationality

In this chapter I describe how mindfulness can shift the workplace in three key dimensions of work-life, namely **productivity**, **power** and **relationality** (Figure 16). I suggest that mindfulness training for individuals might go beyond the intrapersonal and extend into the interpersonal domain of work, with possibilities to transform or disrupt patterns of workplace functioning. Participants experience work differently, or as Kabat-Zinn (2005) describes, with an orthogonal rotation in consciousness where all our intelligences are present, so that our doing comes out of our potential *"for wise and compassionate action, even in the face of inward or outward conflict, or groups holding widely divergent and polarized views"* (p. 354). Participants reflected changes in these three areas and there are overlaps. For example, how they relate to each other would impact productivity and power.

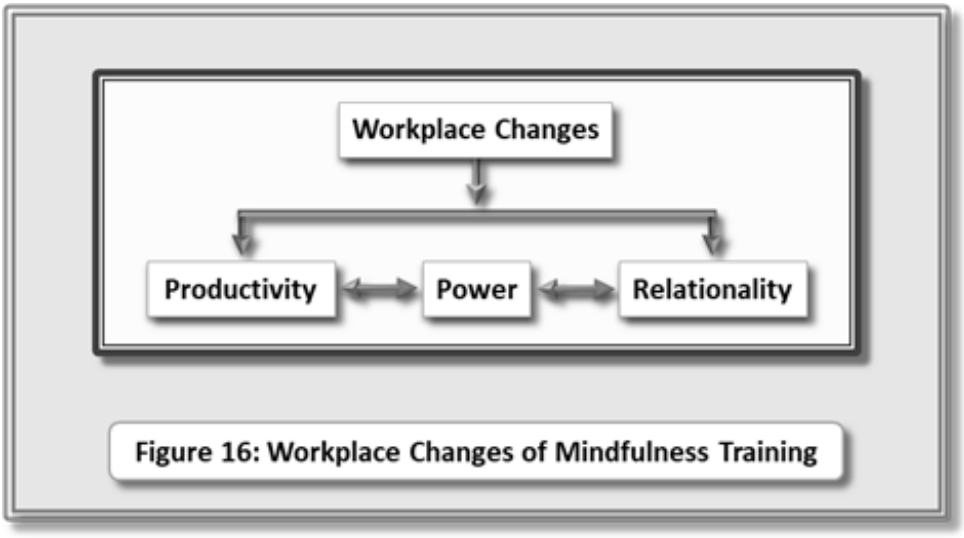

Figure 16: Workplace Changes of Mindfulness Training

7.1 A new relationship with productivity

Merton (1966, p. 81), the Trappist monk's words still apply today:

> *The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence…it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.*

In our contemporary contexts, being driven and working long hours is often valued. In this section I highlight how participants experienced changes in their relationship to productivity and the cultural expectations of "busyness". Three main areas are discussed; changes in **efficacy**, changes in **work values, and boundaries**. These areas are inter-related. Although able to work more mindfully, participants also became more aware of valuing other aspects of their lives and considered putting up boundaries to overworking.

Working mindfully

Their comments reflected enhanced work engagement and efficacy and also the challenges this brought about. There were descriptions of participants working mindfully.

As mentioned in other studies (Levy et al., 2012; Zeidan et al., 2010), participants spoke about the impact of being able to focus on work more skilfully and reduce multi-tasking. Comments such as these from Neil and Tony illustrate this increased focus and awareness of multi-tasking:

> *[T]here might be five things that are bugging you a lot now, they are all clamouring for attention. You end up jumping between the five things. That reduces efficiency and it also takes away the mindfulness of the environment…having natural completion points you at least, for some time, just focus on that only.* (Neil)

> *[S]ometimes I have got eight draft emails on the go…I have recognised it and I do believe that finishing the one and going to the next one makes you write a better email, so I have definitely changed on multi-tasking.* (Tony)

Interestingly, the tendency was not to consider how they could work more, but rather how to work more skilfully, reflecting changing views about what they value:

> *[I] used to operate on a churn things out basis, as quickly as humanly possible, I don't really operate in that way, I want to be, more thoughtful about what I do and how I do it.* (Brendon)

Yash, a medical doctor, shows in his reflection a different relationship to the work itself. He describes working with measurements of quality control in the hospital in a connected and powerful way:

> *[E]very child coming is dying from a preventable death, and you see the connection between that and the measurement…you can either relate to all these stats in a very superficial way or you can really pause and pay attention and realise that every little tick on that box actually represents a person and you see the connectedness of that.* (Yash)

Changes in work values

For many, their relationship to productivity shifted as they noticed tendencies in the workplace to be driven. For example, Frances' image of mindfulness being a *"holding container"* reflects a different understanding of productivity:

> *[W]e can think, and communicate in a more whole and effective way, and that is what makes us more effective and more productive. But it is not being driven by something outside of ourselves…it's about allowing space, around ourselves, around each other, our thinking, our feeling. It's a holding container where inspiration and wisdom has a much greater chance to be experienced and communicated.* (Frances)

Aside from noticing distress in overworking, participants also recognise the struggle in not filling in their every moment working. Evan describes being able to tolerate the discomfort of boredom on a long flight:

> *[O]n the flight, commuting for 20 hours, like okay, I have to take this, take that to do, because it is uncomfortable not, just being. Mindfulness has helped me with a lot of that, and being understanding of the discomfort…* (Evan)

Mindfulness practice might be used to push oneself to manage excessive work levels. Frank describes how mindfulness practice helped him complete his EMBA dissertation, recognising the impact of his drivenness:

> *[I]was fairly diligent about mindfulness because I put myself on a programme to make sure I managed. So I did some hard scheduling and I would stop myself go sit down for ten minutes, I would take a break.… I was observing myself and I was concerned about myself as I was pushing myself harder than I could recall.* (Frank)

Some participants recognised that they had a choice as regards being driven or valuing other aspects of life. In a time of crisis, Sascha became aware of her tendency to over-invest at work:

[I] think when they weren't imploding it was harder to see that tendency as a problem, which has meant I was really invested, and offering of myself and working hard. (Sascha)

Good et al. (2015) question whether mindfulness can enhance or detract from goal pursuit. The concept of non-striving and presence might diminish goal setting. They consider brain imaging research that points to there being no reduction in task performance despite participants being less impacted by extrinsic rewards post mindfulness training (Kirk, Brown, & Downar, 2014). Non-striving is not to be confused with passivity. The sense of increased self-awareness reported by participants might point to a greater capacity to pursue valued goals.

For some, it was about valuing contentment and well-being, over and above competition. This was expressed in their individual capacities, and in terms of the organisation. The comments below reflect an engagement with the deeper values that underpin mindfulness practice, and the root causes of suffering (greed, hatred and delusion). Tony and Herman's comments below highlight Brown et al.'s (2007a) assertion that the nature of goal pursuit with mindfulness is less likely to be impacted by ego:

[I] don't think I realised how anxious a person I was before, whether it's a desire to climb up a corporate ladder…just really thinking what the hell is it all about, life if you are worried about getting somewhere else and don't enjoy the journey. (Tony)

…driving in Johannesburg there was this guy stopping next to me, and I look at this M4 (car) and think envy, and I…feel this heaviness coming over me, 'you are not successful', and I said 'look, I acknowledge this, but what is this really about?' And I came back to contentment and happiness. (Herman)

Lyddy and Good (2017) name the dissonance between mindfulness and the theories of Managerial and Organisational Cognition (MOC) and suggest that the potential disruption to goal-directed functioning is glossed over. Whilst participants like Herman and Tony shared the changes in values in their personal lives, there was also reflection on how mindfulness might change the organisation as a whole. Herman, although enthusiastic about mindfulness at work, had reservations:

[T]he value it can bring to the organisation is to have a happier or more content workforce or a workforce that is growing in terms of themselves. And as they grow as

persons the organisations will benefit from that growth.… I won't say it might necessarily be more profitable, but it would be more enjoyable for everyone. (Herman)

Herman's comment alludes to how mindfulness might not only create a counter-culture in terms of levels of busyness but could lead to employees being less concerned about the bottom line and more concerned about their levels of contentment and balance.

Setting boundaries to overworking

Thus, some participants were able to recognise and challenge common paradigms of overwork, however, movement towards a new way of working was not always easy to implement. In some cases, it was difficult for participants who no longer wanted to work in these ways, but were afraid they would be judged for setting boundaries and saying no to work:

[T]his constant conversation, 'oh I worked all Saturday, oh I worked all night, oh I work ten hours a day', is not helpful. If people were doing mindfulness, they, first of all, wouldn't torture themselves so much and they wouldn't torture other people by telling them about this. I actually thought the other day, 'well I'm not doing it'. But now, do I say, 'this is unhealthy I'm not doing it', or do I keep quiet? This is hard because we are talking about a lot of people who are saying this at high levels. (Janine)

Even those who believed in being more peaceful or calm at work experienced this struggle. Abel named concerns that he would be going against norms of appearing busy and stressed:

[U]nless people recognise the stress response in you they don't believe you are actually taking something seriously.… If I take three minutes out in the day to do breathing exercises, I would freak everyone out. They would be like 'this chaps' got his shit done,' but they would be, 'well why isn't he stressed, we are all running around'. (Abel)

For those who came to value and embrace a more manageable level of work, there was a push against paradigms of over-work. Challenging organisational focus on over-work can bring about a backlash from others. Frances described how one of her coaching clients, who had a regular mindfulness practice, was challenging organisational expectations of productivity:

[S]he has stated clearly that she is not working more than six hours a day. It has been a whole process over a couple of years where she has pushed back, they have pushed back…she brings a quality of consciousness and skill to her team, that they

> *begrudge…she has had to deal with people thinking that she can't cope with the pressure, she has had to deal with people thinking she is flaky, a cop-out…she has had people being jealous, resentful. Now people are turning to her and respecting it…she is defining in a very conscious, mindful way, how she wants to be at work.* (Frances)

Thus, although mindfulness might enhance productivity, there might be some disruption to work expectations in certain workplaces. For participants, mindfulness training did not result in increased doing but rather the capacity to **work more mindfully**, be aware of **new values**, and **set boundaries.** Although participants did remark on an enhanced efficacy, they were more aware of their relationship to productivity. Values such as competitiveness and climbing the corporate ladder were questioned. Employees valuing contentment and well-being over productivity might be at odds with how improved performance is valued and measured, and the lived values of an organisation.

One theory of well-being drawn from both Buddhism and Western psychology describes those who are always looking for the best and who create an internal state through external performance as *"Maximizers"* and those who are satisfied once their intrinsic values are met as *"Satisficers"* (Iyengar, Wells, & Schwartz, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2002). This theory brings up questions as to whether mindfulness training might result in more *"Satisficers"* as opposed to *"Maximizers"*. It is unknown how this might affect the workplace. At a point where humanity might be moving out of an industrial age but is still connected to it, there may be a clash of values, with employees being more connected to self and others, and less connected to materialistic values. Whilst mindfulness training might be seen as beneficial on an individual level, if participants begin to resist increased levels of busyness, this might result in resistance from organisations in incorporating trainings.

The value of non-doing might be lost amidst promotion of mindfulness training for various psychological and physiological benefits. Meditation training as an intervention for workaholism, as opposed to enhancing productivity, has only recently been explored (Van Gordon et al., 2017). Mathiowetz (2016) comments on the *"good for nothing"* aspect of meditation, arguing that meditation is not about resolving political questions of the day, its power is that it provides support to projects that *"resist hierarchy and promote freedom"* (p. 255).

The value of *"being"* or stopping has been under-explored in the context of work. *"Certainly, work is not always required of man. There is such a thing as a sacred idleness – the cultivation of which is now fearfully neglected"* (MacDonald, 2015). Epstein reflects that *"sacred idleness, meditation or just being alone are the diastole of clinical practice, suppleness and emptiness are more important than activity and focus"* (p. 17).

7.2 Awareness of power dynamics

Although I did not initially formally bring up issues of power in my interview schedule, some participants reflected on power dynamics in their organisations. Responses ranged from having more awareness of power dynamics at work to being able to challenge corporate structures. A key to this might be a common shift reported in listening with non-judgment and openness to multiple perspectives, in particular, more openness to input that their employees or subordinates might have to offer. I consolidate these shifts under the subheading's **personal agency and compassionate awareness**, although these capacities are very interwoven.

Personal agency

Changes in personal power and agency are evident from previous sections and from comments such as Brendon's below, in which he recognises his new-found capacity to assert himself in difficult situations. He is able to shift to being more authentic in his interactions:

> *[I] am very much a people pleaser, I am not confrontational, so when I feel the situation is coming on I know what it feels like…I can now say 'okay cool, I reacted a certain way for however many years, it hasn't worked for me'.… If I don't address it, stand my ground…it's going to be a difficult process. I need to be fully grounded in order to say what I need to say in the way that I want to say it.* (Brendon)

Similarly, Mark names being able to feel his emotions in an embodied and powerful way:

> *[I] feel that I am quite empowered now to recognise what it is. Sort of recognise anger or frustration or hatred or whatever it is and label it as such. And just that act, I find empowering…* (Mark)

This enhanced sense of personal power and agency could at times influence power dynamics in a positive way. For some participants, formally bringing mindfulness practice into the workplace changed dynamics. Yash, a doctor in a busy community clinic in Khayelitsha, Cape

Town, encourages the highly stressed staff to do yoga stretches and mindfulness practice. This enhances connection amongst employees of different work levels, cultures and races:

> *[Y]ou know the African sister was standing next to the family physician who is a White Afrikaner, together with the English-speaking psychologist, just getting everybody together and breathing and stretching together, it was an opportunity for us all just to relate to each other, the breathing, the pausing, the being quiet. The connection in that moment.* (Yash)

Similarly, Nadine changed some difficult dynamics at work by teaching her senior colleague to use a breathing mindfulness practice before labelling or judging the in-patients at an eating-disorder clinic. She commented:

> *[A]nd she is like an elder, so it is not like there was any hierarchical thing, so it was so great…that was nice in the workplace.* (Nadine)

Some participants named this ability to notice and interrogate processes. However, it was not always easy. Buz noticed a lack of ethics in his company and his discomfort in speaking up:

> *[T]he question about ethicalness, it's a lot of stress on me. Because I feel that if people are not saying or doing things in the right manner, you want to say something, but sometimes you can't say it.… Sometimes I feel I am not being authentic, and I am just going with the flow…somebody else has said so, and that's it, you are not supposed to question.* (Buz)

Some participants were able to challenge power structures. For one manager, an increased level of compassionate awareness of others lead him to confront management:

> *[T]hey said I must fire one of the guys in the company. I said, 'I can't because he is a good guy and he hasn't done anything wrong'. These were sensitive issues and mindfulness helped me because the manner in which I dealt with it was strategic; I didn't go for the person, I went for the problem. They backed off because I pointed out the consequences.… There were four guys on the hit list for no reason other than their nationalities, and I said 'I'm not standing for that'; mindfulness put me on that extra level to negotiate. My colleagues said I outshine them in not manipulating but knowing what to do next.* (Charles)

In addition to standing up to power, Charles was also able to empower those around him – particularly people that had not been noticed by management:

> *[O]ne of the guys who has been with the company for 15 years, a management clerk. The previous managers never empowered him. I said I feel like you have done your time and I will empower you. You will become my right-hand man. You will report to me.… If I go on leave he runs the show and when I come back I can carry on. Everyone said what you have done to this guy.* (Charles)

Thando challenged upper management to think differently about employees. He explains to someone in a position of power how he might handle his business differently, bringing in his understanding of mindfulness and being present:

> *[S]o they will talk about health and safety and a lot of things that affects their business. And then in this particular meeting there was something very important that one employee didn't want to raise.… But why he didn't tell him, I mean he was here. He said, 'No meneer (sir) is going to be angry'. So I called him back and I said: 'this guy has something to say to you but he is scared of you'. I said, 'why is he scared, it's because of your approach.'… And I told him, 'you don't need to shout…you need the feedback so that you can make informed business decisions…the fact that you are not observant and the way you handle them, it's going to cost you business.'* (Thando)

Thando and Charles are both able to speak truth to power, and to promote a different way of engaging with employees. As Bolino and Grant (2016) state, it is possible to be disagreeable and pro-social.

Although not a focus of this study, mindfulness training implicated home-life too. For Jo-Anne, setting boundaries within a toxic work environment gave her the courage to leave an abusive marriage:

> *[I] think it made me more introspective and more in control…the biggest thing for me was to say it is okay to say no and that was a huge thing for me.… I also got divorced, because enough is enough.* (Jo-Anne)

Compassionate awareness of others

Participants reflected the shifts in the balance of power through being more able to connect to and listen to employees and colleagues. The capacity for multiple perspectives might be linked to changing power-dynamics. Thando, highlights the potential of mindfulness to enhance questioning of structures and processes at work:

> *[S]ometimes employees do things because they are told to do them, sometimes they do it out of fear even though they see an alternative that will benefit the organisation, but because they want to safeguard their positions. They don't want to challenge the status quo, so if you bring this element into an organisation of mindfulness…you are giving an opportunity for people to analyse a situation by being present…putting themselves in the position of their management.… So, if your employees are mindful and present, they will start to interrogate certain processes and be present and ask the big why question. It's not necessarily these guys are trying to be difficult…it will make them curious other than delivering what they are told.* (Thando)

In a different context, Jack, a senior clinician and part of the management team at a psychiatric institution, reflected on the impact of power dynamics between patients and staff, which could lead to unethical or dehumanising behaviour. He speaks of how the nurses, in their fear of the patients, might diminish them. In bringing these dynamics to their attention, he argues that the nurses do not have to be challenged to be more compassionate, they just need to see their fear and be open to new ways of functioning with the patients:

> *[S]taffing ratios are horrific so we have sections where we have 30 psychotic individuals in a ward at night with two or three staff members. And so they are frightened and they use power to kind of stay safe. And what makes it possible to be really inhuman is the 'othering'…it's not something that you can achieve by meeting it head-on. You know these are nurses, these are people who went into this out of care, so they don't need to be forced to be compassionate, and they just need to see what has happened.* (Jack)

Thus, Jack was able to address this issue in the workplace with a sense of care and compassion for the contextual and personal reasons behind the behaviours. A university professor reflects on how her colleagues' skill in language and their professional standing results in unconscious and destructive power dynamics:

> *[C]olleagues are articulate, they are empowered, and they are adept at forming critiques and marshalling the whole kind of lexicon that has to do with exposing abuse of power. But what they are not so good at doing is recognising their own complicity at some of those destructive practices and their own deployment of the language and the institutional standing that is available to them.… For me it's kind of an unconsciousness, and I can't see how mindfulness can maintain that. If they were able to be a little bit more detached…able to tolerate discomfort and conscious of their impulses and recognise that feelings come and then they pass, and one doesn't have to act on them.* (Sascha)

Despite colleagues' aggression, Sascha was able to notice the power dynamics at work, and deal with others at work compassionately, during a time of severe stress.

Fast, Burris, and Bartel (2014) highlight how ego defensiveness from managers can result in a lack of capacity to hear the voices of their employees. The authors question what might predispose managers to be more open. It may be that mindfulness training provides ways to enhance such openness. Participants were aware that this shift in power would be harder to implement in certain organisations that valued hierarchical structures. One participant described:

> *[I]t has helped me, to separate what is important and not important, and not always this milestone or deadline or what some boss told you to do. So, it can create maybe a bit of resistance against dictatorial or non-collaborative milestones.… So if you work in an environment that exploits and pushes and 'I don't give a shit, you will get this done by tomorrow, and I don't care', I think that type of work ethic will clash with kind of like a mindful organisation.* (Herman)

Participants experienced increased awareness of power dynamics. Pivotal in this is the capacity to be open to others' opinions, particularly in the case of subordinates, and to be able to manage others in higher positions with an increased wisdom and agency. The ability to manage emotion by either choosing to express, or to hold back when necessary, might support management of workplace power dynamics. Orr (2002) describes the potential of mindfulness as a resource in anti-oppressive pedagogies, as *"it can bridge the socially constructed gulf between mind and body, feeling and spirit, ideas and life, and self and other that current pedagogy is often unable to span"* (p. 494). An interesting concern was that the practice of mindfulness itself might lead to power issues. For example, some believed that individuals in the organisational space should

not be pushed into learning mindfulness. Some were concerned about backlash from the organisation itself.

Good et al. (2015) question whether future research might consider *"underlying questions of whether contextual factors like power or competition lessen the effect of mindfulness on concern for others or if mindful concern for others trumps circumstances"*. My study has highlighted how mindfulness may potentially temper the effects of overwork and power dynamics in workspaces and may be a precursor to more caring workspaces. Two key capacities here are a sense of **personal agency** and a **compassionate awareness** for others in the organisation.

7.3 Relationality

Building on compassionate awareness of others from section 7.2, the capacity to manage both productivity and power dynamics is clearly connected to the ability to skilfully manage relationships at work. The capacity to attune to self and others might be a key to workplace engagement. As the poet Mark Nepo (2005) expresses, *"To listen is to lean in softly with a willingness to be changed by what we hear"*. In this study participants seemed more able to *"lean in softly"*, listening both to themselves and to others. This also extended to home life. This can be surprising given that formal mindfulness practice can be seen as an inwardly focussed and solitary practice as opposed to one that enhances relationality.

Whilst the value of mindful relating has been explored in personal relationships and parenting, understanding the impact of mindfulness on relationships at work is more recent. There were three main sub-themes regarding relationality, namely **managing diversity**, **enhanced connection and empathy**, and **managing conflict**.

7.3.1 Managing diversity

Some participants were better able to deal with people of different backgrounds and professions. There were vivid examples of this. Yash described experiencing a sense of connection, guiding short practices at work:

> *[W]henever we get everybody to just breathe through their heart and to be grateful there is this softening and almost this acknowledging that everybody appreciates, and as soon as you mention the words 'taking care of yourself', across the board, whether you are White or Black, people relate to that. The common language is how we all experience this*

in our bodies, in our physiology. It's kind of beyond culture but it is still an area where one needs to tread lightly and cautiously. (Yash)

Similarly, Darren explains how accessing a space deep inside of himself allows him to find positive ways to communicate with diverse people in his factory. Mindfulness allowed him to relate in a different way with his workers in an embodied manner:

[I]t is a challenging task to be able to communicate efficiently and effectively with all different people, taking all their cultures into account. But through mindfulness, it gives me the chance to actually go deep within myself to bring out the positive ways of speaking to people. Being able to motivate to bring out the best in them. Pamela used to come into work very angry and very grouchy, and then eventually we got to play some of the music that she liked, and then I actually heard her singing in the background… (Darren)

Charles also found his practice helped him deal with diverse and complex work relationships. He demonstrates how he becomes a boundary crosser between different identities, and how the shift in his state of *"being"* helped him take on the role of bridge-building. He also illustrates the increased perspective-taking capacity, which allows him to look at things in a deeper way:

[I]t attracts a lot of energy. People tend to confide in you. We had a take over from new management because of the language and the history with Angola and Portugal. The way the Portuguese treat the Angolans is like colonisation. I didn't agree with what they were (doing) and to an extent, I separated myself from it, but I was part of management…. All of them were coming to me to deal with it, the Filipinos, and the Angolans and the South African... (Charles)

Charles highlights how he might still feel anger, but is able to be tolerant of others, able to see his own bias, and to open to multiple perspectives:

[S]ometimes I find it offensive, but I think oh he didn't mean it. You become more tolerant…. Before you would be judging the guy.… Now it is let's think about it. Did he mean what he said or is it his English? (Charles)

Alice, a psychologist, described the shift in her feelings when dealing with patients from low socio-economic backgrounds:

> *[T]o be able to compare in a way that enables you to show more compassion for somebody else because you are so much more advantaged…maybe a spin-off of the whole mindfulness thing is, the shift from guilt to gratitude. You know the sense of feeling so guilty about what I have, and what I have access to, and guilt because the people that I am seeing in our office, they don't have that. But being able to remove that all in the moment and to see a person and be part of the whole socio-economic baggage being brought into the room.* (Alice)

These comments are in keeping with research by Lueke and Gibson (2015) where a 10-minute practice resulted in less implicit bias based on race and age in an implicit association's task and decreases in linguistic intergroup bias. The aspects of listening without judgment and feeling empathy might allow participants to navigate difference. Berila (2016) argues for the use of mindfulness practice in thoughtful ways in university classrooms to deal with diversity and oppression. Although diversity and culture were not a focus, this study highlights some potential to provide another way to impact such issues in the workplace.

7.3.2 Enhancing empathy and connection

In the second sub-theme of relationality, there were examples of increased empathy, defined by Holt, Marques, Hu, and Wood (2017) as *"compassion for attunement to others' emotions and circumstances"* (p. 2). Islam (2013) refers to the human side of management, suggesting that empirical research might look at why it has been so easy to forget that the workplace is a place of social meaning, and how we can stay aware of our social bonds at work. Participant experiences resonate with the suggestion by Good et al. (2015) that *"mindfulness leads to…other-orientation"* (p. 128), and the capacity to experience life in a less self-referential manner. Current neuro-scientific understandings of interpersonal neurobiology reflect the capacities of empathy and social connection in brain development; in the human experience individual neural networks are wired to interact with each other (Tweedy, 2017). The impact on individuals practising mindfulness might be seen as the next wave of growth in the workplace, allowing for employees to be seen for the fullness of their humanity, as described by Frances:

> *[I]t is almost like a human evolutionary process where life is longing for people to turn towards themselves and each other with compassion, with presence, with being in the*

present moment and relaxing and experiencing a fuller whole version of themselves and there is a huge need for that. (Frances)

Participants provided many examples of enhanced social bonds through empathy and connection.

Megan describes difficult conversations with her cancer patients, compassionately noticing feeling and responding to their pain and anxiety:

[I] can just be there, and breathe, and acknowledge their emotion whereas previously it was hard to do that. But now with mindfulness, you are obviously mindful of others emotions as well. (Megan)

Yash describes the experience of sensing interconnection. Connecting with people as their roles and stereotypes at work can be a barrier to empathy. Here Yash is able to act from a much wider sense of what it means to relate to a clerk at work. The moment of pause and ability to consider her situation with empathy is evident:

[T]his clerk walks in and she almost like interrupts me when I am in an important conversation, and she comes in there with this young girl next to her, and the immediate response is to say to her 'listen please don't disturb me, I am very busy'. And then you quickly connect with her and you realise the anxiety and tension on her face, and you see the connections because she is there with her daughter that has been hurt with a stone in her eye. And I look at her and immediately in that moment I realised that she is an epileptic and is quite brittle…you realise that she is also going through a very difficult divorce and having issues with the management and you kind of see all the connections. (With) the practice of mindfulness and you see the connection of all things, relating to her with compassion. (Yash)

Yash's approach reflects an ethical stance, or way of being, which emphasises being able to understand reasons beyond one's own interpretations and valuing an attitude of care at work. This kind of relationality includes other things that he knows about his employee, drawing on a larger arc of the relationship, beyond work boundaries.

Thando explains how he experiences empathy and connection. It is evident he is now aware of a way of being that allows him to connect in a different way:

[I]t allows you to connect with the individuals and somehow, they feel it, even though you are not saying it, but they feel it, that you are connected, you are interested, you are there, you are not just doing what you are supposed to do. You are present. (Thando)

Lucia, in dealing with students in an academic institution, reports being more able to discern the needs and situations of others. Although she feels she practices tolerance more than compassion, there is a sense that she is able to sensitively understand those she is dealing with:

[M]indfulness has just helped me be more aware of other people and their journeys and their stories that I might not know, but that I need to know that maybe there is a reason why their behaviour is as it is…it is more about just being tolerant of another person without me necessarily having to know the story… (Lucia)

Participants thus find a deeper capacity to attune to others, and to be aware of their histories with sensitivity. Kanov et al. (2004) refer to the three processes of compassion, noticing, feeling and responding, which can be explored to meet suffering both on an individual level and collectively in an organisation. These three levels are evident in participants' reflections. For example, Herman in his increased use of mindfulness notices his communication style is not to listen. Through noticing, feeling and responding (Kanov et al., 2004) he is now aware of his pattern of dominating conversation. In his new approach, a deeper appreciation of the other is evident:

[I] practice it when I am within my work, when I go to meetings, when I have got conflict situation…it has helped me to…contribute more, understand other people more.… Sometimes I find myself in meetings when I think I really know a lot and I want to take over the show, and I actually realised that. I will keep quiet and listen and really try to understand the people. (Herman)

Evan described compassion, noticing, feeling and responding. He displays how slowing down to empathise, even briefly in an embodied way, allows for calm, a domino effect that can be felt by others:

[T]he process of saying to someone 'okay I see you stressed and you are rushing a little bit, lets breathe and slow down, it's okay, hold on', and actually physically showing that I have slowed down, defining the problem, unpacking it, understanding it as a sequence

of events we can fix, and then having practical steps…a quick 2 to 3 minutes, and you calm that energy… (Evan)

Whilst Evan's example reflects the impact of presence on another's stress levels, the capacity to feel empathetic can also result in an ability to see the positive in what others are doing. In the stress of work-life, expressing emotion and praising others might be forgotten. Naomi describes a shift:

[M]y own experience and work-life to date has been in the same kind of environments where people don't really express a lot of emotion or even praise. I think I am becoming more aware of just how something, saying 'okay well done, you got all your targets' or whatever, that means something to people. (Naomi)

Whilst I have explored the downside of more sensitivity and vulnerability at work, in some cases being able to be more vulnerable and open with others can enhance connection as Richard illustrates;

[S]he said, I never knew you had this personality! You know because I was talking more, I was letting people know, 'it's okay to feel sad and all of these things.' … Here, I go and stand in people's workspace, and chat a little bit. (Richard)

The sense of relationality might move beyond the "other" and can extend to the work itself. Below, Yash describes how mindfulness impacted doing quality control in the hospital, allowing him to feel part of a greater whole:

[S]o with the department at the moment, there are a number of targets that we measure, so quality control comes under a broad heading called clinical governance, and so it can very easily be seen as an 'us' and a 'them'. So, people working on the ground, and management, this is what management wants…mindfulness actually gets you to start pausing, and to really pay attention to what you are doing.…you can measure the number of babies that have had their first dose of immunisation, vs. the ones that are fully immunised. And you can look at it as a very superficial target that you are measuring but if you really pause, and you pay attention, you see the connectedness of everything. (Yash)

Developing compassion and empathy was not always easy. There were some outlier comments reflecting how mindfulness practice is not always embodied by participants. Brett comments about one of his co-participants:

> *[I] bumped into somebody else who was on the course, she said 'how was the course for you?' She said, 'with me I find that it has helped me to engage with people more and to really listen to what they have to say, okay nice to see you, bye'! Which showed me that she didn't listen to me at all, and that she has a very warped perception of what the course has done for her!* (Brett)

In Janice's case, she finds herself struggling to match her intention to be compassionate as she is always in a hurry:

> *[I] am much more aware of when I get annoyed, I can feel irritation building up, I like to think I am a little bit better about acting out that irritation, I am not so sure about that…that intention that I set in the morning to hold people more compassionately, it doesn't yet translate.*. (Janice)

The cultural practices and beliefs in the workplace may sometimes neglect to recognise people as human beings beyond their productive functioning (Islam, 2013). Karnes (2009) suggests that areas of social skills and empathy are under-trained and underdeveloped in organisations, and that employers willing to give employees what they need are more likely to be successful and will also be doing the right thing. Stephens, Heaphy, and Dutton (2012) describe how high-quality connections can have lasting effects on individuals and organisations and characterise them with three subjective experiences; feelings of vitality and aliveness, enhanced positive regard and felt mutuality. Holt et al. (2017) argue that integrity and empathy are a *"critical duo in a leader's behavioural arsenal"* (p. 14) and that empathy can and should be taught, particularly in business school contexts. My study reflects that an orientation towards empathy and connection at work can be cultivated through mindfulness practice.

7.3.3 Management of conflict

Increased compassion, empathy, and management of diversity feeds into the third theme of management of conflict, where participants were able to use the practice to avoid potential conflict and disharmony. A foundation to this might be the ability to meet discomfort in an embodied way. By being able to notice difficult emotions, Glen can be more active in managing conflict:

> *[Y]ou can look at yourself and say 'how am I feeling today? I'm feeling quite stressed, I am pretty tired, okay maybe I need to try and sort of avoid a situation today because I am*

tired'. That may sort of (avoid) …conflict…let me be aware of that going into this meeting… (Glen)

[I] think the mindfulness can allow you to be open about how you are feeling to yourself and be more open to others, and say, okay, Fred is having a bad week today, okay. No problem. I have noticed that. (Glen)

In Justin's description, it is evident that he is applying various new capacities, being able to take a pause, to notice the wandering mind:

[I]n the conflict situation and particularly in managing my own response if there is somebody saying something which I want to jump down their throat, again, various different practices learnings come into play. But that sense of 'just breathe, I don't have to respond right now, there is plenty of time' and just listen. And listening to it, and then also being able to, or trying to, noticing my story that comes and just letting it go and making space for another story, which might be the other person's story. (Justin)

Identifying his *"story"* allows Justin to respond in less defensive ways. Mindfulness practice was used informally, as in the case of Glen and Justin, to avoid or manage conflict. It was also utilised formally. Janine described deliberately using loving-kindness practice to deal with a difficult relationship with one of her university students:

[I] was still very angry, that was the main emotion and that was stopping me from relating to my students. If it was a student that was grating, I would very quickly start shouting at them and that is not me, because I am a totally loving person. I really implemented the loving-kindness. One particular person, I had a lot of difficulty with and I sent a lot of loving-kindness to him and I was actually able to deal with him in a lovely open way.… I heard him talking about me… 'I thought she was going to be really scary and shout at us, and she has been so lovely and so caring.' (Janine)

Thando demonstrated the capacity to remain productive, equanimous and compassionate with a manager who was attacking him and overloading him with work. His resilience in his capacity to be aware, to evaluate, and to see the situation in a positive way is evident here:

[H]is mission was to frustrate me…I remained calm, and addressed the issues, and the workload that he would give to me. I would come back the following morning, deliver the results, and people would come to me and say, 'how do you manage at the end of the day

> *because if I was in your position by now, I would have cracked'. Then I explain to them, 'it is how I look at it'. Because I ask myself a question, first of all, 'is it about me? Maybe I am the problem?'… I want to put myself in his shoes, and say, 'maybe there is something that makes him behave that way?'* (Thando)

As suggested by Brown et al. (2008), mindfulness helps to reduce identity investment and quiet the ego, and under threat, Thando is still able to respond with empathy and resilience. Similarly, Charles demonstrates resilience and an easing of self-identification in dealing with a difficult and explosive client:

> *[B]efore I would have dealt with it emotionally. By not getting emotional, not getting argumentative, my guys said, 'you are doing it tactfully'. There was a guy who always gets his way and gets it right. Nico always had a tiff with all of management because he was very abrasive. The way I dealt with Nico was to say 'yes, Nico I apologise'. I let him blow off steam and I would say what can I do to improve it? Nico wrote an email to top management to say how great the service was. I didn't do anything differently, but I just was present to him, that's it. I got the management award for customer management.* (Charles)

The shift from ego-identity was also found in the ability to handle criticism. Jack illustrated how he was able to react differently to tough accusations thrown his way while he was developing a new project for the psychiatric hospital where he worked. He describes his new-found way of dealing with criticism. His ability to dis-identify from his own story and to notice the pain of the other is again palpable. He chooses to respond compassionately:

> *[M]y most sensitive thing is when you are putting everything into something…trying to help, and it gets thrown in your face. You get accused of being on a power trip. Wherein the past I used to react with hurt and anger, I think now I am much more able to see where that is coming from and see why and not to take it personally.… It's not just that it doesn't hurt…you recognise your own growth, I am bigger than this…* (Jack)

Although it might seem that Charles, Jack and Thando adopted a more passive approach, one can argue that they were rather dealing with the situation with care and sensitivity and their tone is one of increased self-agency. They are able to see a larger picture and to not be caught up in their own story, highlighting how mindfulness does not eliminate identity, but rather allows its functions to be channelled more skilfully (Brown et al., 2008). In each case their

response was compassionate and held the larger context of work in mind. This is conscious management of conflict as opposed to passivity and acceptance. Justin described a belief in the potential of mindfulness to shift from a culture of ego and blame:

> *[I] have often thought, that people being exposed to an MBSR type of programme would inevitably change the way that people relate to each other…there is often a sense that people may be made to feel stupid, or a blaming culture and I kind of imagine somehow that would change*. (Justin)

In the case of dealing with conflict, Jack explicitly described how he talked to his staff about mindfulness:

> *[I] have felt a need to say, 'this doesn't mean to say we are accepting the bad things that are happening, you know' and everyone just laughs, 'of course not, don't be stupid'. People understand that just because you can now make peace with what is going, it doesn't mean you just accept it. And in fact, it is quite the opposite, the ability to see what is wrong and more effectively deal with it. It gives you this wisdom, it's not all this big enemy now…* (Jack)

Jack highlights the awareness that mindfulness might open people up to seeing more of what was going on in the organisation (struggles in treatment of aggressive patients). This increased awareness allows for more options.

Dealing with conflict more mindfully did not always mean a suppression of emotion, it also meant that participants had more choice in how they expressed anger. Evan and Glen reflect on this:

> *[S]o mindfulness is a trigger for me to use a whole bunch of processes and tools…it's not always easy to diffuse the situation, by being soft-spoken, you actually have to step up and take control of the situation.… You need to take assertive action and you are mindful enough to do that.* (Evan)

> *[I]t's just about being aware…we try and get them to stop doing it in a way that is going to work. That might even be shouting at them but that is a conscious decision of shouting at them as opposed to a react.* (Glen)

Bolino and Grant (2016) name a shadow side of pro-social behaviour as leniency. For some participants, there was a concern that a more compassionate environment might be in contradiction with a competitive, high-performing one. Glen and Brendon, below, reflect an understanding of a shadow side. They did not see increased compassion as passivity or acceptance of situations, but rather as a complex balance between compassion and performance:

> *[I] am not saying you shouldn't allow people more latitude, but you know it doesn't mean you have to compromise on your standards, it doesn't mean you have to permit behaviour that is unacceptable to you, it is more about understanding that behaviour…* (Glen)

> *[S]ometimes you need to say 'this needs to be done by Wednesday at five-o-clock and it needs to be done well', in a gentle way. That's the complexity of it*. (Brendon)

A foundation to shift competitiveness and conflict might be the capacity to catch limiting beliefs about resources. In his more inclusive approach to work, Glen uses his capacity for multiple perspectives and openness to possibility:

> *[S]ometimes you get into a situation where you are almost fighting with someone to get your share or resources to get your job done and they are fighting their resources to get their job done and that can escalate to kind of a fight…so just take a deep breath and calm down for a second and try still get the resources you need, but do so in a way that is not in opposition. You try and find a solution that works for both and try to understand their perspective.… Instead of becoming a contest, it becomes a co-operative approach to what you can each achieve*. (Glen)

In managing conflict, participants' experiences resonate with results from fMRI studies where even short mindfulness interventions can impact brain regions associated with emotional processing (amygdala and parahippocampal gyrus) allowing participants to better regulate their emotions in the face of negative experiences (Lutz et al., 2014). Participant reflections are also consistent with research that indicates mindfulness buffers the effect of injustice on rumination and negative emotions and reduces retaliation (Long & Christian, 2015). They also highlight the potential of mindfulness in reducing organisational conflict (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Buddhist practices cultivate four qualities of the heart, namely loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, which can result in new ways of relating. Participants words and actions reflect the qualities of loving-kindness, compassion and equanimity. There was less

evidence of sympathetic joy (joy for the good fortune of others, which is unadulterated by self-interest), perhaps a more difficult quality to cultivate in competitive workspaces. However, there was mention of changes in their relationship with competitiveness.

This section has explored the impact of mindfulness on relationality at work and shown how participants experience new ways of **dealing with diversity, conflict** and **enhancing empathy and connection.** This study resonates with others that show that mindfulness can lead to an enhanced sense of other, and with studies that show that work relationships can promote employee flourishing (Colbert, Bono, & Purvanova, 2015).

I have shown how using the four capacities turn towards pleasant and unpleasant experiences, participants were more aware and developed internal capacities of **resilience, sense of self** and **multiple perspectives/possibility**. With these increased inner resources, participants reflected on workplace transformations in the areas of **productivity, power** and **relationality.**

Mindfulness might provide an antidote in the workplace to the three poisons of greed (overworking), hatred (competitive and aggressive workplaces) and delusion (abuse of power). **Hatred** is counterbalanced by capacity for **relationality**, and **enhanced management of conflict, diversity and increased empathy. Greed** is counterbalanced by **values, efficacy and boundaries**. P**ower** is balanced by **agency and compassionate awareness.**

I will now highlight the experiences and challenges of some participants in bringing a more mindful approach into organisations.

7.4 Some profiles of mindful leaders/managers

Mindfulness can open participants up to new possibilities. I will highlight examples of participants who embraced the practice of mindfulness into their work-life in a powerful way. These profiles provide some insight into the kinds of transformation and the struggles that can occur for mindful leaders and managers. They also illustrate the unique ways in which they share formal and informal practice into their work contexts. These narratives also highlight the uniqueness of each work context in its receptivity and in the ways in which mindfulness might be received.

Shirley, a manager, instead of working harder, brought the practice into her workplace in an unusual way, and not through the formal practices that she was taught on the EMBA programme. Instead of teaching her staff meditation (although she did explain meditation to

them), she approached them with a new suggestion, to take time-out together every day. The change in paradigm and mindset, towards a state of being and connection, is of interest here.

> *[W]e just sat, I said 'we can talk, we can share, we can keep quiet, but half an hour, no phones, no computers', and they were worried because we had to meet a target per hour. Take half an hour out, and that was hard for some because they were thinking you know I am not going to meet my target. And I would say 'I am the person who sets those targets and we are going to take this time'. And we sat every morning, …we just sat and we spoke about arbitrary things, 'how are your kids?' 'What are you eating today?'… plain nothing. If you didn't want to talk you didn't have to. But if somebody spoke to you, you had to look at the person.* (Shirley)

A few employees wanted to know more about meditation, so she shared a phone app with them. In addition to a daily meeting where they would just be quiet or connect with each other, she insisted on them taking time out every day for lunch:

> *[T]hey had to lock their phones in the drawer, …go to the Gardens, and sit there for half an hour and come back to tell me what squirrels, what they saw, that type of thing…it did wonders for their productivity.… I felt that what we achieved as a team was down to them eventually thinking 'okay, it's okay to go for lunch'.* (Shirley)

I asked Shirley how she felt that translated into her work environment:

> *[I] think that is a keyword they became happy. Because even though I think to myself I was a beautiful manager, I realised, and it also gave them the courage…. When I thought I was this open, fantastic manager, it gave them the courage to speak to me.* (Shirley)

Interestingly, despite these employees always reaching their targets, the senior management was not amenable to what Shirley was implementing in her team. As she explained, …they called it: *"fluffy, wuffy, hogwash"*. The resultant increase in productivity left management perplexed, and with the onset of new management, they saw fit to remove her changes, returning staff to old ways of working.

Shirley's example highlights the effort and courage needed to implement such changes, and the resultant resistance when others in managerial positions are not on board. In terms of network centrality Mehra, Kilduff & Brass (2001) encourage examination of the ways in which different types of people forge different patterns of social ties in the workplace. Network structure and

personality may impact how different people might use d share mindfulness with others at work. Despite her position in middle management issues of hierarchy and power come into play here:

> *[T]wo new guys were very negative towards it. They broke the sessions up, that type of thing…and this main guy stopped everything and said he won't have it in the business. He doesn't believe it, and so he stopped everything…as senior management he just said 'there is no place for it in businesses'. And because I was a staunch believer, he hammered me. He would stand up in front of the exec team and say, 'Shirley, would you like to meditate before we start' and things like that. And where I would have given him a mouthful I would say 'thanks but you carry on'. But it was tough.* (Shirley)

Shirley eventually left the job and called the team to see how they were:

> *[A]nd I said where has all that pride gone, and she said it's tough, it's every man for himself now because they give you warnings and they dismiss you for the slightest reason.* (Shirley)

Charles also gave a clear example of how a culture of care could enhance productivity, challenging the judgment that kindness is "soft" and could lead to declines in productivity. Charles embraced the practices individually, without teaching his staff, but was present to them. He explained the tough dynamics at work and how by being mindful of his team they were able to perform and stay motivated:

> *[I] saw what was missing in management. And the people part was lacking. It was cutthroat. And in stepping back and performing mindfulness and just evaluating, I created a good professional bond with my guys, they trusted me. It came through. Guys from the other team couldn't pinpoint it.… Mentally and physically they were performing. We were a department inside of our section, and we made double the department's turnover. A small little section made twice the turnover. At the end of the day, the people were motivated, and I didn't have to stand behind them.* (Charles)

When asked how he thought mindfulness helped, Charles highlighted how when people are honoured and valued, they feel safe and work as a team. The enhanced capacity to value the other and to understand their sense of inter-connectedness is evident in his words:

> *[D]ifferent personalities want a pat on the back.… People were being fired with no job security. Understanding the person and what they need. The sense of belonging, trust,*

> *well-being. I created safety for my team and that inspired them. They said you create a barrier between us and them. I said there is no us and them.* (Charles)

As with Sharon, his seniors reacted:

> *[M]y boss started to see me as a threat. Because of my management and technical abilities.* (Charles)

Charles also expressed that he sometimes felt uncomfortable with his new-found mindfulness skills. He felt that he was using the practice to be manipulative, as he could see that increased connection resulted in performance:

> *[T]hat's why I said it felt selfish, cruel and manipulative sometimes but at the end of the day my team ran like clockwork. I could defend them. When they were wrong not. But otherwise I could say these are the facts and this is the way forward and we got what we needed.* (Charles)

Another example of bringing mindfulness into his workplace in a courageous way is Yash, the doctor, who works in Khayelitsha, a largely impoverished South African township. As an extremely busy doctor, his role was in management, training of doctors, seeing patients, attending meetings and dealing with quality issues. The ways in which mindfulness practice infused all aspects of his work is evident in his reflections. He described how most of his patients were unemployed with many psychosocial issues and the quadruple burden of disease:

> *[H]ere we have four spikes of diseases, there are the chronic diseases, diabetes, heart disease, a lot of interpersonal violence, gunshots and stabbings, man's inhumanity to man, and then TB/HIV which is another huge issue, and then also emerging conditions like diarrhoea in children, malnutrition.* (Yash)

This following vignette highlights how mindfulness training can transform a doctor's experience working under extremely complex and difficult clinic conditions, and the experiences of those around him, medical students, doctors, administrative staff and patients:

Yash described his shift over the past two years from feeling that he had to protect himself from what was going on at work. He made reference to using loving-kindness practice, a method of developing compassion (the Buddhist practice of metta) in an informal way, as part of that shift:

> *[T]he shift has been towards loving kindness and just accepting what is… it's been this creating a space of acceptance, attention and care, and the journey with ourselves, the metta practice that starts with ourselves and from there relating with patients, and from there relating to other staff, to students, and relating to management. We can often see it as them against us, but actually relating to them in a loving space.* (Yash)

Yash is able to use his position of power to bring and share these practices.

> *[O]ver the last few years I have moved away from almost an apologetic sharing of mindfulness to just saying 'this is what I do'. And if I am feeling a bit stressed in the past I would go to the loo or go to the toilet and do a mindful yoga stretch, but now I say, 'what the hell, you know, if it is benefitting me, it is benefiting everyone else'. So, I now go in front of the medical students and the doctors and say 'guys, this is it, let's just do some stretching together', and then we stretch, sometimes in the middle of the meeting*. (Yash)

He described how he felt it was important to teach this to his medical students on his own, without it being formally in their medical curriculum. He was inspired to bring mindfulness practice in his unique way as he taught third and sixth-year medical students:

> *[I] haven't waited for the university to start incorporating this into their formal curriculum but when you really do a consultation with a patient and you are listening and taking a history that is in itself an opportunity to listen mindfully and to listen meditatively and to really connect and to relate with the other person. So how can you separate meditation from listening so being with another individual? I do a communication tutorial for breaking bad news…at some point in the tutorial we break into stillness, you know just noticing their breath.* (Yash)

As opposed to teaching his students and interns long formal meditation practices he explained how he believed informal mindfulness practice was central to coping with day-to-day life in the clinic:

> *[Y]ou don't have time to sit for 20 minutes…so when you walk in the busyness of the clinic from where we meet in the casualty to walking through this very busy corridor. I would ask them to notice their thoughts, notice where their attention is going and bring it back to their feet.… So, the purpose of this is so that when you are sitting there with a*

patient, actually really being able to sit and to offer them your attention which is the greatest gift to really be there with them. (Yash)

Yash also elaborated on how he had integrated some formal practice into his management meetings. One can sense the relief in the response of his team as they engage in a different way, shifting usual paradigms of meetings at work:

[B]efore the meeting starts we just get a few people together, you know the secretary is taking notes, and the sister from the maternity unit and the manager of the HIV clinic, and we say, 'everybody stand up' and we stretch and we breathe and they appreciate it. They really, you know it usually ends with applause. They seem to love it. (Yash)

Yash also highlighted his belief in how this practice could shift workplaces such as his own to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a human being. The key to mindfulness practice boiled down to care and relating. In his response to noisy patients in the waiting room, he removes the de-humanising element of the workplace and he takes in the whole, reversing the role of bureaucratic reduction, and reframing his experience to empathetically include a sense of their history, and context:

[T]here would be times when I would go out and say to the patients 'would you please be quiet I am trying to listen to a heart'. So, the shift between resisting the noise and being frustrated with allowing it to be, and spontaneously just this arising of compassion.… They are queuing up from 5am in the morning and they sit for hours, and yes, they talk, and sometimes they talk a little bit loud, and it is like wow, they are having a conversation, perhaps entertaining themselves, sometimes loudly, but is okay and to relate to one's irritation. Actually, being able to relate to that with amazing compassion. (Yash)

As opposed to how many might be trained to function in South African clinics, Yash shares here that there is a need for self-care for health professionals:

[U]ltimately this is the heart of the practice, and whether you call it mindfulness or whether you call it medicine, it is really relating to all of us with, love, actually, really learning to relate to each other. So, this is where I see my journey at the moment, moving away from the technical details moving to how can we get the heart back into medicine…there is a profound need for the doctors and the nurses to take care of themselves. So, starting with compassion in their teams, in their communities, in their

homes and really, really just filling this well of compassion, of self-compassion and allowing this to flow into their work. (Yash)

Key to Yash's belief in the practice is his willingness to risk judgment from others, his understanding of interconnection and the value of slowing down:

[S]o what if they think it is crazy; there is this profound need in this world for coming back to our senses, slowing down, relating to each other and relating to the world; this beautiful blue sky, nature, the trees, yah, beautiful world, it's so beautiful we can all appreciate it. (Yash)

One's personal mindfulness practice can result in a creative response to conventional workplace systems and problems. In this final vignette, Jack, a psychiatrist working in a clinic with extremely difficult patients and socio-economic conditions, attributes his commitment to an hour-long mindfulness practice as inspiration for an innovative hospital programme that he created. His story highlights the potentiality for transformation through insight and inspiration derived from extended time in mindfulness practice. Following a burn-out at work, Jack built up his meditation practice over time from five minutes to 60 minutes a day. He attributed the development of the Lentegeur Spring Project at a Mental Hospital in Mitchells Plain on the Cape Flats in Cape Town to this daily practice. Feeling disillusioned with the mental healthcare system he established a project that re-integrates patients with their communities through green initiatives, which helps the patients find meaning through connection with the earth and the environment**.** This allows all patients to contribute food to their families and communities and engenders meaning and pride. His project was named a flagship of the provincial health department:

[I] am convinced now that everything I have managed to do in terms of responding creatively to my burnout at work…it's essentially about moving beyond the categorical and everything about the way psychiatry is being practised, the hospitals, the structures. It's all about removing people, putting them into boxes, categorising them, categorising the illness into categories, reducing it into a pill and so on, is absolutely the opposite of mindfulness. So I think the project was born out of that…I think that an unconscious product of the practice, was the project. (Jack)

Jack also described vividly how he uses mindfulness in all aspects of work, including work with his trainees, staff and severely psychologically distressed patients:

> *[I] can almost not think of an aspect of my work now that isn't infused with mindfulness. It seems like a no-brainer that you would want to teach any psychiatrist or psychologist.… I see people with severe schizophrenia, they have been through all the medication…the algorithm is probably exhausted by the time they get to me, and they are probably on all the medication.… We get them to observe their voices, and not react to them, to respond wisely, to accept that they are there.… Just very gently introducing other mindfulness practices.* (Jack)

In the following quote, Jack highlights how one person's presence might be felt as contagious and impact others around him, when the head of nursing, to whom he taught mindfulness, stopped reprimanding people at work:

> *[S]he did the mindfulness course…when it was my turn to be addressed, she said, 'every day working with you, every moment has been a learning curve because whatever you do, you bring us all into it, and we learn just by the way we are all brought into this place and involved in what is happening'.… When there is a problem, we have got to welcome it, we have got to open and see it and not react…and seeing, seeing from all perspectives and then, and always responding to that, in how can we most compassionately respond.* (Jack)

Jack went on to describe his capacity to pause and to notice as a change in his attitude and approach to work:

> *[L]earning to pause, learning to make space around issues and getting people to learn and see. I mean for me that is the other miracle, this, you don't have to do anything, you just have to see…it's such a departure from my own sort of Calvinist upbringing sort of orientation which was you beat things into submission.* (Jack)

His Spring Programme brought principles of compassion and interconnection to a difficult work environment. As with Shirley, the changes he brought into his workplace were met with resistance. In his Spring Programme, he experienced the mistrust of participants due to his race and position of power. Despite their criticism, he was able to continue with the programme:

> *[I] am a White man working at Lentegeur, a previously disadvantaged psychiatric hospital that is just the epitome of the rejected, and particularly in that community. The rejection has been so internalised there is almost a self-hatred, a self-othering that goes*

on. And so any, certainly a bright idea coming from a White guy, it is met with a huge amount of distrust and suspicion and at times it has been sabotaged. At times, I think hope is so dangerous, you know there is a history of just hope having been shattered so many times that it is something that people are really frightened of. And somewhere there is this thing of 'I am not going to participate, it's too dangerous, too risky'…and I have felt a few knives in the back. And when you are having sleepless nights having put so much into something, your intended recipient you know, the one you want to bestow these gifts on, is accusing you of horrible things and finding ways to undermine everything. It takes a bit of swallowing. (Jack)

Jack was able to continue with his plans to implement his programme, demonstrating resilience, a sense of agency and capacity to manage negative commentary from others. Such capacities are critical when implementing innovative changes.

7.5 Conclusion: Bringing mindfulness to the workplace

The qualities that all four participants demonstrate as Mindful leaders are; embracing the practice with passion, willingness to risk vulnerability and the challenge of bringing mindfulness to work, and a capacity to use their position of power in ways that were transformative for others. Dweck's (2017) notion of a growth mindset where leaders and managers are open to learning and challenge might be key here. These participants' stories are congruent with studies that show that mindfulness training can increase awareness of self and others, and also enhance group task performance and possibly increased group cohesion (Cleirigh & Greaney, 2014). Their experiences support the hypothesis by Glomb et al. (2011) that mindful leaders might encourage environments that enhance trust and openness to new perspectives.

Interestingly, Jack, Yash, and Shirley and Charles all had different levels of mindfulness training and practice. Whilst Jack had engaged with a mindfulness training programme for health professionals, Yash and Charles had done an 8-week mindfulness programme, and Shirley had done a Mindful Leadership Programme at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business. Yash had been practising mindfulness for the longest period (approximately 12 years).

At the same time, it also emphasises the difficulty of bringing the practices into spaces where they are not trusted or misunderstood, or even ridiculed. Participants are not always successful

in bringing mindfulness to the fore at work, as Shirley experienced. As Lyddy and Good (2017) comment, *"Evidence increasingly suggests that mindfulness can benefit individuals at work without first considering how being mindful fits into organisations oriented toward continuous activity"* (p. 1).

Whilst mindfulness allows for increased levels of connection and can lead to an increase in productivity, there are challenges. Despite the value of encouraging employees to initiate change, many managers engage in actions that indicate a resistance to employee voice in the workplace, particularly when that voice highlights their low self-efficacy (Fast et al., 2014). Cangemi and Miller (2007) refer to the fear-based hierarchies that suppress creativity and innovation.

These examples show that mindfulness provides ways of managing complexity and being in the workplace. At the same time, without the support of an environment that is open to these new ways of being, participants introducing these changes can meet some degree of challenge and resistance. Dutton & Ashford (2013) explain how issue-sellers who believe they are credible in the eyes of upper management are more likely to promote their issues than those who do not see themselves in this way. The position and degree of power held by those promoting mindfulness in their workplace might be key here, for example Yash's position in his organisation may have allowed him more leeway to experiment with mindfulness than Shirley.

Good et al. (2015) ask whether a more caring workplace might interfere with decisions that can maximise profit. At the same time, they hypothesise that team functioning might be impacted by mindfulness, and result in high-quality relationships, increased resilience in the face of problems, and an openness to new ideas. Walsh (2017) questions *"how will companies respond if practising 'caring mindfulness' affects their bottom line?"* (p. 10). Clearly, some work environments rely on ego-driven success and some participants questioned the use of mindfulness training there. Participant Justin described the conflict of bringing mindfulness into a financial management organisation where success is valued:

> *[T]he investment managers, the fund managers, the people who make investment decisions, the people who essentially back themselves to be right most of the time. If you are backing yourself to be right most of the time and you start to inquire into the mystery here, there is a conflict. I would imagine that if a fund manager came into a training like*

this and got it, they would start to doubt what they are doing, why they are doing it, their capacity to do it… (Justin)

Frances believed it might be important for mindfulness teachers in the organisational space to "*tread a little carefully"* around the ego of the organisation, highlighting the needs for an organisational growth mindset (Dweck 2017).

…the more individuals that do this potentially there is like a silent revolution, there will be more and more pushback at an organisational level, in a way that is ultimately good. If you imagine the organisation as a huge big ego, and we go in, we go and threaten the ego, we sow seeds potentially that are ultimately going to challenge the ego/organisation. (Frances)

With a growth mind-set there is a belief in growth. This can be seen in the capacity to acknowledge imperfections, see challenges as opportunities, be open to learning, value the process instead of the outcome, and manage criticism positively. These were all visible in Yash, Shirley, Clint and Jack.

Participants provided some interesting responses to the critiques of mindfulness at work. The majority felt that despite the risks and ethical concerns of bringing some practices into the workplace, it would be valuable to do so. One participant summed up the issue around integrity as: *"I can imagine some people might use it in ways that aren't ethical, but it has such a lot of peace and good energy…when you are vindictive, I don't think you will be doing mindfulness."* At the same time, employees might feel a loss of power if forced to "be mindful". Here, Brendon highlights the importance of personal choice in this regard:

[A]s I said my own journey has been quite unsettling. Some people might not be open to it, you might end up with a divide, and you might end up with the mindful doctor, the non-mindful doctor. I think that could be a negative, I don't think one is necessarily right or wrong. I think people must make their choices, and I wouldn't impose it on an organisation. I wouldn't impose it on people, I think it is very, very much a personal choice. (Brendon)

Participants were asked whether such practices should be used in the organisational space. While they offered many suggestions and provisos, there was a consensus. All 53 participants felt that mindfulness should be taught in organisations. Some were clear that this could help organisations to transform in some way, or at the very least to develop resilience in the face of

shadow material. For some, the practice offered individual resilience, and for others, the impact was believed to extend beyond the individual, with potential to increase resilience for the whole system. Sascha and Janice felt the kindness inherent in the practice would help individuals to manage organisational life:

> *[I]t's an alertness that actually does signal care…and an ability to manage oneself in that with a kind of a calm wisdom…that is the ideal and even a little bit of that would help enormously.* (Sascha)

> *[L]et's face it, most of the suffering in the world is mostly caused by human unkindness in some form…it's almost like a psychic protection if people are able to be in the world and be less vulnerable in the world.… You certainly can't stop the nasty people and as we know we certainly can't stop all the terrible things that happen, so maybe it's more about just giving everybody a sense of psychic protection or readiness.* (Janice)

Participants reflected on the power of learning to be at work in a different way and the value of stopping:

> *[I]t would be incredibly powerful, just being silent together for 30 minutes once a week. Because the way they speak to each other, the way they disrespect one another, the language is foul.… I think if you could get a toxic work environment to be silent, even just once a month, together, in harmony, with a positive message, it would make a huge difference.* (Jo-Anne)

> *[I]t's almost like a shock absorber…this person is just kind of stressed or worried or scared, don't take it personally…dissipate it, rather than letting it transmit through the system and create instability.* (Glen)

Most participants did not speak about the connections of mindfulness to Buddhist roots. A few had gone further in their explorations and had become interested in Buddhism. Others had found that once they had moved past their initial judgments of the origins of the practice they were surprised at the benefits. Interestingly, the Buddhist understandings of the root causes of suffering are greed, hatred and delusion map onto the themes of these findings: greed (excessive productivity), hatred (competitive and aggressive workplace behaviours) and delusion (use and abuse of power at work). I will elaborate on this in chapter 8.

In the next chapter, I look at the theoretical and pedagogical contributions of mindfulness. I explore a Model of Mindfulness, Figures 17 and 18, which provides the full description of the individual capacities developed through mindfulness practice and how they might bring awareness to the roots of suffering in the workplace and moving towards a transformation of our experience of work.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Bringing it all together: theoretical and pedagogical contributions

This study's unique contribution is a preliminary understanding of how participants, having completed mindfulness training outside of the workplace, apply, understand and are impacted by mindfulness practice. This study provides a more nuanced understanding of the impact, understandings and applications of such practices at work using the voices of participants who have been through FG mindfulness training, outside of the work context. In answer to the research question, "how do participants who have learnt the practices outside of the workplace apply and experience mindfulness at work?" this study closes some gaps as follows:

- Examines ways in which participants experience, apply and understand formal and informal practice at work. It explores the barriers and facilitators to formal practice and the ways in which participants share their formal and informal practice at work;

- Presents an inductive model that highlights the potential of the mindful individual to transform their work world in the domains of productivity, relationality and power. An inductive model highlights the resources and capacities built through practice. The model considers capacities developed as antidotes to the three Buddhist poisons of greed, hatred and delusion. This provides a response to those who are concerned that mindfulness practice in the workplace might be diluted or misappropriated;

- Highlights the role and contribution of mindfulness practice to POS, particularly looking at equanimity, and provides recommendations for training based on participant experiences.

In this chapter I identify the theoretical and pedagogical contributions made by this study. I reflect on the limitations of the study, make suggestions for future research, and conclude with further discussion.

8.1 A theoretical model of transformative capacities of mindfulness in the workplace

The current research illustrates how participants in mindfulness programmes are impacted beyond well-being and symptom reduction in the workspace. Using the voices of participants of programmes outside of the workplace, an inductive model of the transformative capacities of mindfulness in the workplace was developed. This study supports the idea that mindfulness training could add a valuable resource to current leadership models **(described in Section 2.6)**

which highlight the importance of self-awareness and presence, such as Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) Resonant Leadership; Kofman's (2012) Conscious Business; Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky's (2009) Adaptive Leadership; Theory U (Senge et al., 2004); and McKinsey's Centred Leadership (Barsh & Lavoie, 2014). These models do not use formal meditation practices and could be enhanced with the use of these practices.

Beyond my phenomenological aspirations as a methodological approach, a causal system became apparent from the data. Although IPA was my initial platform, the findings allowed development of a model (Figures 17 and 18) derived from the voices of participants. I describe the model theoretically and explain its application visually. In so doing, I present key capacities that develop in the workplace, as a result of mindfulness practice. I also highlight how it compares with other models developed.

Figure 17, below, highlights the capacities of mindfulness training on an individual level that can impact both the individual and the workspace. The model highlights how present moment awareness is enhanced through formal and informal practice. Four capacities of mindfulness are developed, namely meta-cognition, embodiment, kindness and equanimity. These four capacities translate into the ability to meet what is in the moment more fully, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Over time, this ability impacts participants on an individual level by enhancing resilience, sense of self, (authenticity, self-acceptance and self-confidence) and openness to multiple perspectives and possibility. These internal changes are transformative in the workspace by enhancing awareness in the areas of productivity, power dynamics and relationality.

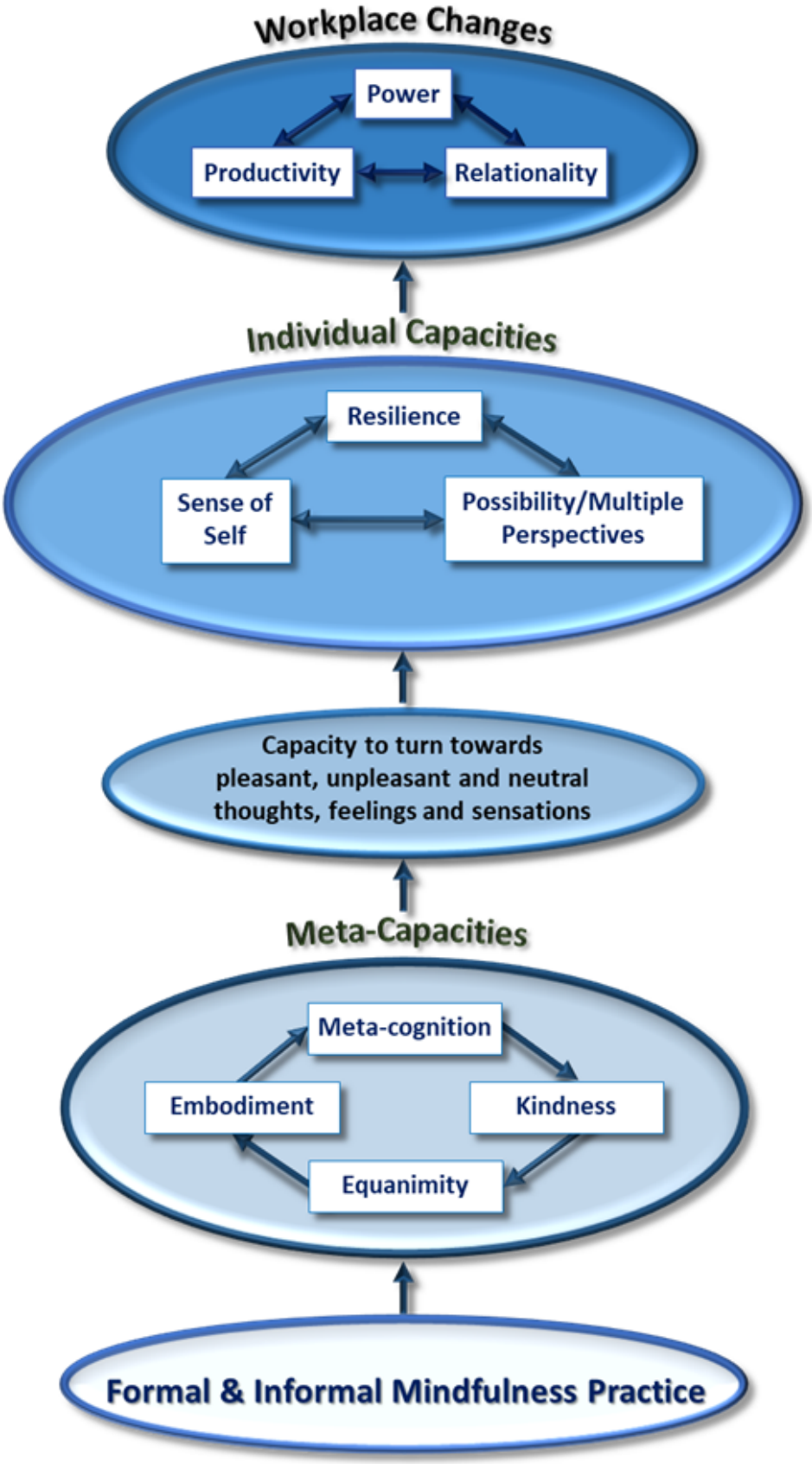

Figure 17: Transformative Capacities of Mindfulness Training in the Workplace

8.1.1 A visual knowledge structure showing the potential application and impact of mindfulness training for individuals in the workplace

Placing the final description of my model, Figure 18, in a visual knowledge structure, I use the metaphor of the tree to describe the potentiality of mindfulness training, and how the individual resources and capacities developed might be a key to addressing the unwholesome motivations known as the three poisons named by the Buddha of greed, hatred and delusion. (Loy, 2007, p. 20). This model translates the theory into a metaphorical narrative, highlighting the applicability of mindfulness for transformation in the workplace. Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011, p. 13) comment that,

> *The abstraction of mindfulness from its context within a broad range of Buddhist meditative practices might seem like an appropriation and distortion of traditional Buddhism that loses sight of the Buddhist goal of rooting out greed, hatred and delusion. From a different Buddhist perspective, it might seem to be an example of 'skill in means' (upa ̄ya-kau ́salya): it provides a way of giving beings the opportunity to make a first and important initial step on the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.*

The authors argue that if MBSR had used Buddhist language and the framework of the Eightfold Noble Path and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness it might have prevented these interventions from entering healthcare. The use of the model in Figure 18 might be a way of languaging an understanding of how mindfulness can help those in the workplace move in a direction of reduction of suffering.

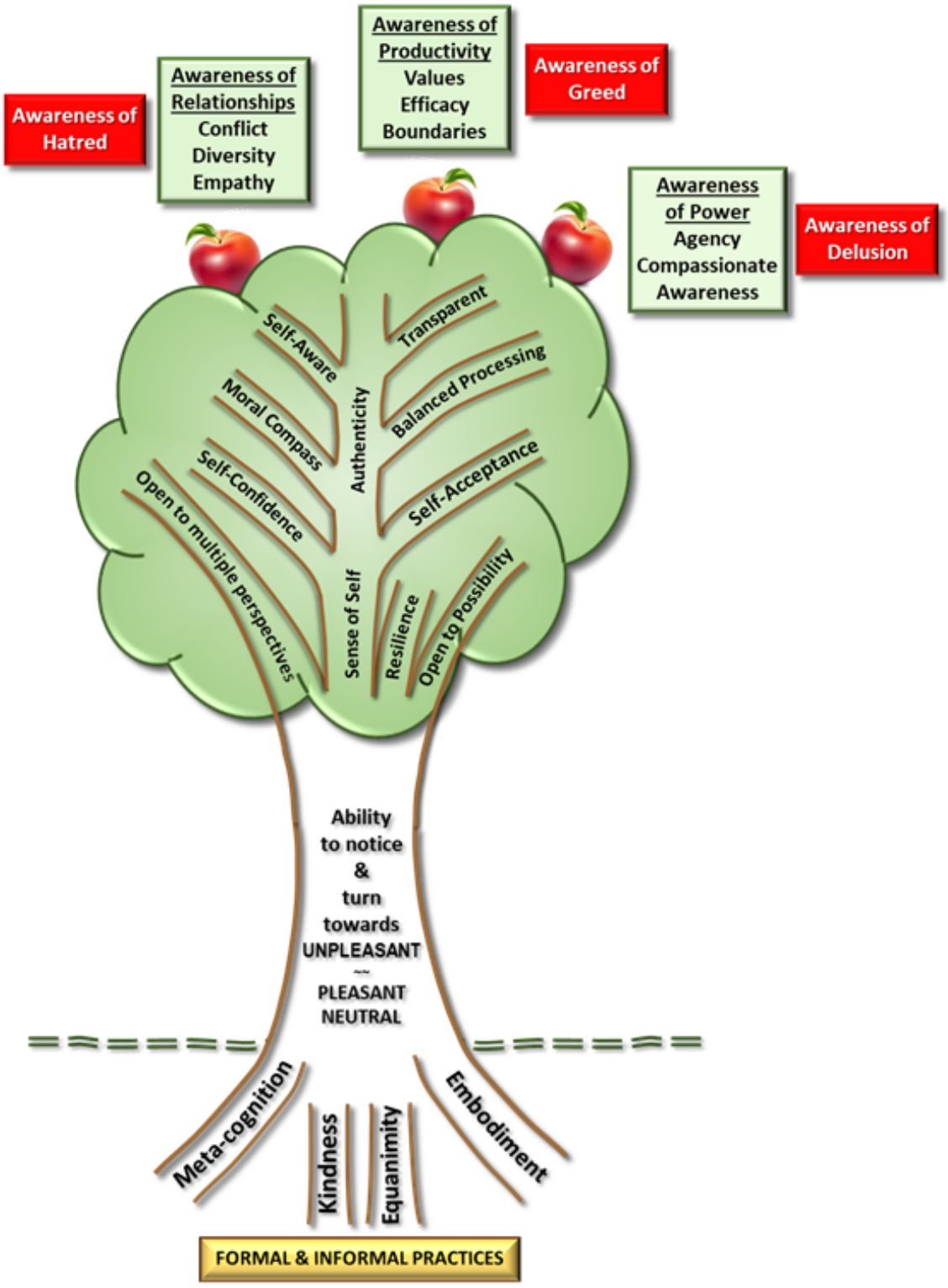

Figure 18: Transforming the Three Poisons: Potentiality of Mindfulness for Individual and Organisational Transformation

From the soil of formal and informal mindfulness practice develop roots that allow the tree to stay steady, namely meta-cognition, equanimity, embodiment and kindness. These roots then grow a strong trunk of being able to notice and be present to pleasant, unpleasant and neutral moments. Over time, the branches of relationship to self (authenticity, confidence and self-

evaluation), resilience and multiple perspectives can grow and strengthen. Various sub-branches can grow too; authenticity comprises of the capacity to be self-aware, transparent and locate a moral compass. One tree in the forest over time might result in some impact. Many mindful trees in the forest might begin to change the climate. As the practice of mindfulness gains in popularity and individuals bring these practices to work, it might result in some interesting fruits (represented in Figure 18) in our understanding of work. The transformation in the areas of productivity, power and relationality, could be tied in with the Buddhist concept of three poisons; greed (excessive productivity), hatred (competitive and aggressive workplace behaviours) and delusion (use and abuse of power at work). The awareness that mindfulness brings to these poisons provides an antidote. For example, the poison of **hatred** is counterbalanced by capacity for **relationality**, and **enhanced management of conflict, diversity and increased empathy.** The poison of **greed** is counterbalanced by **values, efficacy and boundaries**. The poison of **power** is balanced by enhanced sense of **agency and compassionate awareness.** As opposed to seeking spiritual enlightenment, the practices in the workplace, particularly in FG-MBIs, are geared more to support the development of leaders and employees who are caring and less reactive, and willing to create new initiatives and possibilities in the workplace. The model provides some insight into the question, *"Is there a certain uniqueness to mindfulness that cannot be found in the enormous amount of leadership methods the world has seen?"* (Sauer & Kohls, 2011).

I propose my theoretical model (Figure 17) and application model (Figure 18) might provide some initial understanding of the mechanisms at play in transforming individuals and their experience of the workspace. As opposed to the concerns raised by various scholars (Forbes, 2012; Monteiro et al., 2015, Ng, 2015; Purser & Loy, 2013; Purser & Milillo, 2015) that mindfulness could entrench problematic behaviours and systems, the model highlights ways in which key capacities develop through practice that can transform behaviours and systems.

Good et al. (2015, p. 135) refer to the potential of *"mindfulness as a root construct"* that shapes our basic understanding of human functioning at work. As more people seek mindfulness training external to their work, this root construct might transform experience of modern organisational life. This study highlighted the impact of mindfulness training on productivity, power and relationality, all major concerns in the workplace. The participants have also highlighted how complex environments such as those in the South African context can be navigated with mindfulness practice. Thus, this model shows how mindfulness training can

result in more mindful individuals, who cultivate the resources and power they need to transform their work worlds through their practices.

8.1.2 Comparing my model with others

The model (Figures 17 and 18) reinforces elements from these models and also provides an understanding of the transformative elements of mindfulness in the workplace. Figure 18 brings in an understanding of how these capacities might be a counterbalance to the three poisons named by the Buddha. Various models have explored the mechanisms of mindfulness, particularly in clinical settings (Shapiro et al. 2006) and more recently in the workplace (Reitz et al. 2016). I offer this model to complement our understanding of mechanisms of change that have been delineated in other models mentioned in the literature review (Carmody et al., 2009; Garland et al., 2009; Halifax, 2012; Kang et al., 2012; Lyddy & Good, 2017; Roeser et al., 2012; Shapiro et al., 2006).

The four capacities of wandering mind, kindness, equanimity and embodiment map onto Halifax's (2012) model of compassion. Similar to Halifax's Model I refer to both equanimity and kindness and reinforce that these qualities are valuable in sense-making in social interactions. Like Halifax the model establishes the importance of embodiment and mind/body interaction with the environment. Halifax's Model is used for clinicians providing end of life care, where compassion is an essential factor in treatment, the dynamic nature of her model might not address the complexities of the workplace. My theoretical model (Figure 17) reflects the impact on productivity power dynamics, goal driven behaviour and complex relationships. My application model (Figure 18) reflects the individual resources developed and the potential impact on the three poisons, greed, hatred, and delusion.

Similarly, my model contrasts to the BPM (Buddhist Psychological Model), Grabovac et al. (2011) draw on the understanding that the goal of Buddhist practice is to achieve enlightenment or a change in perception that stops the process of identification of sensate and mental experiences into a separate self. However, insight into the three characteristics of suffering, impermanence and no-self are relevant but perhaps less resonant in the workplace. Although the characteristics delineated by Grabovac et al. (2011) of suffering, impermanence and no-self featured in my data, more striking were capacities that could lead to a different experience of work; embodiment, meta-cognition, kindness and equanimity. The BPM does not consider how participants in busy competitive workplaces might relate to these concepts. What merged

inductively in this study was the impact on power, relationality and productivity, and I have linked these to the Buddha's three poisons, greed, hatred and delusion.

The BPM makes no distinction between sense impressions vs. cognitions (mental events) as one works with these events in the same manner in mindfulness practice. My model names the capacity for a more refined awareness of thought and feelings/sensations. This capacity to name, label and have some sense of granularity of thoughts, feelings and sensations is vital for embodiment of mindfulness at work. Through increased awareness of discomfort in body, sensations, and feelings, participants manage situations better. Furthermore, Grabovac et al. (2011) describe equanimity as a quality of awareness. I suggest that equanimity is not only a quality of awareness but also a vital capacity that can be grown and developed (along with the other three capacities).

Although other models refer to meta-capacities, these capacities have not been arranged or described in this way. In the workplace, Reitz et al. (2016) suggest there are three higher order meta-capacities derived from their research into an 8-week Mindful Leadership Programme. These are meta-cognitive ability, and attitudes of allowing and curiosity. Shapiro et al. (2006), in the model of reperceiving, asserts that three factors, namely intention, attention and attitude allow for increased mindfulness. I have been more specific in naming embodiment, equanimity and kindness as capacities that can be grown (as opposed to attitudes). I have also specified the capacity for meta-cognition (instead of attention).

8.1.3 Contribution to Positive Organisational Scholarship

This study contributes to POS providing an understanding of how mindfulness training might enhance flourishing. Whilst highlighting the potential of meditation-based methods to cultivate wholesome emotions (Dorjee, 2010), this study also provides some important reflections on how mindfulness promotes resilience and equanimity in the face of difficult emotions. Participants revealed that mindfulness cultivates internal resources such as compassion, empathy, conflict management, authenticity, agency and resilience. These capacities are critical in considering workplaces that can alleviate suffering. Mindfulness thus might be the key by which some of the POS concepts can become embodied in the workplace, and where generative dynamics, such as high-quality connections (Dutton & Ragins, 2007), resilience, and compassion can be developed. These results are in keeping with Kroon, Woerkom, and Menting (2017), who suggest that there might be more resources than the ones POS has offered. Key

themes that are explored in POS were evident in my data, namely authenticity (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012), resilience (Caza & Milton, 2012; Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2012), high quality connections (DeRue & Workman, 2012), compassion and management of emotions in times of change (Sutcliffe & Christianson, 2012).

A key understanding in POS is the *"heliotropic"* principle of appreciative enquiry which implies that all human beings tend to lean towards life-giving positive energy, and by the same token, away from negative energy (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012, p. 4). Studies that have explored positive practices at work have shown that actions and attitudes such as forgiving mistakes, providing support, and showing kindness, allowed organisations to perform at higher levels in desired outcomes (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). In my study these actions and attitudes were cultivated through the practice of mindfulness.

This study demonstrates the potential of being able to notice negative thoughts, feelings or sensations in mindful awareness, and the value of equanimity. Desbordes et al. (2014) suggest well-being and human flourishing can be better served by cultivating the capacity to cultivate equanimity than to maximise pleasure. This is in contrast with authors like Fredrickson (2001, 2004) who suggests that positive emotions broaden attention and thinking and encourage emotional resilience. The author suggests that broadened mind-sets arising from positive mind-sets can be contrasted to narrowed mind-sets triggered by negative emotions.

Thus, the study adds a dimension to POS by emphasizing the value of equanimity and the capacity to be aware of both the good and the bad. There is a deeper positive in mindfulness that can allow us to go through both positive and negative states. The paradox with mindfulness training is that turning towards all experiences of life, positive, neutral and negative, with an open aware attitude might be the generative potential. The understanding of the meditative traditions of compassion, loving-kindness and the capacity to turn towards shadow emotions in an embodied manner might offer a rich support to POS in its understanding of flourishing. As opposed to employees creating more positive energy, they might rather have the wisdom and insight to see blocks to positivity more clearly, and to embrace the polarities of experiences.

This has implications for adopting a mindful approach in dealing with complexities such as conflict regarding material interests (Powell, Hamann, Bitzer, & Baker, 2017). As Kofman (2006) suggests, *"many apparently successful companies hide great suffering in their basements"* (p, xvii). The introduction of mindfulness into the workspace is not without complexity and at the same time the potential of mindfulness might be in the ability to manage

complexity and shadow, helping us integrate the difficult with a positive orientation.

POS uses the understanding that many positive experiences can create a cycle of virtuous action. Mindfulness engages the understanding that the capacity to be present to positive, neutral and negative experiences can create new and more adaptive ways of responding to situations. Krantz (2006) refers to the *"sunny idealized image of leaders who transform through inspiration, passion and love"* (p. 236) as a defence against some of the darker complexities of leadership. Vince and Mazen (2014) refer to violent innocence, a form of denial that stems from the need to not experience unwanted emotions, and that positivity can be a violation when people have to deny shadow emotions. As opposed to the strong positive bias evident in POS, the current study highlights cultivation of mindful awareness that embraces all experiences; positive, negative, and neutral. This awareness might provide a deeper understanding of flourishing in the POS context, as the capacity to embrace all experiences with equanimity, embodiment and kindness.

This might help address the argument directed towards POS as regards its bias to the positive, or as Caza and Carroll (2012) term it, *"problematic positivity"* (p. 972) and allow for a more inclusive embrace of life at work. Rather than employees having to fit into a positively oriented framework, mindfulness might offer a way by which the experiences of all individuals at work can be valued, leaving an openness to learn from negative experiences such as anger, anxiety, fear and shame. These bodies of knowledge might also differ in that POS is clear about achieving goals and profitability, whereas mindfulness might advocate more in the direction of Right action and Right mindfulness.

In conclusion, as opposed to a dualistic way of thinking, this study adds a more integrative approach to POS by emphasizing the value of equanimity. The approach (one that includes positive and negative) might allow for a fuller understanding of flourishing at work. Luthans and Youssef (2007) concur that *"much is lost when either the negative or the positive is slighted or forgotten"* (p. 323).

8.2 Pedagogical contribution: Recommendations for organisational trainings

Participants in this study did not undergo mindfulness training at work but rather engaged in training outside of their workspaces. I will now share three areas pedagogical insights gathered from interview data: **bringing mindfulness to the workplace**, **mindfulness and existing OD practices** and **transparency**

1) Bringing mindfulness into the workplace: To achieve significant change, mindfulness needs to be practised over time (Reitz et al., 2016). It was understood that this was not the *"magic bullet"* that Sauer and Kohls (2011) alluded to, but rather a longer-term practice. A model of barriers and facilitators to practice (Figure 10) can provide insight into how to encourage formal practice. A growth or mastery mindset (Dweck, 2017) is valuable for those bringing these practices into the workplace.

   Interestingly, there was concern that participants themselves might feel coerced into the practices. If mindfulness is taught in the workplace it could end up being divisive as opposed to connecting. Kuechler and Stedham (2017) argue that resistance could arise from both students and faculty of MBA programmes if participation in the course were to be made compulsory. It could result in a split camp of those who are *"more mindful"* and those who are *"less mindful"*. Brendel (2015) concurs in that it is important not to force employees who are not interested in mindfulness. When bringing spiritually based programmes into the workplace, as stated by Ashforth and Pratt (2010), the issue of choice in programmes that are essentially based in some kind of spiritual orientation is imperative,

   Whether an organisation is enabling, partnering or directing it is imperative that individuals have reasonably full and accurate foreknowledge of the organisation's spiritual orientation…that their informed consent be secured for any spiritual programs and that they be allowed to opt out or withdraw without penalty. (p. 54)

   Organisational buy-in, group support, and encouragement of spaces to practice in, would support the cultivation of mindfulness at work. Many participants advocated for a senior individual or group of individuals who would inspire others or normalise the practice for those wanting to bring the practice to work. This is congruent with the study by Kachan et al. (2017) in which the authors propose that with higher rates of people engaging in mindfulness practices in the US, managers could take into account and identify such individuals when planning the implementation of MBIs into the workplace. Interestingly, the authors also name the slower uptake of socio-economically disadvantaged subgroups within certain subgroups such as blue-collar and farm workers. They note that this can be addressed by providing such programmes within the workplace and addressing existing beliefs about mindfulness practices in these groups. This is relevant in the South African context where cultural beliefs might restrict

learning, and where an intervention such as mindfulness practice might be a cost-effective intervention for workplace health and wellness. It might also serve in the South African context as a way of enhancing compassion, connection and new ways of dealing with issues of power, productivity, diversity, and relating.

2) Mindfulness and existing OD practices: Mindfulness trainers and even individuals using the practice should tread lightly in bringing mindfulness to the organisational space. Thus, mindfulness could be supportive of already existing OD practices. For example, Bush (2011) refers to Johnson in discussing appreciative inquiry (AI), arguing that rather than remaining stuck in the dualistic perspectives of organisations, the generative potential of AI is most likely to *"come from embracing the polarities of human existence and it is the tensions of those very forces that give life and vitality to organisations"* (p. 19). Mindfulness can also be supportive of the principle beliefs of change for practitioners of Dialogic OD (Organisational Development), as recommended by Bushe and Marshank (2014). Maxton and Bushe (2018), in their study, suggest that it is the emergent nature of the change process more than its positive focus that is responsible for changes in schemata content. This suggests that types of OD such as AI are impacted more by generativity, and that mindfulness practice might facilitate these processes both for the participant and the practitioner.

3) Transparency: Mindfulness is often sold in the workplace, with the origins of the practice omitted, and the neuro-scientific and empirical findings being a leading reason why individuals or organisations are interested in the practices. Whilst mindfulness is promoted in organisations as not being spiritual, it might be more valuable to be clearer on the origins, roots and understandings of such practices. This issue continues to be one that we need to debate in the context of mindfulness practice at work. Reb and Atkins (2015) concur, there is still a reticence in the workspace to mix the spiritual with the professional, and it is perhaps for the reasons they provide (conflicting values between spiritual practices and work, secularisation of society, and a need to keep work and personal life separate) that mindfulness at work has also been framed in a more secular manner. Traditional Buddhist language and concepts may prevent mindfulness as a transformative intervention from taking place in the workspace, thus re-languaging of these concepts is necessary. However, transparency regarding the origins of the practices might be vital in terms of teaching with integrity.

The data also reflected ways in which organisations might reflect mismatched expectations of mindfulness. The idea of a "mindful employee" as sold in the workplace does not always include one that is more able to master shadow emotions or challenge the status quo. More transparency regarding this (as opposed to mindfulness training being seen as a tool to increase focus and manage stress) might serve the field as a whole.

Programmes that promote mindfulness as a stress reduction tool or a means to enhance productivity and focus might not be transparent enough about the struggles, shadow material and a potential shift in paradigms that these practices might elicit. We need to consider the impact of these practices for those at work, particularly if they are not forewarned about the difficulties the practices might invoke. The side-effects emanating from the stages of insight can include physical pain and tension, and intense negative emotional states (Grabovac et al., 2011). Working with shadow material, although valuable, might not be applicable, or feasible, particularly in workspaces that do not invite authenticity or vulnerability.

The model developed in this study might support understanding of potentiality and challenges of first-generation mindfulness trainings for the workspace. Through the capacities developed through mindfulness, there is an increased capacity to access shadow experiences and at the same time new capacities to cope with those experiences. As a participant once said, *"it heals as it reveals"*. For individuals exploring the practices on their own and then integrating them at work, and for organisations wanting to adopt the practice, the model might provide a blueprint for ways in which the practice might be transformative and challenging. This would allow for participants to understand on a deeper level the value and the challenges of such practices.

Would there be space for this practice in organisations that only value output, rather than supporting other values such as authentic connection to self and others? What about the impact for participants who are more able to voice their opinions and take risks to express themselves in organisations that are more autocratic? Furthermore, do participants of such courses need extra support to manage the movement towards a more authentic connection and at the same time a clearer awareness of nature of self?

Helping organisations to understand what mindfulness is, and is not, and how it may, or may not, impact participants would be useful. We need guidelines for mindfulness trainers regarding what to ask organisations wanting such interventions in terms of levels of readiness, the origins of the practices, and understandings of impact. Using the criteria such as those delineated by Van Gordon et al. (2014) and Shonin and Van Gordon (2014b) could be helpful in framing a new generation of mindfulness trainings for the organisational space. Being clear that there might be an impact on issues such as power, productivity and relationality, when selling or teaching existing programmes, is important. Continued discussion between mindfulness-based practitioners and Buddhist scholars in this field seems vital for us to develop programmes that have potentiality for radical personal transformation. This might allow more potential for participants to be aware of blindness to larger scale ethical and social issues.

8.3 Limitations of the study

This research contributes to the growth of interest in mindfulness in the workplace for individuals and organisations and adds a more nuanced understanding through the voices of participants. However, there are limitations to the study.

As researcher and a mindfulness trainer, I conducted the research process with a lens that already was biased towards the benefit of mindfulness practices. The research process, including the recording (transcription) and analysis of data, the relevance and depth of the process, were dependent on my own capacity for awareness and deconstruction.

As a researcher and facilitator, I had taught many of the participants and conducted the research process. This could and would have deepened my understanding of their processes, however, social desirability might have resulted in participants wanting approval of their practice or wanting to be affiliated with me, which might have curtailed what was shared. Holding a non-judgmental attitude as interviewer and in the interview, questions was important here. Although participants sometimes worried that I would be judging their lack of practice, they did speak openly about their struggles with the practice and what it evoked, and did not seem uncomfortable with expressing their struggles and views that opposed the use of the practice.

The interpretation of data was dependent on my own level of reflexivity. As a mindfulness practitioner and teacher, I tried to be aware of my own levels of bias and engaged in regular conversations with colleagues in the field, to bring in some independent perspectives on the

coding. I was also aware of shifts in my own perspectives. My beliefs changed at various points and at times I myself doubted the use and value of such practices in the workplace. For example, I presented at a conference in Naples (European Group for Organizational Studies), at the time of just beginning to analyse the data. Many presenters were critical of mindfulness training at work and I saw the value of having my assumptions challenged; as one of the conference participants argued, *"if mindfulness has something of value to offer, its proponents won't have anything to lose except a number of cherished illusions"*. My thinking was also continuously shaped by my own experience of teaching in various organisational contexts. On balance, I believe my immersion in the field allowed for more depth of reflection.

The focus was on "perceived" impact as opposed to a more objective measure. The impacts of mindfulness can be subtle and not always easily ascribed to mindfulness training. The skill of the interviewer to elicit these shifts and interpret that data was important. Nevertheless, it might be that respondents are outliers who found value in the practice (as opposed to those who struggled to find value). This means that the research is a good reflection of that subgroup but may not enlighten further around why and how people do not connect with the training. It also focuses on Mindfulness-Based Interventions as taught in the lineage of Kabat-Zinn, as opposed to a more generic investigation of different ways of teaching presence. Furthermore, the research targets upper to middle management, and it would have been valuable to include participants from non-managerial contexts and blue-collar workers. Although an important and under-researched issue, it was also beyond the scope of the research to explore differences in response due to gender or culture.

Although useful for teachers and practitioners, the model developed is not one that can be used in neuroscience given the range of different practices included in the interventions; (i.e., from concentration to open awareness to loving-kindness). Corroboration of the model would necessitate further qualitative and quantitative research.

Whilst the study might have benefitted from the use of some mindfulness questionnaires and measurement of how many times a week they were practising and what specific technique was used, the strength of this study is that it uses a natural sample of active mindfulness participants as opposed to deliberately putting people on a programme. It also provides a sample with a variety of experience, professional backgrounds and work contexts, long-term and short-term mindfulness experience, and includes some mindfulness teachers. Because of this variety, both practitioners from various fields, and mindfulness teachers, might derive benefit from the

findings. Although there were differences in length and depth of practice between the three groups, this was not a focus of the research.

It is hoped that despite the limitations, the data derived from the sample will still be of value. In this final section, I will reflect further on the findings, particularly in terms of some of the criticisms of mindfulness at work. I will also suggest some directions for future research.

8.4 Final discussion

The Buddha's advice was that our task is to learn about the path that leads to the cessation of suffering and in particular, the sources of attachment that are associated *"with the path of wealth and hedonic pleasure"* (Farb, 2017). Organisations might be the places that need these practices the most.

> *"It seems as though the rivers of craving are running in every direction,"* said Ajita, *"How can we dam them and hold them back? What can we use to close the floodgates?"* The Buddha said: *"Any river can be stopped with the dam of mindfulness. Caring and thoughtfulness are the flood stoppers. With wisdom you can close the floodgate."* (Bancroft, 2017, p. 84)

Mindfulness at work has gained popularity and is being increasingly promoted, in an age where the *"rivers of craving"* are prevalent. Whilst critics of the mindfulness movement question whether these practices are being diluted or result in increased passivity in participants, there is scant qualitative evidence to back up these views. This study provides important qualitative data from participants of programmes, at a time when there is an upsurge in interest in mindfulness practice for the workplace.

Qualitative data adds a more rounded and nuanced understanding of mindfulness in the context of work. To summarise my study, using semi-structured interviews of 53 participants, I explored three main groups in order to provide a variety of data, namely participants who had completed an 8-week MBSR programme, participants who had completed a 2-year certification programme to allow them to teach MBIs, and participants who had completed their Executive MBA which included a Mindful Leadership Course that lasted the duration of their EMBA. I used an IPA understanding and Thematic Analysis in order to analyse data in order to explore adaptations, understandings and perceived impact of mindfulness training. This study explored

the potentiality of mindfulness practice in the workspace, and contributes to the existing literature in POS. Key contributions are as follows:

Studies have not explored the simple question: "How do participants apply and use their formal and informal practices at work, and share the practices with others?" This study explores how participants experienced, used and shared the practices in work and life. It provides some understanding of barriers and facilitators of daily formal practice. It also highlights how even small applications of these practices might make a difference for participants and those around them at work.

Furthermore, the study considers the critiques of mindfulness at work. The data contributes to the conversation and concern that mindfulness might be co-opted and used for performance enhancement, placing the onus of dealing with stress on employees, and creating a *"zombified"* and productive workforce (Purser & Forbes, 2017). Using the voices of participants, the study challenges assumptions that diluted practices will result in a dumbing down, and passivity, as opposed to a waking up at work, or an active challenge to workplace paradigms. Mindfulness training might be a vehicle for transformation rather than a panacea. Comments from participants who have completed trainings reflect the potential of mindfulness for change.

It bears mentioning at this point that although not elicited this, a number of participants described the dark or oppressive nature of their workplaces. One participant had even contacted me numerous times wanting to speak about the abusive nature of her workplace and how mindfulness has helped her. Although there were certainly reflections on workplaces that were open and supportive of their employees and the sharing of mindfulness, it is interesting to contemplate whether this is a reflection of a socio-cultural issues in South Africa and the complexity of our legacy and workplaces.

If we are concerned with the abusive and oppressive nature of work, at the individual level, mindfulness training might provide an increased ability to question and resist dominant paradigms of overwork and power, as well as to value and create spaces of whole human relating or relating to higher qualities of connection. As participants relate to themselves and to others more authentically and in their fullness, this might counteract the often soul-crushing nature of work. Participants might gain the resources to speak up or to leave. In this study, mindfulness showed potential to increase sense of agency and power, enhance awareness of others, and challenge paradigms of productivity. Mindfulness practice offers possibilities of

change, promoting enhanced connection with self and others as opposed to increased greed and competition.

A further contribution is my model (Figures 17 and 18). The model may be valuable for participants, facilitators of programmes, and organisations interested in mindfulness training. In my study, four foundational capacities are developed by participants, post-mindfulness training, namely meta-cognition, kindness, equanimity and embodiment. These allow for a key capacity to be developed, the ability to be present to thoughts, feelings and sensations, opening to every day experiences. Chesley and Wylson (2016) explain, *"A mindful change leader can keep the big picture in mind while at the same time being self-aware, focused in the present moment, and able to respond to what comes up in that moment 'without' a lot of angst or worry"*. I suggest the key is being able to respond to what comes up at the moment, dealing with others and complexities at work whilst being *"aware"* of (not necessarily being without) complex emotions such as angst, worry and anger in the workplace.

Over time, this can result in enhanced resilience, changes in sense of self (authenticity, self-confidence, self-acceptance), these capacities can lead to transformation in the workplace; in my study these were most evident in the domains of productivity, power and relationality. The relevance of transformation of these domains in terms of the Buddha's three poisons was highlighted. The model developed provides a framework to enquire further into the mechanisms of mindfulness in the workplace. This framework considers mindfulness interventions at work as transformative, allowing participants to reduce self-destructive and destructive tendencies.

In conclusion, as opposed to mindfulness being promoted primarily for stress reduction and productivity, these practices connect us more deeply to ourselves, and the use of these trainings at work might shift more in the direction of self-development as opposed to stress reduction. Thus, bringing these practices and understandings into secular workplaces that are more concerned with bottom line and employee productivity is in question. This study adds depth to these debates.

8.5 Future research

This research highlights the transformative capacities of mindfulness training on an individual level that can impact the workspace. The model developed highlights how awareness (enhanced through formal and informal practice) develops four capacities of mindfulness namely meta-cognition, embodiment, kindness and equanimity. These four capacities translate into the ability

to be present to pleasant, unpleasant or neutral experiences. Over time this impacted participants on an individual level by enhancing resilience, sense of self, (authenticity, self-acceptance and self-confidence) and openness to multiple perspectives and possibility. These internal changes might lead to transformation in the workspace by enhancing awareness in the areas of productivity, power dynamics and relationality.

Future research might explore the following:

1) Moving beyond symptom reduction: Focus for work-based interventions can extend beyond symptom reduction and well-being and consider the role of mindful managers and employees in creating compassionate workplaces with new understandings of power and productivity. Research can also explore the impact of how mindfulness changes the experience of individuals exploring interventions outside of the workplace in the area of pro-social or compassionate behaviour. This might highlight further the shadow side of pro-social behaviour (Bolino & Grant, 2016) at work. This would be participatory and longitudinal research with some form of triangulation from bosses or employees.

   Furthermore, does increased awareness bring about a disconnect between personal and organisational values; to what degree do more mindful employees begin to make choices that resonate more with their own values if they are not in accordance with those of the company? Assessing participant values pre- and post-training might provide insight into this. Participant observation in organisations might illicit deeper contextual insights as to how mindfulness might impact organisational dynamics and individual experiences at work. This research might encourage exploration of some of the concerns raised by Good et al (2016) where whilst people might become more productive at work, they may face challenges within contexts that value control and hierarchy.

   Research might explore the four meta-capacities; the wandering mind, equanimity, embodiment and kindness, and how these qualities are applied at work. As growth is not always clear or linear, a model of the stages of development over time might provide support and clarity for participants navigating these practices in the workplace. For example, an individual's experience and application of kindness or embodiment may shift over time as awareness becomes more refined. More rigorous attention can be paid to the theme of equanimity in the workplace and how it might provide a key element to POS understandings of transformation in the workplace by offering participants a way

of managing both the good and the bad.

The nuances of the impact of mindfulness on productivity can also be explored further. Kirk, Brown, and Downar (2014) suggest that the nature of goal pursuit with mindfulness is less likely to be impacted by external rewards. The ways in which mindfulness might impact the perception of an accomplishment of goals could be further researched by monitoring how participants change in relation to goal setting, during and post mindfulness training. Although paradoxical, the role of goal-setting for mindfulness practice could also be explored.

2) Understanding formal/informal practice at work: We don't know enough about what happens to people's practice post training? What is the relationship between formal and informal practice? What prevents practice for those in the workspace? Further research might support participant commitment to formal practice. Participatory research can use real-time apps that look at commitment to meditation practice itself (with questions like: *"Did you meditate?" "Why not?"*). Given the difficulty in monitoring, if participants engage in the home practice, an app might allow for a more reliable measure of whether the home practice has occurred. Qualitative data via interview could assess the quality of home practice and can explore which resources enhance home practice (Lloyd et al., 2017).

   Informal practice might be the majority of practice taking place at work and might prove to be more manageable (and do-able) than formal practice. Whilst research has explored the use of shorter practices for work-based interventions it has not explored use of informal practice. Lloyd et al. (2017) suggest that informal practice is harder to isolate and measure in terms of frequency and duration, and better ways of monitoring this (e.g., experience sampling) might benefit future research. Hortynska (2011) highlights how the concept of regular practice by participants might be misunderstood to mean just informal practice.

   What are the experiences of those who resist or even drop out of mindfulness programmes at work? These participants could be encouraged to participate as a way of voicing their concerns and interviews would need to be conducted by interviewers not involved in the mindfulness intervention. It would be useful to focus on negative voices more exclusively by conducting follow-up interviews with participants and to use multiple data sources such as participant journals, and interviews with colleagues or

family members. In addition, people could be encouraged to agree to a research follow up right at the start of training in order to catch the voices of those who resist.

Future research could look the nuances of how mindfulness training impacts complexities of race, gender, socio-economics in societies such as the South African context". Are there different kinds of barriers and facilitators of practice for different groups? Does mindfulness bring more awareness to issues of social identity and do these dynamics change? Does it raise issues that were suppressed? Can it enhance our capacity to manage diversity? We can also look through institutional lenses querying the role of gender or culture in engagement of mindfulness practices at work can be explored further through semi-structured interviews. What are the links between such practices and the South African concept of Ubuntu?

3) Standardisation and promotion of workplace trainings: What are the training and promotional implications as we understand more about mindfulness in the workplace. Although there is argument for more standardisation in how MBIs at work are taught, in order to ensure that participants receive an adequate dose (Lloyd et al., 2017), this research points to a more contextualised understanding of mindfulness in the workplace. How do we develop customised programmes based on particular contexts? As is happening in the fields of MBSR and MBCT, research might also look at the qualities of mindfulness programmes and of teachers and the kinds of competencies that allow for effective delivery in the workplace, that might be linked not only to stress reduction and productivity but also understandings of transforming suffering.

How are work-based programmes promoted? This research would draw on websites and promotional material to ascertain ways in which mindfulness is being sold. For example, noting whether it mentions confronting such shadow material that might not be applicable, or be more difficult for those at work. Or knowing kinds of practices and input are shared in workplace interventions might allow for some framework standardisation in how MBIs at work are administered whilst at same time providing flexibility for different work contexts. Research can also explore what kinds of organisations run the risks of challenging mindfulness or diluting it more than others. Are companies whose focus is primarily on the bottom line more at risk of doing so?

4) Issues of self and identity in the workplace: How does mindfulness impact the Buddhist sense of self (there is no permanent self) and SDT (operating from one's true authentic self) in the workplace? These understandings might add to Identity theory. Studies might develop these themes and expand understandings of the impact of mindfulness on one's sense of self and identity in relationship to work. How one perceives oneself at work might be key to managing issues such as work engagement, conflict at work, and sense of agency. We need to consider ways in which mindfulness in the workplace might be different to the uses in clinical practice and what might serve facilitators and practitioners in these spaces. Wayment and Bauer (2017) note that the traditional purpose of mindfulness is enlightenment and dissolution of the self, which might be incompatible with the business or workspace. Huffman et al. (2015) suggest that the conceptualisation of the *"quiet ego"* might be more compatible with issues of workplace culture. Future qualitative study could explore the emergence of the quiet ego in the workplace, and how it might allow for transformation, transcending self-interest and being more balanced in concern for self and others.

   The impact of distorted self-narratives at work is also unknown. Participants become more aware of *"…decisions that are motivated by fear, seeking prestige, or lack of confidence, as these will only lead to wrong actions"* (Coventry, 2015, p. 51). For example, the habit of judging oneself harshly can reinforce feelings of inadequacy, helplessness and anxiety, undermining the natural capacity for acceptance, generosity and compassion (Feldman & Kuyken, 2011). Similarly, mindfulness training may offer new dimensions to understanding of sense of self in the workplace, particularly in the dimension of less ego driven thought and behaviour.

Finally, Van Dam et al. (2017) suggest that research should consider teams of not only clinicians but also scientists, scholars from classical mindfulness traditions, and scholars that are sceptical about the practice and its efficacy. They also recommend that clinical studies should not rely merely on self-report and assessments by clinicians, but also incorporate biological and behavioural efficacy measures. A team approach to exploring this field that includes scholars from different traditions would add more depth to a study in this field.

Final thoughts

Tsoukas and Chia (2002) suggest that organisational scientists need to give priority to

"microscopic change" (p. 580), the change that occurs naturally, incrementally. Whilst it is not only the individual that needs to change in managing structures that have been harmful to us in the workplace, the results of this study are hopeful if we can consider the potential of individuals to create change incrementally in their own right. As Ilya Prigogine (2003) explained,

> *Especially in this time of globalization…the individual level will be the key factor in shaping the evolution of the entire human species. Just as few particles can alter macroscopic organisation in nature… so the role of the individual is more important now than ever.* (p. 20)

As opposed to mindfulness being sold as a tool that can allow participants to perform better, we might debate whether and how programmes might facilitate employees that can question, have an enhanced sense of agency, and are more able to manage self-destructive and destructive tendencies. Participants in this study shared mindfulness in their workspaces in ways that were mostly transformative and not necessarily passive.

Sauer and Kohls (2011) remind us that mindfulness is not a new leadership tool or management technique. Since ancient times, it has been employed for developing the mind in the first instance and might have impacts on the workplace that we have not yet considered. It might be that mindfulness becomes a colluding force that leads to paradigms of increasing productivity, stress and lack of transformation. However, mindfulness practice is inherently transformative and may equally be subject to exclusion in workplaces. Such forces will aid the "*quick fad"* dynamic and try to remove such programmes once it brings about deeper questioning of power and materialism. Wheatley (2009) shares the story of the Dalai Lama who counselled her colleagues who were depressed about the state of the world saying, *"your work with bear fruit in 700 years"*. We can continue to assess ways in which conscientious compassion might support navigation of the socio-political challenges of our times, and to stay open to conversation with critics of the movement.

Anderson and Braude (2011) suggest that personal transformation can accompany research if the research project has great personal meaning. This has been my experience. The Greek word *"Meraki"* can be defined as doing something with passion, with eagerness, enthusiasm, and with all your heart, leaving a part of yourself in an act of creativity. Not unlike mindfulness, it can be experienced in the simplest of tasks. Building on the comment of (Kabat-Zinn, 2017, Conclusion para 2),

> *…each one of us has a unique opportunity and a unique role to play in this unfolding, based on our love, our practice, and our unique karmic trajectory, and grounded in our essential interconnectedness, non-separation, and common humanity. At this moment on the planet, we need all the various and disparate voices participating in this conversation, and we need to listen to each other with open hearts and deep attending. If we cannot do that, how could we possibly expect reconciliation across the greater divides of political and social animosity and active harming we are seeing enacted throughout the world today?*

This study is my unique role to play in this unfolding of mindfulness into new contexts, based on my love for this practice and my experience of teaching others, particularly in the workplace. For me, this study has been, *"Meraki"*, a labour of love, and a meditation practice within itself. It has allowed me to stay open to deeper questions in the field. I hope I have added texture to this rich and complex conversation in the field by adding the voices of the participants who are exploring mindfulness at work.

May this conversation continue in a way that serves humanity, transforming the forces of greed, fear and aversion that cause suffering in our society today.

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APPENDIX A

Research Interview Protocol

Name:

Age:

Profession/work position:

Gender:

When did you undertake mindfulness training and in what format?

1. Understanding

    a) What does mindfulness mean to you?

    b) Have there been any changes in the way you have understood mindfulness over time?

2. Application and adaptation

    a) Can you give some examples of mindfulness practice you use normally/in crisis/alone/with others?

    b) What do you do in your daily life to practice it? Formal and/or informal practices?

    c) In which way does your work environment support or not support mindfulness?

    d) Are you using the practices in any interesting ways?

    e) What kinds of conversations (if any) have you had about mindfulness with colleagues?

    f) Do you continue to study or develop mindfulness in any way (reading, group work, meditation, yoga class?)

    g) What are your struggles with the practice?

3. Value

    a) Has the practice changed you in any way?

b) What are you noticing as a result of your journey with mindfulness?

c) In which way do you see a positive side, bringing this to bear in the organisational context?

d) In which way do you see a negative side in bringing this to bear in the organisational context?

e) How are you bringing it into the organisation context?

f) Can you describe how mindfulness may have shifted any interactions, relationships or concerns?

g) Are there areas where you are noticing more of a sense of non-judgment towards yourself and others? Can you give examples and what is the impact?

h) What is your relationship to levels of multitasking? And productivity? Engagement with work?

i) Are you using or benefiting from the practices in some ways that are surprising to you?

j) Are there times when you bring awareness into the present moment during your working day and what do you notice about this?

k) What do you do when you are really stressed?

l) Do you see any ways in which this practice is helping you deal with ethical dilemmas or complex issues in your life?

m) Are there any ways that the practice might help you work in more innovative or creative ways?

n) Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B

PhD Ethics Cover Letter for Research

Informed Consent for Participation in Applications of Mindfulness in the workplace research project.

Project title: *"Mindfulness training for individuals in organisations: Application, adaptation and perceived value"*

Principle researcher: Linda Kantor. E-mail: lindakantor@icloud.com & Cell: 083 684 9358

Project description: The purpose of this project is to explore the applications and understandings of mindfulness practice in the organisational context.

Research process: Research will involve individual interviews with participants from a variety of organisational contexts.

Interview process: Should last from 30 minutes to one hour. You will be asked questions related to your experience with mindfulness practices.

Dear Research Participant

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this research. Your time and effort is appreciated as it will contribute to the understandings of mindfulness in the corporate context.

The aim of the research is *"Mindfulness training for individuals in organisations: Application, adaptation and perceived value"*.

1. This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee.

2. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can choose to withdraw from the research at any time. You can also decline to answer any question at any time.

3. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour to complete.

4. You will not be requested to supply any identifiable information, ensuring anonymity of your responses.

5. Due to the nature of the study, you will need to provide the researchers with some form of identifiable information although all responses will be confidential and used for the purposes of this research only.

6. Interviews and focus groups may be audio-recorded with your written consent. Recordings will only be accessed by the researcher.

7. This research may result in the publication of scholarly articles, book chapters and teaching cases.

8. The researcher hopes that this research will be useful and interesting to individuals and organisations, and to those teaching mindfulness in the corporate context.

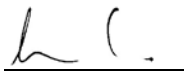
9. Should you have any questions regarding the research please feel free to contact the researcher (Linda Kantor, lindakantor@icloud.com or 083 684 9358)

Participant

Name:

Signature:

Kind regards



Linda Kantor

B.A. & B.Soc.Sc (Hons) & M.A. (Psych) U.C.T

APPENDIX C

Ethics Approval Letter from GSB

FULL COLOUR THINKING

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Ralph Hamann
Professor & Research Director
T: +27 (0)21 406 1503
E: ralph.hamann@gsb.uct.ac.za

GSB/COM/005/2014

Cape Town, 2 June 2014

Linda Kantor
University of Cape Town, Graduate School of Business
lindakantor@icloud.com

Dear Linda

Re: Ethics Approval

Thank you for submitting your ethical clearance application for your PhD research on **"The Perceived Integration Understanding And Value Of Mindfulness Training In Organisational Context ."**

This is to confirm that your application has been assessed by the GSB's Ethics in Research Committee according to the rules and norms of the University and Commerce Faculty, and that it has been approved.

Please note that if you make any substantial change in your research procedure that could affect the experiences of the participants, you must submit a revised protocol to the Committee for approval.

We wish you all the best for your research.

Kind regards,

Prof Ralph Hamann
Research Director

FULL COLOUR THINKING

	RESEARCH ACCESS TO STUDENTS	DSA 100

NOTES

1. This form must be **FULLY** completed by applicants that want to access UCT students for the purpose of research.
2. Return the fully completed **(a) DSA 100** application form **by email,** in **the same word format,** together with **your: (b) research proposal inclusive of your survey, (c) copy of your ethics approval letter/proof (d) informed consent letter** to: Moonira.Khan@uct.ac.za. You application will be attended to by the Executive Director, Department of Student Affairs (DSA), UCT.
3. The turnaround time for a reply **is approximately 10 working days.**

(a) NB: It is the responsibility of the researcher/s to apply for and to obtain **ethics approval and to comply with amendments that may be requested;** as well as **to obtain** approval to access UCT staff and/or UCT students, from the following, at UCT, respectively: **Ethics:** Chairperson, Faculty Research Ethics Committee' (FREC) for ethics approval, (b) **Staff access:** Executive Director: HR for approval to access UCT staff, and (c) **Student access:** Executive Director: Student Affairs for approval to access UCT students.

4. **Note:** UCT Senate Research Protocols requires compliance to the above, **even if prior approval has been obtained from any other institution/agency. UCT's research protocol requirements applies to *all* persons, institutions and agencies from UCT and external to UCT who want to conduct research on human subjects for academic, marketing or service related reasons at UCT.**

SECTION A: RESEARCH APPLICANT/S DETAILS

Position	Staff / Student No	Title and Name	Contact Details (Email / Cell / land line)
A.1 Student Number	KNTLIN003	MS Linda Sara Kantor	lindakantor@icloud.com 083 684 9358 | (021) 424 7914
A.2 Academic / PASS Staff No.			
A.3 Visitor/ Researcher ID No.			
A.4 University at which a student or employee	UCT	Address If *not* UCT:	
A.5 Faculty/ Department/School	Graduate School of Business		
A.6 APPLICANTS DETAILS If different from above	Title and Name	Tel.	Email

SECTION B: RESEARCHER/S SUPERVISOR/S DETAILS

Position	Title and Name	Tel.	Email
B.1 Supervisor	Warren Nilsson		warren.nilsson@gsb.uct.ac.za
B.2 Co-Supervisor/s			

SECTION C: APPLICANT'S RESEARCH STUDY FIELD AND APPROVAL STATUS

C.1 Degree (if a student)	
C.2 Research Project Title	
C.3 Research Proposal	Attached: Yes No
C.4 Target population	
C.5 Lead Researcher details	If different from applicant:
C6. Will use research assistant/s If yes- provide a list of names, contact details and ID no.	Yes No
C.7 Research Methodology and Informed consent:	Research methodology: Informed consent:
C.8 Ethics clearance status from UCT's Faculty Ethics Research Committee (FREC)	Approved by the FREC Yes With amendments: Yes / No (a) Attach copy of your ethics approval. Attached: Yes / No (b) State date and reference no. of ethics approval: Date: Ref. No.:

SECTION D: APPLICANT/S APPROVAL STATUS FOR ACCESS TO STUDENTS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSE

(To be completed by the ED, DSA or Nominee)

	Approved / With Terms / Not	* Conditional approval with terms	Applicant/s Ref. No.:	
D.1 APPROVAL STATUS	*Yes / * Yes / No* ☐	(a) Access to students for this research study must only be undertaken after written ethics approval has been obtained. (b) In event any ethics conditions are attached, these must be complied with before access to students.		
D.2 APPROVED BY:	Designation	Name	Signature	Date
	Executive Director Department of Student Affairs			

APPENDIX D

Member Checking: Email Invitation

Email Subject: Linda Kantor PhD Results (draft) (Dec 2017)

Email Attachment: PDF of Draft Results

Dear Xxx

I hope this email finds you well and enjoying the holiday season.

Thank you so much for being willing to share your experiences and time with me. It has been a deeply rewarding journey so far, to think so deeply about ***"Mindfulness training for individuals in organisations: Application, adaptation and perceived value"***.

As part of my PhD process, I would like to share my current version of data and findings with you.

1. Please check that I have captured what you shared with me correctly and read some of my interpretation and understandings of your comments and to let me know whether I have understood your sharing correctly.
2. You will see that I have used a "pseudonym" for you, Xxx, you are welcome to change the name to one that you prefer if you wish.

You are also welcome to read the entire document and comment if you so choose. You will find your comments on pages: 0, 0, 0, 0, etc.

I look forward to your responses. Please bear in mind that this document is still a work in progress and can be amended according to your commentary.

Please send any potential comments or changes by the end of January 2018.

With warm wishes

Linda

APPENDIX E

Demographics

PhD Interviewees-Pseudonyms, Profession, Gender, Age & Course (53 Interviewed) (Average Age: 46.2 years) (Pg.1)					
No.	Pseudonym	Profession	Gender	Age	Course
1	Abel	manager - tech company	male	39	emba-2014
2	Alan	engineer - marine industry	male	58	emba-2016
3	Alice	clinical psychologist	female	60	mbsr-2012
4	Anna	psychologist / university lecturer	female	53	imisa-2014
5	Anton	business owner - recruitment	male	53	imisa-2015
6	Bella	operations manager	female	54	mbsr-2014
7	Benjamin	partner in sustainable consulting	female	54	mbsr-2015
8	Bernice	manager - (unemployed at the time of the interview)	female	39	emba-2014
9	Brendon	manager - marketing	male	37	emba-2016
10	Buz	chief medical officer	male	50	emba-2015
11	Cedric	manager	male	52	emba-2015
12	Charles	manager - projects	male	33	mbsr-2012
13	Christopher	executive coach	male	48	imisa-2013
14	Darren	business owner - plumber & steel works	male	43	mbsr-2007
15	Evan	business owner - financial management	male	39	emba-2013
16	Frances	executive coach in the corporate space	female	48	imisa-2014
17	Frank	senior manager - power projects	male	37	emba-2015
18	Gena	administrator / general manager NGO	female	53	emba-2014
19	Gideon	business owner - laundries	male	50	mbsr-2003+2006
20	Glen	manager - telecoms industry	male	42	emba-2014
21	Herman	business owner - project management	male	45	emba-2016
22	Jack	psychiatrist / senior lecturer	male	50	imisa-2014
23	Janice	business owner - marketing, design & communication	female	45	imisa-2015
24	Janine	teaching fellow	female	44	mbsr-2002
25	Jo-Anne	manager (unemployed at the time of the interview)	female	57	mbsr-2008
26	Justin	data / systems management	male	49	mbsr-2004
27	Kevin	executive coach & facilitator	male	43	imisa-2014

Demographics (Cont.)

PhD Interviewees - Pseudonyms, Profession, Gender, Age & Course (53 Interviewed) (Average Age: 46.2 years) (Pg.2					
No.	Pseudonym	Profession	Gender	Age	Course
28	Laura	principal consultant - environmental consulting	female	36	mbsr-2011
29	Lucia	senior program manager at a business school	female	47	emba-2012
30	Lynette	life coach & facilitator	female	47	imisa-2015
31	Mark	head of operations - financial management	male	39	emba-2015
32	Megan	oncologist	female	44	mbsr-2015
33	Merle	consultant (unemployed at the time of the interview)	female	41	emba-2015
34	Miles	facilities manager	male	46	emba-2016
35	Morris	CFO steel trading company	male	48	imisa-2008
36	Nadine	addictions counsellor / art therapist	female	44	imisa-2013
37	Naomi	head of policy & research	female	53	mbsr-2014
38	Natalie	wellness manager	female	48	mbsr-2015
39	Neil	business owner - safety & security equipment	male	39	emba-2014
40	Noelene	product & training administrator	female	52	mbsr-2001
41	Richard	manager	male	51	mbsr-2015
42	Rodney	administrator	male	45	emba-2014
43	Roy	attorney	male	45	emba-2013
44	Sascha	academic lecturer	female	46	mbsr-2010
45	Sheila	HR consultant	female	50	mbsr-2015
46	Shirley	consultant	female	48	emba-2015
47	Stanley	independent financial advisor	male	37	mbsr-2008
48	Thando	independent consultant - products distribution	male	40	emba-2014
49	Tony	manager - property company	male	34	emba-2016
50	Vanya	freelance journalist	female	41	mbsr-2008
51	Vivienne	coaching & mentorship to NGO's & individuals	female	55	mbsr-2015
52	Widaan	manager (unemployed at the time of the interview)	male	45	emba-2014
53	Yash	family physician GP / lecturer	male	50	imisa-2014

APPENDIX F

Manual Codes

1. APPLICATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

Formal practice

Informal practice

Mindfulness in daily life and at home

As a tool

As a way of being

Commitment to practice

Struggles with practice

Struggles with the training itself

Sharing it with others/influencing others

Sharing at work: resistance to doing so

2. MECHANISMS AND UNDERSTANDING OF MINDFULNESS

Wandering mind/managing mind/observer

Focus/open awareness

Universality/interconnection

Non-linear time

Embodiment

Kindness

Equanimity

3. CAPACITIES /PERCEIVED VALUE IN THE WORKSPACE

Turning towards the uncomfortable

Management of anxiety/anger

Complexity

Multiple perspectives/beginner's mind

Paradigm change

Harmonising/relating

Listening

Boundaries/saying no

Approach behaviour: turning towards people/situations/approach

Resilience

Compassion/self-compassion

Productivity

4. MINDFUL AGENCY

Authenticity

Confidence/belief in self

Self-evaluation

Authenticity

Diversity

Vulnerability

5. EXTRAS

Creativity

Decision making

Ethics

Problem solving

Stress management/energy management/sustainability/balance

Relaxation

Sleep

6. SHOULD THIS BE TAUGHT IN A CORPORATE SPACE/CRITIQUES?

Participants

Teachers/practitioners

What brought you to practice?

Mindfulness as a result of the interview

Reference to Buddhism

Other therapy

What am I not looking at?