Mindfulness, Self, and Society: Toward a Sociological Critique of Mindfulness-Based Interventions

By

Spencer Aaron Huesken

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Program in Sociology

in conformity with the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

April 2019

Abstract

Initially introduced to the clinical literature in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness has continued to emerge as an empirically model of intervention used for addressing individual barriers ranging from psychological disorders, to a diverse set of chronic physical illnesses (Kabat-Zinn 1979, 1990, Walsh 1980, Shapiro 2009, Baer 2015). This method of intervention is presented as a viable directive in the face of unaffordable health-care costs all well as other issues of accessibility within the medical system. More recently, mindfulness-based smartphone apps have become a popular way for individuals to tap into this meditative tradition contributing to a multi-billion-dollar health and wellness enterprise. Despite the financial success and literature pointing to the quantitative efficacy of these apps, there is very little qualitative work which investigates precisely how these interventions are taken up and contextualized by the individual in everyday life. To develop a sociological critique of mindfulness is to ask what exactly is going on when we are to 'direct' our attention purposefully. Further, how can such a seemingly benign verbal cue to direct attention to something be so profound in the way that it shapes our subjective experiences? This project was designed to explore how mindfulness might be informing the ways in which individuals are constructing, understanding, and practicing self and selfhood in a contemporary neoliberal context - more specifically, I wanted to know how mindfulness may facilitate the emergence of a culture in which the therapeutic narratives of self-management have been placed at the core of personhood. To approach this task accordingly, this project situates the experiences of six users of the Headspace Mindfulness app within the sociological literature to better understand what sort of meaning-making is occurring through the use of mindfulness-based interventions.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

At some point during my undergraduate degree, I was on the search for techniques I could employ to organize my time more effectively. I was particularly concerned with establishing effective writing habits. I came across an issue of TIME magazine published in 2014 which read: *Finding peace in a stressed-out, digitally dependent culture may just be a matter of thinking differently.* I hardly knew anything about mindfulness meditation at the time, other than it seemed to be everywhere I looked. There were posters around campus advertising an eight-week mindfulness-based stressed reduction course. These posters were presented in pastel colour palettes and coupled with therapeutic imagery of oceans, mountains, trees and beaches; hardly something anyone could miss. Further, I had seen numerous ads for meditation apps on my phone - all of which claimed to enhance my potential for personal success. Needless to say, I bought the magazine, and shortly thereafter, I signed up for the eight-week program at my school. I thought that mindfulness was a particularly novel and new-age type of approach to dealing with the stressors of everyday life, and I bought into the narrative that I would be able to unlock some sort of hidden potential within myself with this new skill.

Unbeknown to me, mindfulness had a rich history and still continues to serve as not only a cultural buzzword, but also a powerful practice, model of clinical intervention, and profound site of meaning-making. Historically associated with the teachings of Buddhism, mindfulness was introduced to the clinical literature in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn – the pioneer and designer of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course that I took. Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."

Following its initial adoption into the field of psychology, there has been a breadth of scholarly literature continuing to emerge which points to the empirical efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions as a method of treating anxiety and depressive disorders, addiction, and even more physically pervasive diseases (Kabat-Zinn 2003, Baer 2015, Creswell 2017). This method of intervention is presented as a viable directive in the face of unaffordable health-care costs all well as other issues of accessibility within the medical system. Most importantly, the training does not require anything other than a willing individual prepared to make change in their life.

The efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions has extended far past the original clinical models, contributing to a health and wellness enterprise estimated by the National Institute of Health to generate over $4 billion-dollars annually (Pickert 2014). More recently, mindfulness-based smartphone apps have become a popular way for individuals to tap into this meditative tradition. Mindfulness-based apps can be seen situated among other health and wellness applications such as calorie counters and fitness trackers. There are currently thousands of different mindfulness apps on the market (Hartwell, 2018). There are two particular mindfulness apps which most notably dominate the $1.2 billion mindfulness-meditation app market: 'Calm' and 'Headspace' (Potkewitz 2018). The success of these apps simply cannot be understated; In 2017, Calm was recognized as the iPhone App of the Year.

Of course, as a sociology student, my first question is: what exactly is going on here? As Elias (1978) argues, "sociology is concerned with problems of society, and society is something formed by oneself and other people together." To unpack any phenomena sociologically is not only to excavate a history of relationships between the individual and society, but also to locate one's self within this task. This is not to say that the proliferation of mindfulness is a 'problem' per se, however, there are particular problems which this intervention

addresses, and a context in which this occurs. On its face, the success of mindfulness brings saliency to three particular issues; first, as the TIME magazine article explicates, there is a stressed-out culture; second, there is a market demand for modes of self-intervention; third, these things work.

Sociology is often tasked with addressing the questions surrounding the meaning-making processes through which individuals come to understand themselves within a given social structure. Binkley (2014) argues that when we ask ourselves questions about what it means to live a life, we do so in reference to a particular point in time, and more specifically, in the face of particular types of economic structures. Further, Binkley argues that asking ourselves this question today, requires us to address our particular moment in capitalism – neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberal capitalism may be understood as a political rationality which marks the dominant economic paradigm of capitalism. Employing the same conceptual frameworks of classical liberalism, neoliberalism promotes the belief that the economy should be driven by free and self-regulating markets, with minimal intervention by the state (Thorson 2010). Neoliberalism however, may be seen as a specific ideology wherein the role of the state functions to create its own programs and initiatives which open the conditions for market activities (Binkley 2008). Further, through the lens of neoliberalism, social life becomes understood and organized though "the voluntaristic, entrepreneurial and self- responsible dispositions, upon which market forms depend" (Binkley 2009:68).

Informing the basis of this project, I wanted to know how mindfulness might be informing the ways in which individuals are constructing, understanding, and practicing self and selfhood in a contemporary neoliberal context - more specifically, I wanted to know how mindfulness may facilitate the emergence of a culture in which the therapeutic narratives of self-

management have been placed at the core of personhood. To approach this task accordingly, this project first pulls forward and operationalizes several key concepts which outline the micro functions of self and meaning making. These works are within the paradigm of symbolic interactionism and provide an insight into how individuals go about constructing the 'self' in everyday life. Key theories that are include Mead (1934), Blumer (1969), Stryker (1980), and Heise (1979). Second, this project explores the post-structuralist model of the self. The work of Foucault (1978-1979/2008), Rose (1998), and Binkley (2014), is used to further understand how political rationalities come to define the way we understand what it means to live a life. Further, these theorists are used to illustrate how psychological knowledge of the self constitutes the peripheral boundaries of our subjective experiences – that is, the way we come to understand ourselves through these terms. Third, this work covers the foundational models of mindfulness-based intervention such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Dialectical Behavior theory (DBT). These interventions are outlined to illustrate the function and application of mindfulness. Third, I explore the proliferation of mindfulness-based smartphone apps to illustrate the extent to which these interventions have been taken up by app developers, and ultimately allow for mindfulness- based interventions to be taken up by anybody with access to a smartphone.

Lastly, this project employs a qualitative exploration of six headspace users to situate their experiences within all of the aforementioned paradigms. Using the literature of mindfulness as a clinically substantiated mode of intervention and the sociological perspectives of self and identity, I conceptualize mindfulness as a structural institution, site of meaning-making, and as part of a culture in which the management of the mind continues to be seen as synonymous with

the cultivation for personal fulfillment. These analyses are used to advance the argument that the practice of mindfulness acts as a profound site of meaning making through which the individual reconstitutes their own notions of the self by managing role expectations, and analyzing their own thoughts and feelings of objects of observation. Further, the framework of neoliberalism effectively allows for a culture of productivity to become actualized. Within this framework, the meticulous management of private life as a trained skill through the use of mindfulness-based interventions becomes metonymically aligned with notions of potentially, well-being, fulfilment, and purpose. Through the effective management of individual attentional capacities, mindfulness further serves to delineate the parameters of what it means to live a meaningful life.

Chapter 2: Situating the Self

Understanding the individual in everyday life

Am I moral person? Am I prepared for this exam? Did I lock the door when I left my apartment? Throughout daily life we may continually find ourselves engaging in momentary dialogue as though there is a recipient of our speech who can answer such questions. That is to say, we are engaging in what Herbert Blumer (1969) explains as self-indication – from his theoretical perspective, we are locating our self as an object within the symbolic structures of social life. Blumer's work argues that these internal dialogues provide a method of crafting meaning across social context and we rely on this process to not only make sense of the external world, but our own experiences within it. One of the foundational purposes of this project is to begin to think about the ways in which mindfulness may be informing the way we are constructing, understanding, and practicing self, albeit in a particular time and place. The task of this chapter is to conceivably situate the self as a resource that can be drawn from, worked upon, and articulated across social contexts – the 'contexts' in this case, are themselves mediating structures which shape and constrain the parameters as to how we may think of the self.

To fulfil the task of this chapter, there are two particular questions which must be addressed. First; if we are to think of the self as a consistent process of negotiation, action, and reaction, then what exactly is this process and how does it function? Second, if context itself is the result of mediating structures in which we are able to think about the self, what are the structures and how do they shape and constrain our ability to engage in these processes? To address these questions, I draw on the relevant sociological literature within two specific paradigms. First, to construct a functional understanding of the self for the purpose of this

project, I situate the self within the literature of the symbolic interactionist perspectives. This paradigm tackles these fundamental processes which constitute meaning-making happening at the micro level of the individual. This work includes several seminal symbolic interactionist understandings of 'self' (Mead 1934, Blumer 1969, Stryker 1980, Heise 1979), which have aided in establishing symbolic interactionism as a theoretical paradigm of sociological inquiry. These theoretical contributions are situated alongside more recent work, which provide a contemporary context to which the original contributions of self-as-process may be applied. These theoretical contributions explain the social processes in which the self is constructed, understood, and practiced, as well as the broad social contexts in which these processes are taking place.

Second, I draw on post-structuralist perspectives of selfhood to provide linkages between the macro functions of society with the taken for granted knowledge we use to navigate our lived realities. More specifically, the dialogue or the thoughts internal to our innermost experiences rely on particular types of taken for granted knowledge which have not emerged in a vacuum. Pervasive sociocultural discourses shape our shared symbols, language, and norms, and have emerged historically out of conflict and asymmetrical distributions of power. The post-structural frameworks explored (Foucault 1978 1979, Rose 1990, Binkley 2014) are integral in positing the techniques of self-management and the experiential realities of individuals as consequences of dominant paradigms of thought, which change throughout time. The specific purpose of incorporating this particular paradigm, is again to link the macro and the micro, but also to illustrate that taken for granted knowledge is particularly transient, specific only to the context of place and space. This is most important to acknowledge as it avoids reducing the process of self to any essentialist claims of truth, but rather employs a functional reference point for the individual in everyday life which may address a present-day temporality of the individual, but

does not categorically close the lexicon surrounding 'the self.' That is, we can both locate the self as something to be spoken about or referenced, while maintaining the notion that structure acts to delineate the parameters through which we are able to do this.

The 'I' and the 'Me'

Having established a functional trajectory of this chapter the first task is to unpack the foundational literature which will guide the discussion of 'self' throughout this work – namely, the perspectives within the theoretical paradigm of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic Interactionism is most succinctly described as a micro sociological paradigm which addresses the manner in which society is created and maintained through face-to-face, repeated, meaningful interactions among individuals (Carter & Fuller 2016). While there is often an emphasis placed specifically on rituals of interaction within this sociological approach, Symbolic interactionism is more broadly concerned with exploring the various meaning-making processes with which we engage in everyday life. These meaning-making process ultimately constitute our notions of self on a moment-to-moment basis, ultimately contributing to our ability to understanding the lived experiences which make up the reflexive relationship of the individual and society.

While the nomenclature of 'symbolic interactionism' did not exist at the time of his writing, George Herbert Mead (1934) precipitated the development of this theoretical tradition with his work on the 'self.' Mead was focused on the emergent process which constitute a functional understanding of self. As he articulates:

> The self is something which has a development; it is not there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process (Mead 1934:135).

For Mead, we organize our identities in response to an ongoing dialectic of the 'I' and the 'Me,' - which not only reflects the importance we grant to social conditions when deciding how to think, feel or behave, but also illustrates a particular sort of deliberative agency responsible for making sense of our past, present or perceived future selves (Rohall, Milkie, & Lucas 2014). The 'Me' may be understood as the repository of sociocultural knowledge with which we engage as social actors. Mead referred to this as the 'generalized other.' The generalized other may often be illustrated as an instrument of social control, as sociocultural knowledge itself establishes particular constraints on the conduct of any individual within its constituent boundaries. Simply put, the 'me' may be coherently interpreted as a frame of reference which informs our moment-to-moment thoughts, feelings, and actions. This is not to say that society itself is a literal constitution of prescriptive 'ought' claims, but rather for Mead, it may be seen as a reference point from which we can see ourselves as "objects in the same way that other people see us and attribute symbols and meanings to their perceptions…You are able to think about who this person is that is you by adopting other people's perceptions of you" (Redmond 2015).

If we think of the 'Me' as the social self, we may begin to then situate our understanding of the I as the "active self" (Rohall et al. 2014). The "I" may be seen as the locality of action which is interpreted and evaluated by the 'Me.' As Mead articulates:

> The "I" of this moment is present in the "me" of the next moment. There again I cannot turn around quick enough to catch myself. I become a "me" in so far as I remember what I said. … The "I" in memory is there as the spokesman of the self of the second, or minute, or day ago. As given, it is a "me," but it is a "me" which was the "I" at the earlier time. If you ask, then, where directly in your own experience the "I" comes in, the answer is that it comes in as a historical figure. It is what you were a second ago that is the "I" of

the "me." It is another "me" that has to take that role. You cannot get the immediate

response of the "I" in the process. (Mead 1934/1962:174)

An important note to make here is that the relationship of self outlined by the function of the I

and the takes place in the form of a reflexive engagement with the individual, denoting both a

locality and temporality to this process. In dealing with temporality, the words 'everyday life'

may be seen all too often as a parenthetical throwaway phrase, but in fact, there is extensive

work which theorizes precisely the mundane intricacies in which these processes of self occur.

Theorizing Everyday Life

'Everyday life' - a term which is employed frequently throughout this work, often holds

connotations of that which is not pressing or important, however there is an extensive literature

which theorizes 'everyday life,' situating the mundane as a site of critical inquiry. The goal of

this work is to understand everyday life as the temporal and local site of action and meaning-

making, through which individuals experience their subjective reality. Susie Scott (2009:1)

argues that studying the mundane is not to miss the wider picture of large-scale social issues

which constitute our understanding of what it means to live a life, but rather "everyday life *is* the

wider picture." Further, Scott (2009:2) argues that placing concise parameters on what exactly

constitutes 'everyday life' is difficult as that which is often understood as mundane is relative to

the individual. This does not merely indicate that everyday life is most adequately explored

through interpretive analysis. Differing theoretical paradigms denote what constitutes the

mundane and how structural forces are taken up in the routine activities and behaviors with

which we engage. Gardiner (2002) presents key conceptualizations of everyday life, unpacking

and contextualizing the concept as an intricate and nuanced processes of reflexivity. A

postmodern conceptualization denotes everyday life as something which has its own history, problematizing the taken for granted knowledge we use to navigate our subjective experience.

This places everyday life as something understood as much more than merely a homogenized and shared reality. Within the scope of this research, the task is not to tease out what particular paradigm most succinctly accounts for the problematics of everyday life, but rather to merely study the meaning-making processes which are taken up at the level of the individual. This is to say that for the purpose of this research, using an interpretive method of analysis as to how individuals go about navigating the complexities of their daily lives, sheds light into the structural forces which shape and constrain their subjective experiences, and the taken for granted knowledge which is used to reflect on their understandings of selfhood. This is most important for this particular research as the subjectivity of the individual experience is explored through the lens of intervention strategies, and the reflexive and interpretive mechanisms which constitute meaning-making, is what constitutes this project. Thus, for the purposes of this project everyday life is understood as the process through which individuals constitute and navigate meaning as it applies to their own subjective reality. For a detailed critique surrounding the theorization of everyday see Gardiner 'critiques of everyday life,' (2002).

The literature explored thus far evidently places the self as an emergent process of socialization which requires a reflexive interaction between the individual and everyday life. More specifically, what can be seen in these processes which constitute the construction of the self is not the presence unsocialized being to which socio-cultural symbols are applied, but rather what Martin (2015) articulates as 'deliberative agency,' in response to Mead's (1934) work. As Martin (2015) argues, "both our individual psychologies and our sociocultural practices and

institutions are in a constant state of continuous, conditional interaction within which both are constantly emergent." Examining meads Mead's 'I and Me' assembly of the self, there is a salient claim that runs through his work in that the self can be seen as "multifaced, made up of interdependent and independent, mutually reinforcing and conflicting parts" (Stryker & Burke 2000). Given this complex interplay of self-as-process, the question remains - in what capacity or context can we really ask ourselves "who am I?" The ways that we understand ourselves as products of situated social interaction, contingent upon the societal structures within which we engage, has precipitated and sustained different perspectives within the theoretical paradigm of symbolic interactionism which are tasked with answering this question. What follows is a history of some of these modes of inquiry which are relevant within the scope of this project.

Emergent streams of Symbolic Interactionism

Following the seminal contributions of Mead 1934 in theorizing the individual and society, symbolic interactionism followed two distinct schools of thought; the Chicago and Iowa Schools. Herbert Blumer's (1969/1986) work established the tradition of the Chicago school, and Manford Kuhn's (1954) established the Iowa school of thought. Continuing with the tradition in which the concept of self is to be understood in terms of a process occurring through a reflexive dialogue between society and the individual, these two schools of thought both arrive at a conceptual foundation that society and the individual both take on meanings through social interaction. As Stets and Sterpe (2000) argue:

> The symbolic capacity of humans means they have minds; they think. When individuals
> think about themselves, self-conceptions are constructed that refer to who and what they
> are, and these self-conceptions are shaped by the social process. Contained in this

imagery is the idea that humans, both individually and collectively, are active and creative.

Blumer (1969/1986) believed that the temporal aspects of meaning-making did not allow for a general model which could quantitatively measure social behavior, arguing that because the meanings that underlie human interaction are consistently being negotiated and renegotiated, and that numerical representations of social action do not capture the various meanings which are continually emerging during social interaction. Blumer argued that a qualitative analysis of human interaction was fundamentally the best way to ascertain a rich analysis of the construction of meaning for individuals; this began Blumer's 'interpretive method,' which would come to be situated within the tradition of symbolic interaction.

Conversely, Kuhn (1954) prioritized a model which employed rigorous empirical work to capture the meaning-making processes which constitutes our notions of self. For Kuhn, the self was the most significant object within the meanings of social action, and a core notion of self could conceivably be modeled as a set of stable self-meanings, which provide predictability to behavior, and continuity of interaction. Kuhn argued that although structure is constructed and maintained through symbolic interaction, once structure is in place, it constrains further interaction, establishing it as something which constitutes networks of positions that organize relations among persons. Further, the positions of individuals within these networks establishes specific role expectations, and these could be empirically explored and linked to the notion of self.

Emphasizing the notion that individuals take on roles within social structure in accordance with the role expectations that are influenced by the structure, Kuhn introduced the twenty statements test as a method of quantitatively measuring the self-concepts of individuals.

The test is quite simple, asking the question 'who am I?' Respondents are required to ask themselves the questions twenty times, filling in a blank line of text each time. Responses on the test are divided into four modes; the physical self- which is in reference to physical characteristics; the social self- which is in reference to roles and statuses (student, parent, gender et cetera); the reflective self- in reference to feelings or traits; and the oceanic self – referencing dimensions of self that do not easily fit into the preceding categories (Rohall et al. 2014).

The two divergent models of self within a symbolic interacts paradigm established by Kuhn and Blumer place a different emphasis on the relationship between the individual and social structure, and ultimately differ in regards to the scope of how meaning can be interpreted. In either case however, social structure plays a significant role in mediating the meaning-making processes which constitute the notions of self. Social structures vary in scope, they can be defined as proximal structures such as family units or sports teams; intermediate units such as institutions and organizations; and large social structures, which may be seen as those features of the stratification system such as race/ethnicity, class, gender, and socioeconomic status (Stets and Serpe 2000). These social structures have historically, and continue to, act as social boundaries which yield significant impact on the individual over the course of a lifespan (ibid). What follows are more contemporary theories of self within the symbolic interactionist paradigm. These theoretical perspectives further constitute the relationship between the individual and social structure, and the ways we understand ourselves as a result of this relationship.

Identity theory

Building on the structural model of the symbolic interactionist tradition, Sheldon Stryker (1987) introduced identity theory to further understand the roles and narratives that we use to

understand ourselves within social settings; namely the ways in which we construct identities. Interested in the motivational process with which individuals engage to meet expectations, Stryker focused particularly on identifying the intersection of traits, roles, and social categories (Rohall et al. 2014). Employing the notion that social structure provides a basis for role identification, Stryker was interested in predicting the behavior of the individual when they identify with a role within a social structure. Identity in this case, is best understood as the set of meanings attached to roles individuals occupy in the social structure (Stryker, [1980] 2002). Within the scope of his work, Stryker (2007:1084) defines social structure as "the patterned regularities in human interactions," arguing that "most of a person's social interaction tends to be with the same or only slowly changing casts of others who do essentially the same things on a repetitive basis in either group." Moreover, within this operational definition of structure, Stryker situates identity and role identity as interchangeable terms within the scope of his work, arguing that "identities are cognitive aspects of selves—self-cognitions or self-concepts; they are defined as internalized role expectations attached to positions in organized sets of social relationship" (ibid)

From this perspective, individuals may be seen to have many different identities across time and situational context, and invocation of specific identities can be probabilistically determined based on motivation (Francis & Adams 2018). Stryker argues that motivation can be seen as commitments to social roles which are based on intensity and volume of the social ties within the delineated model of social structure. The commitment to social roles creates what is called identity salience. Regarding predictability, the salience of an identity within a stratified social hierarchy will likely determine the extent to which it will become enacted in a social situation (Francis & Adams 2018). This theoretical perspective can be employed to understand

how people take on identity roles, and the context in which they do so. Mary Grigspy (2009) employs Stryker's theoretical framework to understand different identity roles within a university setting. Taking place at a Midwest State University,' Grigspy interviewed 60 students, and followed many of these students around for a day attempting to explore how they perceived their identities. While Grigsby's study is highly qualitative in that it is not functionally predicting the identities that students will enact, however it depicts both the structural strains, and the processes through which undergraduates establish their identities and social ties. Grigspy draws heavily on Stryker's identity theory to explain the way these identities within the school become negotiated and understood. Grigspy lists four types of particular roles of the 'student' within the university. The Careerist: someone seeking an occupation; The credentialist: someone for whom a diploma matters more than grades or learning; The Collegiate: someone for whom sports and sorority or fraternity membership mattered; The Alternative: a mix of devout and countercultural students; and The Academic: those students for whom knowledge was more important than careers or other things (Rohall et al. 2014:124).

What is important to Stryker's theory and later, to the research of Grigspy (2009), are the ways in which individuals embody behavior contingent on the role expectations within the social structure. If we are to think of our own identities such as carpenter, student, teacher, musician, Stryker's theoretical perspective presents a way that we can further understand the fluidity of our identity in regards to the specific role expectation of a given social structure. One of the questions which may then be asked is, how are identities stable at all? Cast (2003) argues that individuals adjust their own behavior not only to maintain their own identities, but also as a method of modeling interactions which elicit maintenance commitments of others. Simply put, what may be seen is interactional relationships which are reciprocally reinforced. Stets and

Burke (2005) argue that the ways in which individuals seek confirmation of self-meaning serves to ground the certainty of identity and social roles within an ever-changing world. This is perhaps one of the ways in which a 'stable' self may be thought of as an object while still maintaining the fluidity of role identity. More specifically, what is central to this theoretical perspective is the notion that these roles are not static, and continuously becoming mediated by structural conditions.

Stryker's framework advances a model in which identity can be understood concretely, while also acknowledging the inevitable variance throughout structure and social context. Moreover, the structural mediation of role saliency seen in this perspective is not solely rooted in physical or institutional structures; any social context can arguably manifest the same framework. While it is evident that identity theory's primary concern lies in understanding behaviors of the individual in accordance with perceptions of social roles, it is seemingly placing the processes as one which relies heavily on sociocognitive processes such as role taking, reflected appraisals, and a definition of the social situation (Burke & Stets 2000).

Affect control theory

David R. Heise (1987) argues that 'affect' is not adequately accounted for when establishing symbolic interactionist models of the self. While Stryker's later work incorporated a model which accounted for emotion, Heise (1987) argues that emotion and affect are often used interchangeable within the literature, employing a specific conceptional model which distinguishes 'affect' from 'emotion.' Affect is the core concept of ACT, and is differentiated from emotion in that emotion is defined as the "experienced signal that an event has occurred," whereas Affect can be seen as a "broad term encompassing emotions, as well as sentiments,

impressions, and motives." (Heise 1979 in Francis & Adams 2018:9) Heise further describes

sentiments as:

> the established affective meaning attached to actors, behaviors, and objects (and more
>
> recently, modifiers). In ACT, actors and objects are persons (codified as identities) and
>
> behaviors are verbs. Modifiers include social identities that exist across situations (e.g.,
>
> gender and ethnicity), personality traits, and moods (Heise 1979 in Francis & Adams
>
> 2018:10).

Incorporating elements of symbolic interactionism and identity theory to explain the role of

sentiments in identity processes, ACT argues that sentiments aid in interpreting how well we are

producing our identities, as well as those of others (Heise 1985 in Rohall, Milkie, & Lucas

2015:124). This may arguably aid in explaining the parenthetical 'gut-feeling' dialogue we so

often employ as though there is empirical merit to the way that we 'feel' within a situation.

One of the primary objectives of ACT is to quantify these sentiments by measuring the

classifications in a hypothesized social setting. Heise (2002) qualifies three principles upon

which role sentiments in interactions may be understood. The first: Individuals create events to

confirm the sentiments that they have about themselves and others in the current situation; the

second: if events do not work to maintain sentiments, then individuals reidentify themselves and

others; lastly, in the process of building events to confirm sentiments, individuals perform the

social roles that are fundamental to society. To effectively quantify the situational parameters

ACT delineates three particular aspects of sentiment to qualify it as a measurable phenomenon

which constitute the EPA scale; Evaluation (goodness or badness), Potency (powerfulness or

powerlessness), and activity (liveliness or quietness) (Heise 2002, Burke and Stets 2009, Rohall

et al 2014:124). As Burke and Stets (2009:56) articulate:

Affect control theorists apply the EPA dimensions of meaning to each feature of an event. Thus, there would be EPA ratings for the actor, the behavior, the object, and the setting (ABOS), which are viewed as the primary elements of interaction. In order to assess the average person's affective reactions to each of the ABOS dimensions, Heise and his collaborators draw samples of individuals and ask them to provide an evaluation/potency/activity profile for concepts related to a variety of actors, behaviors, others, objects, and settings. For each concept, respondents use a scale that usually ranges from +4 to −4 in order to assess evaluation, potency, and activity. Zero is neutral on each of the dimensions—being neither good nor bad, strong nor weak, active nor passive.

From this scale, empirical data may be extracted from social contexts. Rohall et al. (2014:126) outline a simple thought experiment in which sentiments could be compared by instructing the readers to think about the feelings towards those who are considered as friends to those who are considered rivals or enemies. The authors argue that we use these apply these sentiments to roles and statuses within society, and these sentiments remain culturally specific and linguistically mediated.

To demonstrate his model, Heise (2002) explored sentiments by comparing the way individuals rate family members across cultures. Within the scope of his work it can be seen that Japanese individuals evaluated family members less positively than in the United States and Canada, whereas in China, family is evaluated more positively than in the United States and Canada. Moreover, when establishing our own identities Heise and Mackinnon (2010) argue that we are likely to pick identities which confer with our own EPA sentiments we hold for ourselves. For example, if one holds a particularly favorable sentiment about themselves, such as being virtuous, or generous (evaluation), they are less likely to assume deviant identities. Further it is

likely that individuals will take on role identities which confer with the potency of these characteristics. This can range from life decisions such as career choices through to choice of activities or recreational hobbies (Rohall, et al. 2014:127).

It should be noted that ACT is making no predictive claims as to what roles and behaviors with which one may identify, but rather establishing a model which can empirically asses affective reaction to individuals and phenomena. This ties into what is arguably the most integral component in differentiating the core tenants of ACT from the structural symbolic interactionist framework of Identity Theory; the ways in which 'self' is conceptualized. Much of the symbolic interactionist literature in both psychological and sociological frames of thought reflects enlightenment thinking, that is, the structuralist models of self which are based entirely in roles and institutions (Francis & Adams 2018:11).

More specifically, MacKinnon and Heise (2010) refer to the single self of a unique individual as a "persona" comprised of everything in that person's identity set, including social roles, traits, and modifiers. It also includes the person's "biographical me," the sum of past experiences that have produced the current configuration of identities, traits, and sentiments. In any situation, the individual will construct a situational self by selecting institutionally appropriate identities from their identity set, or by adopting a new identity from the cultural pool of identities if necessary. To confirm the chosen identity, the person will enact the associated role. Identities selected will depend on the potential for self-actualization (affirmation of self-sentiments) (Mackinnon and Heise 2010 in Francis & Adams 2018:11,12). With the contribution of ACT, MacKinnon and Heise (2010) establish an important theoretical position. The authors argue that identities are "defined by their place in language rather than in institutions." With the sentiments test identities can be further be placed in a model of the self which is concretely

defined, yet by understanding the structural constraints as linguistically mediated, the EPA

model can account for epistemological advances in knowledge from recent decades, while

avoiding a purely post-structuralist notion that there is no stable, core self that transcends

situational context. The literature outlined thus far, contributes to a functional understanding of

how exactly individuals locate the self within the messiness of everyday life, and how this can be

seen as an ongoing process of socialization which is contingent on the structural factors which

mediate interaction and the linguistic symbols which are used to navigate place and space. This

contributes to a micro sociological framework delineating the individual in everyday life.

However, even with a functionally 'fluid' understanding of the 'self' there are still broad societal

frameworks which constitute understandings of what exactly it means to live a life, and these

ultimately shape the boundaries of how these micro processes function.

Post-Structuralist model of Self

Exploring a post structuralist perspective of the self will aid in further understanding

what exactly constitutes the parameters through which our subjective realities become defined,

but what exactly is a post structuralist model of the self? Relying on operationally defined

models of interaction, behavior, and ultimately the self, requires us first to apply a particular type

of knowledge about what it means to live a life. The very fact that we situate the self as an object

to be studied, consequently enabling an atomic reduction of rudimentary biological functions to

become the model through which we understand our 'selves,' tells us that there is indeed an *a

priori* knowledge used to determine what it means to be a self. Knowledge can be seen not just

as something that exists or 'is,' but also as something that acts, and that does, namely an

apparatus through which notions of 'truth' are thrust upon the individual in everyday life. The

most mundane activities of our days such as brushing our teeth, eating the correct amount of

protein with our breakfast, or matching our trousers to our shirt, require us to draw on knowledge

about what we ought to be doing so as to regulate our behavior in accordance to what is defined

as 'normal' or 'true.'

The work of Michel Foucault (1978) introduces the framework of neoliberal governmentality.

Pointing to the dominant political rationalities of neoliberalism, Foucault's analysis illustrates the

ways in which society is rendered governable through techniques and strategies which place the

well-being of the population as a diffuse responsibilitization of the individual. As individuals

effectively take-on knowledge about what it means to be a 'good' citizen, they concretely

establish ideas of the individual, while justifying their actions in terms of a wider social

responsibility Schecter (2010). Further, neoliberal governmentality allows for state problems to

become problems of the marketplace. The social net of responsibility through which individuals

understand what it means to be live a life become actualized through the promises of freedom,

autonomy, and market consumption behavior (ibid). In his lecture series *The birth of biopolitics:*

lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault (1978-1979) points to a reorganization of self-

government, in which individuals have come to be delineated largely as rational individuals, and

the promotion of individuals as economic-rational actors, whose morality is rooted in the abilities

to perform cost-benefit analyses in given circumstances, so as to further the economic

potentiality, substantiating the belief they act upon self-determined decisions, or express the

existence of free-will divorced from the incentives of the state.

What is the takeaway from placing our notions of self as merely consequences of political

rationalities thrust upon us and taken up in everyday life? While this may elicit the feeling that

our lived realities are analogous to the default operating system on a computer,

this theoretical paradigm allows for a further understanding as to how the individual interacts with social structure. The implications of this process leave the ways in which we understand ourselves and those around us to remain fundamentally contingent on our ability to engage with dominant paradigms of knowledge, revealing power not as an apparatus which governs through visibly subversive tactics of oppression, but rather as something which often feels natural to us. While this framework may not necessarily aid in a specific understanding of the interpersonal process on a micro level of interaction like the theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism, it most adequately accounts for the unintended consequences that occur as a result of the production of different forms of knowledge.

Nikolas Rose (1990) employs a Foucauldian framework to further understand this relationship, specifically pointing to the emergence of the psy fields as those which define the ways we think about ourselves. Rose (1990) argues,

> In the complex web they have traced out, the truths of science and the powers of expert act as relays that bring the values of authorities and the goals of business into contact with the dreams and actions of us all…the power of these technologies lies in their capacity to offer means by which the regulation of selves - by others and by ourselves – can be made consonant with contemporary political principles, moral ideals, and constitutional exigencies

Rose argues that over the course of the 20th century, human beings began to understand their distress in psychological terms, the observations of the body and the mind has allowed the professional to know the self through psychological criterion, and these ultimately become understood as empirical truths, moving through bodies, shaping, constraining, and modifying the

boundaries within which is our subjective experiences. The work of Rose brings Foucault's (1973) theoretical paradigm into contemporary political cannon.

Within contemporary society, the proliferation of pop-psychological discourse, through self-help literature, positive psychology, and narratives of self-cultivation may be linked to the political rationalities originally outlined by Foucault (1978). Speaking to framework of neoliberal governmentality, thinking about ourselves through these terms, and managing our experiences through the techniques these form of knowledge produce becomes aligned as a way in which the individual becomes takes on the responsibilities of a citizen.

With the therapeutic interventional models often employed in these fields- such as mindfulness training, self-care rituals, and positive affirmations, the interplay between the subjective dimensions of human agency, and the objective structures that compel people to behave in the way they do are understood through the maximization of the internal capacities for self-regulation. As Far as psychological knowledge is concerned, we can move past the frameworks which have a preoccupation with normatively negative states such as neurosis, psychoses, disorders of various kinds. As Binkley (2014:25) puts it, fields such as positive psychology can "map out with the same measure of scientific precision applied to mental pathologies, the psychological states identified with joy, flourishing, expressive well-being, and happiness itself." For Binkley (2014) This form of knowledge takes place in a particular time of capitalism – neoliberal capitalism. Within this, "everyday lifestyle choices of individuals are viewed as elements of larger projects of self-development, implemented by therapeutic discourses of risk management, self-realization, and enhanced personal well-being" (Binkley 2007:111).

The literature explored in this chapter provides insight into two particular models of understanding the processes by which the self may become constituted. The theoretical paradigm of symbolic interactionism explains the particular processes through which individuals engage and construct meaning in their lives. This is shaped and constrained by the social structures within which the meaning-making processes is occurring. Symbolic interactionism allows us to understand the fluidity of the role-identities and ultimately the socially constructed nature of the self. More specifically, it elucidates the function of socialization in transmitting symbolic meaning across social contexts. The Post structuralist perspectives of self further explicate the parameters through which these micro processes can occur, that is, the broad societal rationalities which are employed and define the peripheral margins of normality. Further, self-regulation, becomes intimately coupled with political rationalities preoccupied with narratives such as 'freedom' and 'choice' enabling individuals to think about themselves in particular sorts of ways, using particular sorts of language, and ultimately allowing for the self to become a project of personal undertaking. For the purposes of this work, the self may be understood as a consistent process of reflexive engagement, which is fluidly shaped by place, space, and context.

The literature surrounding the self will be used to further examine the intervention of mindfulness meditation. The symbolic interactionist literature is integral in illuminating the profound meaning-making processes occurring at the micro level when individuals engage in this particular intervention, and the post-structuralist models of subjectification are integral in elucidating the tensions that occur as we regulate our private emotional life through neoliberal rationalities.

Chapter 3 Mindfulness: A Way to Train the Mind

Given that the self can may be seen as an emergent property of the meaning-making processes we use to make sense of our realities, it would remain rather salient that the various modes of self-intervention available to us have profound potential to shape the way we experience our social world, and consequently our selves. Perhaps we have had someone tell us we need to be more 'mindful.' This may be in the form of a teacher instructing us on how we ought to manage our time more efficiently, a manager requiring us to pay closer attention to the work-related task at hand, or even a close friend coaching us through the various stages of an emotional experience so as to make sense of the whole situation. The point here, is that this term 'mindfulness' is often thrown around as a parenthetical cue referencing a particular type of attention, with a particular type of intention. This term may or may not hold minimal purchase in our day-to-day rituals of interaction, however there is a rapidly growing body of literature which points to mindfulness, not merely as a spiritual tradition, appropriated as a contemporary western signifier of being 'woke,' but rather as an empirically examinable method of intervention with substantive potential to profoundly change the subjective experiences of the individual on a moment-to-moment basis.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the key mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) credited within the academic literature such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), and dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT). This chapter will provide a background regarding the implementation of these mindfulness as models of clinical intervention as well as an overview of how these models work. Further, this chapter will explore the more recent

integration of mindfulness-based interventions as smartphone apps, which have proven to be dominant on the smartphone app market. This chapter will illustrate precisely how these modes of intervention function, serving to both place mindfulness as a substantiated practice, as well as to explicate the techniques through which individuals engage with, and take up knowledge surrounding the individual in everyday life.

With its introduction to western psychology by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1979 in the form of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, mindfulness may be seen as somewhat of an umbrella term in its clinical application, as it is explicated as a prescriptive treatment of circumstances spanning the experiential landscape of selfhood - ranging from the management of chronic illness, the treatment of addiction, to simply reframing our understanding of the radically mundane intricacies of everyday life with meaning and purpose. Kabat-Zinn, a pioneer in the field, defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (1994:4). More specifically, mindfulness is often seen as both a process and an outcome which involves both knowing and shaping the mind – "an awareness that arises out of intentionally attending in an open and discerning way to whatever is arising in the present moment" (Shapiro 2009:555). Despite the varying interventions which utilize the practice as part their regimen of treatment, the aforementioned definition and understanding of mindfulness as practice remain consistent throughout the literature.

The first wave of mindfulness-based intervention in western psychology is attributed to the work of Kabat-Zinn, who demonstrated the efficacy of the practice for management of anxiety and depressive disorders, as well as diagnosed illness which included chronic pain (Karremans & Papies 2017). Further incorporation into western psychology may be attributed to scholars such as Walsh (1980), who posited the adaptation and application of the meditative traditions of

mindfulness which are rooted in spiritual practice as an empirical approach within secular clinical or medical contexts, further substantiating it as a clinical application Kabat-Zinn (2003). In the recent decade, mindfulness has largely been taken up as an area of interest by neuroscientists and cognitive psychologists. These fields are largely concerned with understanding the '*how*' of mindfulness- that is the ways in which mindfulness is associated with specific neurological functions of executive control, attention regulation, emotional regulation, and structural changes in the brain (Karremans & Papies 2017). Further, mindfulness has also been of concern to social psychologists for its abilities to cultivate the capacities of self-regulation, self-awareness, and self-related processes (ibid).

The Emergence of Clinical Mindfulness Intervention

When we see mindfulness training programs, workshops, or classes advertised on posters or online, it is likely that the program is some form of, or has been premised upon, mindfulness-based stress reduction. Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) was pioneered by Kabat-Zinn (1979, 1990) and was first implemented to treat medical patients with chronic pain and stress related conditions (Baer 2015). MBSR has been further applied with more specific populations, such as cancer patients, individuals with heart disease, or even with couples seeking to enhance their relationship satisfaction (Karremans & Papies 2017). The latter illustrates that MBSR is not only used to treat individuals with chronic ailments - many healthy individuals participate in the program simply to improve their capacities to navigate daily life. Broadly speaking, MBSR is used to improve health, quality of life and social functioning (De Vibe, Bjørndal, Fattah, Dyrdal, Halland & Tanner-Smith 2017). Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program and its functions may be seen as the bedrock upon which newer applications are built and implemented, making the specific structure of the program important to delineate.

The intervention utilizes mindfulness meditation training in a group setting, with the duration of the program typically Spanning 8-weeks - with each session lasting up to a few hours. (Baer 2015). Classes are not divided based on participant diagnosis, rather, everyone is grouped together in the class setting for the training, with the exception of the specific subsets of patients who utilize the treatment in a private setting. The instructors who lead the sessions also engage in the activities themselves, often having established their own mindfulness practices. Participants are given homework throughout the duration of the program which often requires them to complete meditation assignments at home – these typically take 45 minutes to complete (Pickert 2014). Throughout the eight-week program, each session has a different exercise which the instructor guides the patients through – these are key components which take place during the MBSR program, and are aimed at cultivating an awareness in daily life.

The first session employs a foundational exercise which is intended to introduce the experience of bringing attentional awareness to tasks which are typically conducted without them – a state that is often referenced as 'autopilot' (Baer 2015). The most common exercise used to achieve this is the 'raisin exercise.' In this exercise, the instructor guides participants through the eating of a raisin - the purpose is to bring attention to the sensations and experiences of the present moment- in this case, eating raisins. Participants are encouraged to engage in the eating of the raisin with curiosity and without any sort of judgment. The key is to only experience the current sensory sensation of the raisin. The idea here: bringing awareness to tasks and activities which we currently do with little to no awareness – or on 'autopilot,' can fundamentally change the nature of the experience itself. In principle, MBSR advocates that this increased awareness of experience "can lead to increased freedom to make choices about what to do in a variety of situations" (Baer 2015:7). Following the experience of the first session, participants are

instructed to apply this mindfulness exercise to their eating habits throughout the rest of the week. This specific component of mindfulness intervention can be seen in the literature as a potential method of treating obesity, specifically achieved through its minimization of emotional and unnecessary eating, particularly by addressing the "automatic and inattentive reactions around food" (Mantzios & Wilson 2015).

The raisin exercise is one of many activities which is used to cultivate the capacities for attention and awareness. Another integral exercise implemented throughout the program and found in many others, is the body scan - Also guided by the instructor via verbal cues, this exercise aids participants in cultivating an awareness of bodily sensations. The key to this exercise, is again, for participants to merely notice the sensations occurring through each of the body parts the instructor guides them to. The goal is not to relax, or to change anything, but rather to be aware. It is an exercise to train the attentional capacities of the mind.

> The body scan provides an opportunity to practice several important mindfulness skills, including deliberately directing attention in a particular way, noticing when attention has wandered off and returning it gently to the present moment, and being open, curious, accepting, and nonjudgmental about the observed experience, regardless of how pleasant or unpleasant it is (Baer 2015:8)

Further, following the same principals, both sitting and walking meditation are implemented throughout these sessions as well. These exercises are also intended to bring awareness to the breath, and to the body, so as to focus on the sensations and direct attention back to the cues if it wonders. There is no correct way to complete these exercises, the purpose is solely to cultivate the capacity to remain focused on the moment-to-moment without anticipation of the future or rumination of the past. It should be noted that participants are not necessarily encouraged to

endure pain by any means; they may indeed choose to act on pain, discomfort or any of the tension which are coming into their awareness during the exercises, the emphasis is on executing any actions with said mindful awareness.

One of the core tenants of the MBSR program may also be seen in the group discussion portion of the sessions. Functioning much like a group therapy session, participants are encouraged to elaborate on their experiences with the exercises throughout the week, and particular obstacles they may have faced in daily life (Bear 2015:11). These portions of the sessions provide a safe-space for participants to open up about their own subjective experiences, as well as to hear those of others. These discussions give the participants the ability to think about the particular way they felt in their day-to-day, moment-to-moment experiences, which may be advantageous for future mindfulness practice. Again, the integral component here is to cultivate the capacities for attention and awareness.

The culmination of the skills acquired through the duration of the program are implemented in an all-day meditation session taking place on week 6 of the program. Typically, this session is conducted without speaking or communicating with others. As Baer (2015:13) articulates, "The extended period of silence encourages more intensive self-awareness and provides the opportunity to practice nonjudgmental observation of experience, without engaging in habitual avoidance strategies." This day may be seen as analogous to 'silent-retreat' models, which are popularized by meditation practitioners worldwide. Despite the relatively qualitative orientation of MBSR, the empirical efficacy of this intervention has also been demonstrated within the literature. Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of MBSR intervention data demonstrating the efficacy of the intervention both in an observed and controlled setting. There were several criteria for inclusion in the meta-analysis. All studies

utilized the same operationalization of mindfulness, and followed the group setting template with the aforementioned components of the sessions. Another qualification for inclusion was that there were quantitative outcomes of the studies available, and could be derived from standardized and validated scales – these studies also had available post-intervention, but not necessarily follow-up data available (Grossman et al. 2004).

Coding the available studies based on design, researchers employed the conceptual framework of health to include dimensions of both physical and mental health - the researchers assessed the effect of a mindfulness meditation intervention on these health status measures.

> Mental health constructs comprised scales such as psychological wellbeing and symptomatology, depression, anxiety, sleep, psychological components of quality of life, or affective perception of pain. Physical health constructs were medical symptoms, physical pain, physical impairment, and physical component of quality of life questionnaires (Grossman et al. 2004:37).

> The sample of the controlled study was limited to ten of the studies initially identified, which had randomized quasi-experimental design providing control groups from which researchers could extrapolate effect size information. Out of the ten controlled studies, only five applied physical health variables as outcome measures. The sample contained (*N*=771) individuals across the controlled studies, with 338 of them receiving treatment in the form of mindfulness training. The researchers concluded that within their sampling frame, the MBSR displayed consistent and relatively strong effect sizes across both dimensions of health with a mean effect size of (*d*=0.54). This indicates a medium effect size, indicating statistically significant results.

The observational studies lacked the control groups for comparison but contained pre and post intervention information for the participants in the MBSR program. The analysis contained data from 18 investigations and (*N*=894) individuals. Similar to the controlled design, the effect size was (*d*=0.50) and (*d*=0.42) for mental health and physical health respectively. What the data from this meta-analysis is illustrating, is that MBSR had indeed had a beneficial impact for the mental and physical well-being across a range of diagnosed ailments. The researchers conclude that "mindfulness training might enhance general features of coping with distress and disability in everyday life, as well as under more extraordinary conditions of serious disorder or stress."

In a more recent meta-analysis, De Vibe et al. (2017) examine the impact of MBSR across a much larger controlled sample size. Their review of intervention efficacy contained 101 randomized controlled trials with a total of (*N*=8,135) participants from USA, Europe, Asia and Australia. Twenty-two trials included persons with mild or moderate psychological problems, 47 targeted people with various somatic conditions and 32 of the studies recruited people from the general population (De Vibe et al. 2017). The researcher reports:

> MBSR has a moderately large effect on outcome measures of mental health, somatic health, and quality of life including social function at post-intervention when compared to an inactive control. If 100 people go through the MBSR program, 21 more people will have a favorable mental health outcome compared to if they had been put on a wait-list or gotten only the usual treatment (De Vibe et al. 2017:7).

While the researchers suggest a change in the way trials are conducted, they conclude that the intervention is a moderately well-documented mode of intervention and an "attractive option to improve health, handle stress, and cope with the strains of life" (De Vibe et al. 2017:10).

Towards a Cognitive Explanation of Mindfulness

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is premised largely on the framework and protocol of MBSR. The core tenants of MBSR such as the group setting, format, homework, and even the activities such as the raisin exercise, body scan, and walking meditation are all included as part of the MBCT program (Baer 2015). In fact, the pioneers of the MBCT who are cognitive therapists, took part in Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness-based stress reduction program. MBCT was introduced primarily to prevent relapse of individuals who have experienced depressive disorder. As Kabat-Zinn (2013) explicates in a forward for an MBCT manual

> The ultimate aim of the MBCT program is to help individuals make a radical shift in their relationship to the thoughts, feelings, and body sensations that contribute to depressive relapse… [MBCT] has the potential to enrich and transform the discipline itself and, ultimately, our understanding of the nature of the psyche and what we call the "self" (Kabat-Zinn in Segal, Williams, & Teasdale 2013 xii, xiii).

Despite the similarities in the foundational components of intervention seen with MBSR, MBCT places emphasis on the cognitive aspects of subjective experience, including techniques used to identify thinking patterns and address them much like the tenants of cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). The pioneers of MBCT- Segal, Williams & Teasdale established the name of the intervention out of the randomized 8-week clinical trial of their 'attention control training' program, which included the application of mindfulness. The therapists were interested in identify warning signs of troublesome psychological states, and the need to "deploy attention in ways that would starve the self- perpetuating, relapse- related thought– affect cycles of cognitive resources," also seen as the process of 'decentering' (Segal et al. 2013). The therapists acknowledged that MBSR is an extremely effective approach, stating that rather than being simply exposed to a set of skills to utilize when stress arises, individuals were "actually learning

a more general mode of mind that was especially helpful in relating to difficult experiences," however they felt that MBSR left too much responsibility to the individual, and wanted help patients solve their problems, or as they articulate it – 'untie the knots' (ibid).

The therapists delineate 'modes of the mind,' outlining the ways in which different patterns of brain interaction are related to different tasks and activities. Segal et al. assert that the modes of the mind are much like gears of a vehicle and that different modes of the mind are useful for different tasks, the modes of the mind change based on activity and task. Lending credence to the phrase 'changing your mind,' the therapist assert that mindfulness training can be thought of as a way for individuals to recognize and shift these gears of the mind. The authors differentiate between two particular modes of the mind – the 'driven-doing' mode and the 'being' mode. In the 'doing' mode of the mind we are engaging in ruminative thoughts which are cognitively processing the discrepancy between how things are right now, and how they should be, or how we want them to be, regardless of the scale or volume of task. As the authors state:

> These goals could relate to the external world—to make a meal, build a house, or travel to the moon—or to the internal world of self—to feel happy, not make mistakes, never be depressed again, or be a good person… If there is a difference between how things are and how we want them to be, then we generate thoughts and actions to try to close the gap. We monitor progress to see whether the gap is increasing or decreasing, and adjust our actions accordingly. We know we have reached our goal when our idea of how things are coincides with our idea of how we want them to be (Segal et al. 2013:68)

It should be noted; the authors recognize that this mode of the mind is not inherently problematic. This is how we feel motivated to achieve goals, and often times the way in which we make sense of our external world, however the difficulty arises when we locate our own

identity in the discrepancy gap between what is and what isn't. The authors argue that the inability to let go plummets us into a continual dwelling on these thoughts until the discrepancy is addressed. Using the example of a relationship ending, the authors illustrate that we often get bound up thinking there a basic failure about us which caused this circumstance. In this instance or any other where things may not go as planned, we may establish narratives about the situation placing our 'self' within potential futures or reflective pasts, with little attention being paid to the present – what we could have been, what we should have done, et cetera. For the authors, this is the self becoming involved in the aforementioned 'gap.'

The authors indicate the 'being' mode as the binary opposition to this process. This mode is premised on the attention to only the present moment by "accepting and allowing what is, without any immediate pressure to change it" (Segal et al. 2013:72). The goal is to step outside the tendency to locate ourselves within the ruminative thoughts which govern our feelings - again, seen as the process of 'decentering.' Through this processes, thoughts and feelings may be seen as objects of awareness, rather than something with which we identify ourselves. By locating thoughts and feelings as an object of awareness, with no pressure to engage with them there is a temporal shift that can be understood as 'being present' or being 'in the moment.'

While the aforementioned strategy essentially outlines the fundamental practice of mindfulness, including the same essential principals of MBSR, the explanation of the 'modes of the mind' explicates the focuses on cognitive processes MBCT employs. Understanding the process which undergird these modes of the mind is just as important as the implementation of mindfulness in this practice, as the application was intended to be preventative, and recognizing the functions of moods as they arise is essential to mitigating their ability to affect our daily life.

MBCT demonstrates an explicit focus specifically on the ways in which negative moods and feelings may arise due to cognitive process of the mind. This mode of intervention gives patients the tools to engage in the mindfulness training as seen through MBSR techniques, but also equips them to notice and respond to processes which may result in a depressive relapse with clear training on how to shift into this mode of the mind to respond and prevent negative outcomes. As the therapists articulate,

> The core skill that the MBCT program aims to teach is the ability, at times of potential relapse, to recognize and disengage from mind states characterized by self- perpetuating patterns of ruminative, negative thought (Segal et al. 2013:75)

> Returning to the efficacy of this practice, Segal, Williams & Teasdale (2013:395) ran a randomized control trial of this program as the pilot for this type of intervention which determined the extent to which MCBT is effective in preventing major depressive relapse over a 60-week period. The trial consisted of (*N*=145) patients who had recovered from a major depressive episode. These individuals were assigned to two groups. One group continued with their prescribed treatment and the other continued with prescribed treatment while participating in the 8-week MBCT program. In order to qualify for the study, patients had to have had two episodes of major depression in the past. The authors report that MBCT was shown to be beneficial only in the patients with more extensive histories of depression (three or more major depressive episodes). Within this qualification, patients who simply continued with the treatment that they would normally have received showed a 66% relapse rate over the total 60-week study period, whereas those who received MBCT showed a relapse rate of 37% (Segal et al. 2013:398). Surprised by this outcome, the researchers hypnotized that the reason this treatment was only effective within those who had a more extensive history of depression, was attributed to these

individuals experiencing a fundamentally different form of depression to begin with. Further clinical studies of MCBT have illustrated the success in the intervention in its ability to prevent depressive relapse (Kuyken, Warren, Taylor et al. 2016). Moreover, MBCT has been shown to also be a clinically-significant method of intervention for generalized anxiety disorder (Evans, Ferrando, Findler, Stowell, Smart, & Haglin 2008).

Further incorporation of Mindfulness-Based Interventions

While MBSR and MBCT arguably stand as the most prominently researched and tested methods of clinical intervention utilizing mindfulness-based practices, there are other methods in which mindfulness-based practices are implemented. Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) was designed primarily for individuals experiencing borderline personality disorder (BPD), and utilizes mindfulness-based techniques in its application. Borderline personality disorder BPD is characterized by a pervasive pattern of instability in affect regulation, impulse control, interpersonal relationships, and self-image (Lieb, Zanarini, Schmahl, Linehan & Bohus 2004). Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is a psychotherapeutic approach designed to treat the problems of chronically suicidal individuals with borderline personality disorder (Heard & Swales 2016). Because of its ability to aid in training individuals to regulate attention and response to thoughts and feelings, mindfulness is incorporated as a module within the DBT treatment program. While further research may aid in understanding the specific effects mindfulness-based training may have on BPD, Feliu-Soler and colleges (2016) conducted a clinical study which illustrated 10 weeks of DBT-mindfulness has minimal advantages over general psychiatric (GPM) maintenance programs used to treat BPD, although application of the DBT-M module jointly to GPM induced better clinical outcomes than GPM alone (Feliu-Soler et al 2016).

The core tenants of mindfulness within the DBT model follow the same principals as the aforementioned mindfulness techniques, outlining different states of mind responsible for patient's thoughts feeling and actions, incorporating 'what' and 'how' skills of mindfulness to observe and understand the experiences and think about the states of the mind with a mindful attitude. One of the key distinctions between mindfulness in a DBT context is that Unlike MBSR and MBCT, DBT does not stipulate that therapists must have an ongoing formal mindfulness practice (Baer 2015:22). In the case of MBSR and MBCT the therapists guide the sessions, requiring them to express proficiency in the practice themselves. In the context of DBT the therapist need not engage in the practice, but rather just demonstrate the conceptual understanding of the practice they are teaching patients.

Lastly, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) not to be confused with the aforementioned Affect Control Theory, is a method of behavioral intervention that includes mindfulness in its program. ACT posits that processes such as cognition, emotions, memories, or bodily sensations "achieve their potency not only by their form or frequency, but by the context in which they occur" (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006 in Hofmann & Asmundson 2007). ACT recognizes the linkage between cognition and language, and aids patients in facilitating change in the context in which problematic or destructive behaviors are occurring – this is achieved through the cultivation of acceptance of unwanted thoughts and feelings, with the reframing stimulating tendencies that will encourage one to establish improvements to life circumstances. Moreover, ACT is established to discourage experiential avoidance, which is the "unwillingness to experience negatively evaluated feelings, physical sensations, and thoughts" (Hofmann & Asmundson 2007). Because of its emphasis on both the cognitive processes of the individual and behaviour intervention, the developer of this approach

Steven Hayes, argues that ACT presents "categorical ambiguity" to the clinical intervention model due to the approach being rigorously behavioral in theory, but based on a comprehensive empirical analysis of human cognition (Hayes 2004, pg. 3).

ACT consists of six "core processes" which when addressed in conjunction, target the general goal of increasing psychological flexibility – "the ability to contact the present moment more fully as a conscious human being, and to change or persist in behavior when doing so serves valued ends" (Hayes et al. 2006:7). Premised on the six core processes, Hayes and colleges (2006) establish a workable behavioral definition of mindfulness as "acceptance, defusion, contact with the present moment, and self as context." One of the specific ways that ACT employs both a cognitive and behavior intervention with the individual is in the way that it addresses the 'self.' ACT encourages recognition of *the self as the context* in which cognitions, emotions, and sensations occur, rather than as synonymous with those experiences. As Hayes et al. (2006) articulate

> A sense of self called "self as process" is actively encouraged: the defused, non-judgmental ongoing description of thoughts, feelings, and other private events. Self as Context. As a result of deictic frames such as I-You, Now-Then, and Here-There human language leads to a sense of self as a locus or perspective, and provides a transcendent, spiritual side to normal verbal humans…In brief the idea is that "I" emerges over large sets of exemplars of deictic relations, but since this sense of self is a context for verbal knowing, not the content of that knowing, it's limits cannot be consciously known. Self as context is important in part because from this standpoint, one can be aware of one's own flow of experiences without attachment to them or an investment in what

experiences occur: thus, diffusion and acceptance is fostered. Self as context is fostered

in ACT by mindfulness exercises, metaphors, and experiential processes (2006:8)

The two other key components of ACT are 'values' and 'committed action.'

Much like the aforementioned applications of mindfulness intervention, the purpose of ACT is to

place feelings as the object of analysis. Bringing attention to awareness, allows for strategies to

move forward with the day-to-day obstacles in our life. ACT however, brings forth the emphasis

on, and the importance of, broader contextual factors which result in our socialized perspectives

of knowing and understanding. It should be noted; ACT does not explicitly make claims about

the nature of the self, nor is it credited with addressing esoteric debates surrounding the mind-

body debate, but it points to an integral conception of our own feelings, and experiences which

are part of a contextual, socialized perspective within which we commonly place identity the self

as the locus. Shown to have a moderate relationship with psychological outcomes, in

particularly quality of life outcomes, including psychopathology (Hayes et al. 2006), ACT, may

be seen as potential avenue to address psychosomatic experiences in daily life.

Given the range of treatments that are currently available for those experiencing

psychological barriers in daily life, the question remains- if these mindfulness-based

interventions are showing little to moderate efficacy in their intended outcomes, surely there are

measures that may be taken that address psychopathology more reliably? And if this is the case,

what is the point of this intervention at all? The language surrounding its use often carries

spiritual connotations, however as Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach (2004:36) argue,

"the construct of mindful awareness originated in earliest Buddhist documents but is neither

religious nor esoteric in nature… Mindfulness is characterized by dispassionate, nonevaluative

and sustained moment-to-moment awareness of perceptible mental states and processes." From

this perspective, one may understand mindfulness as it is commonly articulated- as *practice*
within its prescription and application, therefore there may be a certain pragmatism to training
mindfulness like a skill. Kabat-Zinn (2003) explicates that mindfulness is not something one
reaches or becomes immediately or instantaneously, rather it is something which is built
overtime from disciplined practice and daily implementation. Although the measures explored in
this chapter situate mindfulness as merely a prescriptive clinical intervention, there is a recurrent
emphasis on mindfulness as a pragmatic intervention for absolutely any individual.

Moreover, although one of the explicit functions of meditative practice is to mitigate the
conceptual framework of the 'self' altogether, could these mindfulness practices and techniques
inform the way we are thinking about the self in a broader societal context? Although the
exercises and practices may suspend any notion of self for the duration of their application, these
mindfulness-based interventions exist within a broader social framework which continues to
place engaging with the 'self' as a fundamental locus of human experience which is often
defined by the very meaning-making processes which mindfulness works upon. In this light,
mindfulness may be seen not merely as a practice or a clinical model , but also as a socio-
political framework which aids in further shaping the ways we are constructing the 'self.'

Mindfulness-based intervention as a Smartphone App

Perhaps the most important factor to point out in the outlined literature of mindfulness is
that most, if not all, of the clinical mindfulness interventions require the individual to attend in-
person sessions before learning how to utilize the practice on a day-to-day basis outside of the
clinical setting. However, mindfulness has more recently become an option for individuals who
are unable or unwilling to participate in an in-person session, let alone an eight-week program.
The program of delivery is through the implementation of mindfulness-based smartphone

applications. The last decade has seen the proliferation of smartphone-based applications become embedded as ubiquitous components in our day-to-day experiences. For many individuals, the smartphone acts as an extension of personal capabilities, which makes the dissemination of knowledge and connection with information a ubiquitously embedded feature of our existence. As of 2019, 81 percent of Americans, and 66 percent of Canadians are reported to own a smartphone (Pew Research Center, February 2019).

The literature detailing what sort of effects of smartphones has on individuals in daily life is mixed. On one hand, the smartphone application market allows for health, wellbeing, and medical intervention to become further marketed and delivered in a convenient, scalable and cost-effective format (Laurie & Blandford 2016). This perspective clearly designates the smartphone as something which not only advances the market for health and wellness fiscally, but also something which increases access to important resources, potentially presenting innumerable benefits for the individual in everyday life. Conversely, the role of smartphones is marked as a detriment to the well-being of the individual. I draw attention specifically to Sherry Turkle (2017), a psychologist who draws concern to the ways that smartphones have permeated our existence. Outlining a rich history of technological innovation, Turkle explores the emergence of technological devices and uses the work of psychologists such as Jean Piaget to situate their role within the developmental stages of childhood. Outlining generational fads such as the as the Tamagotchi and Furby crazes of the 1990's and early 2000's, Turkle draws a psychoanalytical theorization of what constitutes the boundaries of being alive in regards to how people treat these devices which mimic life and present something to be taken care of.

In regard specifically to smartphones, Turkle's work approaches the ways in which individual life in western society is one which is largely seen as remaining connected to our

phones at all times. While, Turkle's arguments often stimulate a nostalgia for a time without smartphones as the objects which mediate our social experience, her work is nonetheless important to highlight as she employs ethnographic research which explores how individuals make sense of the devices they use to navigate daily life, and ultimately unpacks the smartphones are changing the way that we navigate the meaning-making processes in social world. Turkle's arguments can be applied within the scope of this research insofar as individuals may see smartphone applications as a tool to unlocking the potential for well-being; a new responsibility they have to take on in order to successfully participate in the requirements of their lives; an instrument which further limits their ability to allocate capacities of attention; or merely as a fluid intersection of all of these perspectives. Within the scope of this project, the task is not to assess the claims made regarding the detriment or the benefit of smartphones as a component of our subjective experiences, but rather to expand on how mindfulness is implemented within the scope of their usage.

Mindfulness-based apps can be seen situated among other health and wellness applications such as calorie counters and fitness trackers. There are currently thousands of different mindfulness apps on the market (Hartwell, 2018). There are two particular mindfulness apps which most notably dominate the $1.2 billion meditation app market: 'Calm' and 'Headspace' (Potkewitz 2018). The two apps have oscillated between highest valued meditation apps, until Calm recently got a major boost from winning the 2017 iPhone App of the Year award from Apple's App Store, surpassing its predecessor, headspace (Potkewitz 2018). Both of these apps offer limited trials, but predominantly operate behind a paywall consisting of a monthly subscription fee. The success of these mindfulness smartphone applications demonstrates a clear consumer demand for the interventions they offer. Moreover, mindfulness-

based smartphone applications have a tremendous advantage over the in-person intervention applications in that they offer an inexpensive and portable method of accessing mindfulness instruction. The applications also allow for mindfulness to become accessible to a wider demographic of individuals that have access to the internet Creswell (2017).

Despite the incontrovertible financial success of these applications, the emergence of mindfulness-based smartphone technologies is still relatively new, and there is still very little review of smartphone-based mindfulness efficacy. Plaza et al (2013) conducted a review of mindfulness-based mobile applications (MBMA) searching online journal databases, online markets, and within the avaliable literature. The inclusion criteria for the search was simply that the applications include an explicit mindfulness component. The researchers found no randomized clinical trials evaluating the impact of mobile apps and its features and functionalities on mindfulness training or health indicators (ibid). The researchers hypothesize the reason for this is two-fold. First, "MBTs and their related mobile apps are in their early technological development phase," and second, "because developers in the vendors market are not involved in academic or health settings" (ibid np).

However, more recently, Jayawardene et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate the efficacy of preventive online mindfulness interventions (POMI). At this time, there were eight controlled studies which were comprised of non-clinical populations, such as university students and staff, company employees, and community members, which were included (Jayawardene et al. 2016:154). The online mindfulness-intervention deliveries in the meta-analysis were included programs that followed MBSR and MBCT protocols. Within these programs, efficacy was determined by measuring self-perceived stress via survey pre and post treatment between control and treatment groups. The trials had several notable limitations which

the researchers indicate. Amongst these, was the issue of the small sample of eight randomized

control trials, as well as the fact that half of these control trials had high loss to follow-up

intervention group rates, and none adequately reported about intervention adherence of

participants. Despite these limitations, the researchers report that the preventive online

mindfulness interventions (POMI) demonstrated a medium effect in reducing perceived stress,

arguing that this method of delivering mindfulness intervention may have a promising future.

Daudén Roquet & Sas (2018) further outline the ways in which mindfulness-based

applications create new opportunities to target wider audiences and to expand their contexts of

mindfulness meditation use, specifically in the markets of health and well-being. Despite being

placed in markets of health and well-being, the researchers argue that many of the available

smartphone applications focus solely on guided meditation and fail provide specific support for

"monitoring intrinsic meditation processes and measuring the effectiveness of the training"

(ibid).

Including keywords such as 'mindfulness,' 'meditation,' 'mindful,' and 'well-being,' the

authors compiled a list of free applications to conduct ethnographic research in order to evaluate

the content and function of the available applications. The researchers initially identified 280

apps incorporating some variation of mindfulness, however they only included applications that

were listed within the Health and Fitness category; those which had more than 100 ratings in the

iTunes app store; and those which had an average rating higher than 3 on a 5-point scale (ibid).

The final sample for the ethnographic research consisted of 16 smartphone applications. The

majority of the applications (n=13) focused on extrinsic static processes of meditation using

audio to guide and lead the meditation, and only a small number of apps (n=3) relied on

"intrinsic processes with limited external stimuli" (ibid). 'Limited external stimuli' was qualified

as meditation timers, or short bells which indicated the start or end of the session. Demonstrating a clear gap in design space, Daudén et al (2018) argue that simply offering guided meditation may not necessarily equate to increased mindfulness states, or health and well-being, but rather just simply relax users during the time they use the app. Arguably, this may indeed correlate to long-term well-being, however the task of the researchers is one of critically investigating how these apps qualify as something which equates to well-being.

The researchers conclude that amongst the mindfulness app offerings they explored, the *Headspace* application was the only 'evidence-based' application available- specifically refereeing to *Headspace's* adherence to a protocol which explicitly confers with the mindfulness-based interventions seen in the literature. Moreover, *Headspace* delivers its instruction in simple easy to understand terms, and includes video infographics (Daudén Roquet & Sas 2018). The purpose of this specific study was primarily to illuminate a current design gap in mindfulness-based apps, specifically one which empirically demonstrates the inclusion of these apps within the criteria of 'health' and 'well-being.' The researches propose the incorporation of kinetic devices to explore how dimensions of well-being and health could further be measured. Moreover, the authors also illuminate the need for further qualitative analysis to further understand just how important these applications are for their users, and the ways in which they are subjectively affecting them.

Successfully drawing the connections between 'well-being' and mindfulness continues to be a point interest and an important task for researchers as the popularity of the practice and demand for options continues to proliferate. Walsh, Saab & Farb (2019) further explore the connections between subjective well-being and mindfulness practice, addressing the Mindfulness Training (MT) component of mindfulness-based smartphone apps specifically. Citing the

training protocols of MBSR, MBCT, and ACT previously explored, the researchers define mindfulness training as "a collection of meditation, introspection, and yoga practices aimed at the cultivation of psychological resilience and the alleviation of mental health symptoms" (Walsh, Saab & Farb 2019:2).

Using a proprietary app developed in conjunction with the lab performing the study, the researchers first address the shortage in literature surrounding what they define as 'local or state effects' of mindfulness training – that is, the immediate benefits as well as the longitudinal outcomes. In this study, research design consists of a controlled study which compares the results of treatment (n=43) in the form of the proprietary mindfulness training app compared to the results of those of a control group (n=36) who receive a cognitive game rather than mindfulness training. The proprietary app was designed to collect user's self-report measures of current mood and stress, as well as physiological markers such as heart rate, both pre and post treatment. In the active control condition, treatment was delivered in the form of a popular cognitive game allowing for the same collection of mood, stress, and heart rate data (Walsh et al. 2019:2).

This research is of particular interest for the field for several reasons. First, as the authors state: "this was the first actively controlled study to investigate whether MT apps can promote the therapeutic effects associated with validated group MT interventions, namely, subjective well-being, attentional control, and interoceptive integration" (Walsh et al. 2019:15). Secondly, the authors include the measures typically associated with the protocols of clinical mindfulness intervention into their model of well-being such as self-report measures, however, they also include measures such as *Spiritual Experience Index-Revised* and *Meaning in Life Questionnaire.* From the different tests, the others establish a model of *acceptance, awareness, and openness* which is used to empirically substantiate the efficacy of the mindfulness training

application. The researchers state that the participants in both the Mindfulness-Training (MT) and cognitive training groups reported "significant increases in both acceptance and awareness over the study period" (Walsh et al. 2019:15), arguing that this mindfulness training program may be situated within the broader context of the literature as the efficacy of mindfulness and measures of well-being are demonstrated.

More specifically, the researchers conclude

> The results of this study suggest that MT with a smartphone app may provide immediate effects on mood and stress while also providing long-term benefits for attentional control. Although further investigation is warranted, there is evidence that with continued usage, MT via a smartphone app may provide long-term benefits in changing how one relates to his or her inner and outer experiences (Walsh et al. 2019:17).

Again, what may be seen here is another way in which mindfulness-based intervention has the ability to deliver meaningful tools despite the relatively subjective dimensions of well-being measures.

Lastly, Laurie & Blandford (2016) specifically focus on the qualitative dimensions of mindfulness-based interventions through the use of the *Headspac*e app. This research was the first of its kind, as it relied on the qualitative methodology of participant interview in order to investigate just how users make sense of this app. The researchers argue that while there is indeed literature which demonstrates the effectiveness of mindfulness and meditation delivered through technology, there has been "little qualitative work has been done to gain insight into the user experience of these interventions" (Laurie & Blandford 2016:40). More specifically,

> In order to develop effective mental wellbeing technologies and improve current interventions for behavior change, it is essential to understand the relationship between

users and the technology. This involves understanding complex psychological phenomena and behaviors occurring over time, to deliver design recommendations for future development of such technologies (Laurie & Blanford 2016:40).

The developers of *Headspace* provided the researchers with access codes for sixteen participants. Using semi-structured interviews, the data of the users (n=16) was sorted into a number of thematic findings, particularly focusing on user-experience. The researchers use reasoned action approach as the theoretical framing to establish the user experience engaging with the *headspace* app. While this work does speak to the experiences of the individual, it is arguably situated as work which may merely inform the design of future mindfulness app interventions. Of course, 'user experience' was precisely what the researchers were intending to explore with this work, so to critique its scope is to miss the point of their project. Consequently, this work may be seen as particularly important as it begins to build a framework explaining the culture of engagement with these technologies. There remains a gap in the literature which extends the scope of user experience, which successfully links the rhetoric of mindfulness intervention from a clinical perspective, and the qualitative dimensions of personhood, furthering the understanding of precisely *how* users are defining 'well-being,' and *why* mindfulness has, or has not been a valuable intervention for them.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The enterprise of mindfulness: Current state of the literature and the apps

Since becoming implemented as a clinical model of treatment, mindfulness-based interventions have been established as an efficacious model for addressing individual barriers ranging from psychological disorders, to a diverse set of chronic physical illnesses (Kabat-Zinn 1979, 1990, Walsh 1980, Shapiro 2009, Baer 2015). Most often these intervention protocols take the form of a group setting and require regular attendance much like a class or series of workshops, over the course of eight weeks. More recently, these models of Mindfulness-based interventions have been taken up by app developers, generating a billion-dollar market for smartphone-based mindfulness meditation (Hartwell 2018, Potkewitz 2018). The smartphone application market allows for health, wellbeing, and medical intervention to become further promoted and delivered in a convenient, scalable and cost-effective format (Laurie & Blandford 2016). With a multiplicity of app options across smartphone platforms, Mindfulness-based interventions can be personalized and have been made accessible for a considerably wider demographic of individuals than ever before (Creswell 2017).

The literature suggests that the efficacy of these apps makes the smart-phone mode of delivery an advantageous alternative to the traditional eight-week, in-person model of mindfulness intervention, and that there is a promising future for the mindfulness app market (Daudén Roquet & Sas 2018). Despite the financial success and literature pointing to the quantitative efficacy of these apps, there is little qualitative work which investigates precisely how these interventions are taken up and contextualized by the individual in everyday life. The existing literature goes as far as to use quantified self-report measures of meaning-making such

as the *Spiritual Experience Index,* to incorporate the subjective dimensions of meaning-making

(see Walsh et al. 2019), however there is remains a need to further investigate the ways in which

these models of self-intervention are applied to narratives of the self; the social structures in

which they are being implemented; and the subjective context in which they become necessary

remains unclear. Further, as these mindfulness-based intervention apps are marketed under the

umbrella of health, and well-being, there remains a qualitative task in understanding what such

concepts mean to the individuals allocating their resources of time and money to these modes of

intervention, and if this is precisely the reasons they choose to use these apps.

Scope of present research

The aim of this research is to explain why exactly mindfulness has become such an attractive

model for individuals to work on the self, and how exactly, they are going about doing this. Further, I

wanted to know how mindfulness might be informing the ways in which individuals are constructing,

understanding, and practicing self and selfhood in a contemporary neoliberal context - more specifically,

I wanted to know how mindfulness may facilitate the emergence of a culture in which the therapeutic

narratives of self-management have been placed at the core of personhood. While the philosophical

traditions typically associated with mindfulness-meditation, such as Buddhism, may often refute the

notion of the 'self,' this form of intervention is nonetheless taken up, and applied to most mundane

intricacies of everyday life- spaces in which we are actively constructing, negotiating, and shaping the

ideas of what it means to be a self, and what it means to live a life. The scope of this research is not to

assess the philosophical traditions undergirding mindfulness practice, but rather to study the practice

with a sociological lens. The underlying claim running through this notion is that by simply qualifying

these mindfulness-based protocols, as merely a psychological intervention that has empirically

replicable results is to miss much of what is going on here, specifically the ways in which these technologies profoundly shape the subjective experiences of the individual.

This work utilizes both micro sociological literatures, as well as the post-structuralist perspectives of self and social structure. My reason for choosing the theoretical literature used as the foundation of this research is two-fold; First, emerging predominately out of my own experiences with developing a mindfulness practice, this research takes a grounded approach to explore the aforementioned relationship of mindfulness, self, and social structure. My primary concern is to present a cohesive narrative as to how these individuals are interpreting the practice of mindfulness on a very personal level. That is, the various processes of self, affect, and socialization that are taking place as they engage with this practice. Second, I wanted to further situate these narratives within a post structuralist model, which would provide a sociological critique of how we engage with knowledge that shapes the processes of self with which we engage. Self is mobilized through these theoretical lenses as a perpetual process of becoming – that is, a continuous and reflexive engagement with place, space and knowledge. Individuals are seen to take on specific role identities which are shaped both through affective response, and social norms. The contextual framework in which these processes occur can be seen as the neoliberal apparatus in which the core notions of selfhood are framed as the successful management of private life as a means of generating potentially, well-being, fulfilment, and purpose.

While this work generates interpretive data pertaining to the individuals who shared their experiences with me, it is imperative to assert that my role as a researcher also functioned in establishing the meaning-making process for myself and the individuals involved in my interviews. For this reason, I explicate my own account of the interactions with the individuals

throughout my analysis of the interaction. In short, speaking about the process of establishing ideas surrounding mindfulness and the self, in of itself contributes to this framework.

As previously stated, this research takes a qualitative approach to answering the aforementioned questions concerning mindfulness, self, and society, but what contributions can a qualitative research approach really make to furthering the understanding of such complex issues? As Jones (1995), Becker (1996), and Labuschagne (2003) argue, both quantitative and qualitative research have the potential to contribute to the understanding of how society operates, however qualitative research has the ability to capture a profound richness about a specific phenomenon. By employing a qualitative approach, this work reveals emergent narratives as they are described by the participants in the open-ended interviews. Further, Herbert Blumer (1969) argues that by conducting qualitative research, we as researchers, can better account for what people think they are doing, that is the meanings that people are attributing to place and space, and how they navigate their own social realities. Moreover, Becker (1996) emphasizes that by understanding the meanings people give to their world and experiences, qualitative research can best account for the diverse conceptions of the everyday world. That is, the nuanced intricacies which constitute the foundation upon which our very understanding of social reality is situated. As Becker (1996) argues, "the taken-for-granted understandings people share which make concerted action possible… the deep epistemological beliefs that undergird all such shared ideas, the meta-analyses and ontologies we are not ordinarily aware of that make social life possible." Do to the relative gaps in the qualitative literature surrounding mindfulness- an intervention which is by all accounts an explicit reflexive engagement with the self and social structure, as well as the concern of this project, a qualitative approach is of the greatest utility in answering the questions that I have as a researcher.

Sampling Logic

I used the mindfulness meditation application, *Headspace* as the locus of mindfulness practice; there are several reasons for this decision. First, the original scope of this project was going to focus much more on the 'technological' apparatus of mindfulness – that is, the actual analysis of the application was going to serve as an integral component in the research. While the app is still explored within the discussion, once I began exploring the literature and actually speaking to individuals, the application itself seemed to be particularly peripheral to the contents of the open-ended interviews I was sharing with the participants However, this does not undermine the application's importance in this research. The idea of mindfulness as a contemporary 'buzzword,' leaves a necessity to delineate what exactly the conceptual framework of mindfulness would be. Of course, I expected the experiences of the interview participants to vary in terms of their perceptions and reflections on the practice, however I felt as though I needed some coherent framework of *how* the practice was being conducted – most importantly, one which utilizes mindfulness as the psychological literature operationalizes. Simply looking for individuals who practice 'mindfulness' would not necessarily ensure that there was a reliable definition of the practice itself, let alone, one which was premised on any of the models of interventions employed in the mindfulness literature. Headspace best ensured internal validity of the practice, despite the experiences with it being entirely subjective. In short, using the app allowed for consistency and coherence across the sample of participants, as the individuals were receiving the same instruction, within the same framework, and their subjective experiences and meaning-making experiences were completely free to vary.

I used snowball sampling to recruit individuals for this research project. beginning with my Facebook network, I posted an advertisement briefly stating that I was conducting a research

study for my Master's degree which was interested in exploring user's experiences with mindfulness via the *Headspac*e app. In the initial posting, I explicated that the interviews would ideally last about 30 minutes. I asked any individuals to message me privately if they were interested. Many of the individuals in my network shared the status, and within a couple of days I had several messages, and surprisingly, individuals were eager to share their experiences. I responded to the private messages with an informed consent form, which detailed more specifically what would be explored in the research, and how I would be going about doing it. Moreover, I made sure to explicate that the risks in this study are minimal and pose no undue harm, however exploring the values and beliefs of an interviewee present the possibility of eliciting sensitive conversational material for the individual. The informed consent delineated this, as well as further concerns such as privacy issues, data storage et cetera. Of course, there is limitations to this method, as the sample of individuals I was able to reach was entirely contingent on the connections within the social media network. Because I am utilizing and interpretive analysis which was not aimed at not making any inferential claims about demographic information, I was pleased with the diversity of individuals I interviewed. The first six individuals who got back to me after reading the informed consent were the selected participants for discussion.

Participants & Interviews

All six of my interview participants (n=6) were aged 20-29 years. Four participants identified as male, and the other two identified as female. The only pertinent demographic information I collected prior to the interview was age range, and self-reported gender identity. My rationale for this was quite simple; I wanted to be as inclusive of gender as possible in my interview responses, and I needed to explicitly confirm that the interview participants were of

legal age to consent to being interviewed. My hopes were that further demographic information

might emerge in the interview when respondents discussed the importance of their practice, and

the obstacles they have faced in daily life.

When arranging the interviews, I encouraged the interview participants to identify a

location where they would feel most comfortable engaging in the discussion. Four of the

interviews required me to travel to within 100km to conduct the interviews in the homes of the

participants, and the other two were conducted over the phone. The interviewing method

employed was open-ended, however there was some structure– that is, I had a list of topics I

wished to explore as outlined in the interview guide (see appendix) such as reasons for practicing

mindfulness, meaning of mindfulness et cetera. When engaging in the interviews, I tried to

approach them much like facilitated the discussions. I would make sure and capture the questions

that I had, but for the most part, I wanted to the participants to lead the dialogue. All of the

interviews far exceeded the advertised 30-minute approximation. In all instances, the individuals

were eager to share their experiences.

Thematic Coding

All of the interviews were audio recorded with a password protected device, and

transcribed by myself. While I must acknowledge the role that I had as the researcher in this

project, I still wanted to ensure that it was as exploratory as it possibly could be. For this reason,

I compiled my list of issues which I intended to address with the interviews and began

interviewing before developing a substantive literature review. My rationale for this was simply

to circumvent 'fitting' the data into an *a priori* theoretical framework to the most of my

capabilities. The interviews took place between July 17th and August 28th 2018. I began

transcription once all interviews had been completed. To analyze the transcription data, I sorted

the contents of the interview into thematic categories using the NVivo software package. As previously stated, one of the main limitations present with this research lies within discussing the interview data – as with any qualitative analysis the interpretation may be highly subjective and informed by my own experiences with the discourse. And while I recognize that I was the primary instrument for generating the data in this research, I feel I have made my role in this project and my subjective interpretation of this information as salient as possible.

Personal Position

My interests as a social researcher often feel interdisciplinary. I am interested in the ways in which macro level structures shape and inform even the most radically mundane components of daily life- in specifically the institutional practices which shape our understanding of the self and its interactions with other social actors and institutional apparatuses. My motivations for exploring mindfulness emerge from my own experiences with the practice, and the relatively little literature which approaches this practice from a micro perspective. While I hadn't used the *Headspace* application at the time of these interviews, I had taken both an eight-week MBSR course and an eight-week MBCT course. For me, these were useful in reframing my experiences of daily life, which I explicate further in my discussion – however, having technologies of the self as one of my primary sociological research interests, I was often fascinated by the contradictions and tensions I felt with these technologies as I employed them in my own life.

Headspace Application

The individuals in this research were all users of the *Headspace* app, but what exactly is special about *Headspace* in particular? The demand for health and well-being smartphone applications continues to create consistent revenue streams for developers, and a market for behavior intervention. The Headspace app has been consistently been referenced in the peer-

reviewed literature, arguably remaining the standard to what new and emerging mindfulness-based apps are compared to. At the time of this research design, the headspace app was the only commercially available app with peer-reviewed published data pertaining to its efficacy and the literature explored all referenced it extensively. Launched in 2010, Headspace is the pioneer in smartphone-based mindfulness intervention. Further, headspace does a commendable job at providing data pertaining to their app on the company's website. Reported as having over one million paying subscribers across more than 190 countries, many tech-based publications claim the value of the company is over $300 million dollars. The website of the application markets the mindfulness-based intervention as a way of reducing stress, remaining focused in daily tasks, and boosting compassion towards others. Headspace Incorporates both audio and video interaction, delivering guided meditations are voiced by Headspace founder Andy Puddicombe, a former Buddhist monk. The company website reports that Andy wanted to make his techniques available online so more people could experience the benefits of meditation anytime, anywhere – the mission statement of the application is to "to improve the health and happiness of the world" (headspace.com) Currently, the app is available on both Android and Apple iOS platforms. Moreover, the app offers an introductory trial which consists of daily mediation lessons, providing users with enough free content that they can adequately get a feel for what the practice is. After completion of a foundational lesson plan, the format of the application follows daily meditations that increase from ten, to fifteen, and then twenty minutes as users progress through the app. Paid subscribers are able to access further content related to health, relationships and performance (Laurie & Blanford 2016).

Chapter 5: Mindfulness as an Institution: how app users 'create space'

The first theme that I explore in this project is the symbolic construction of space. Within his foundational contributions which precipitated the cannon of symbolic interactionist literature, Mead (1934) outlines the ways in which the self is an emergent process established through relations to social experience, activity, and to other individuals within that process. Further, the contributions of identity theory outline the ways in which the self can be seen as multifaced, made up of interdependent and independent, mutually reinforcing and conflicting parts (Kuhn 1964, Stryker & Burke 2000, Stets and Sterpe 2000, Grigspy 2009, Green 2010). These 'parts' may often be explained as the roles which we take on within a given social structure. Often times our identity and the feelings we have about others is evaluated in accordance with the general role expectations that are influenced by the structure (Heise 1979 Heise 2010, Rohall, Milkie, & Lucas 2014, Francis & Adams 2018). Within the outlined literature pertaining to self, as well as the clinical mindfulness literature, there is an explicit function of space serving to establish conceptions of the self. Space may be indicated through a straight-forward framework such as the physical location of mindfulness intervention programs requiring group participation – these settings create a space in which there are roles to be taken on, and the self is understood within this context in accordance to these roles. However, space can also be understood as the symbolic structures which constitute our realities within which we operate. Thus, space need only be conceivably thought of as a framework within which we interact, establish relations, and navigate our own identities.

Our self-concepts may be seen as internalized role expectations attached to positions in organized sets of social relationships, and networks of ties which maintain the expectations of

these relationships. Our motivations to act may be seen as commitments to these social roles which are based on intensity and volume of the social ties within a given social structure. Moreover, the sentiments we hold about ourselves and others, act as a guiding factor shaping the ways we negotiate our identities within a symbolic structure. The central argument of this chapter is that mindfulness can be situated both as a structure of meaning, and as a tool to which has the ability to create space to locate the self as an emergent process. Through the experiences the participants shared with me, I explicate how mindfulness acts as a system in which there are specific ways of thinking, and the ways in which this creation of space is used to re-contextualize narratives of self that individuals hold in their lives. This chapter will illustrate the ways in which the participants navigate mindfulness as a structural site of meaning making, and expand on their responses to engaging in this process.

Shaping the Engagement with Space

> *Because like… using… using those types of tools [mindfulness], I feel like shapes my life just as much as any meaningful interactions or conversations I have with people. -*
> (Participant 1)

When I sat down with the interview participants to talk about their experiences using the headspace app, I did not expect the application or more specifically, the practice of mindfulness, to become identified as such an integral factor in shaping the ways an individual may reflexively engage in the social world. Acknowledging that the core principals of MBSR, MBCT, ACT, and DBT are indeed to promote cognitive and behavioral change, I was admittedly skeptical as to what this may look like for everyday users of the headspace app who are engaging with this intervention through what was outlined as approximately a ten-minute session on their smartphone. More specifically, I was interested in how these principles might be applied to the situational context of everyday life. While the intervention literature illustrates that these

practices clearly work, and employs a model outlining how they function, I to approach the question of '*how*' quite differently. That is, my task is in understanding how exactly the users themselves think these things work, and what exactly does it mean to them.

Amongst the most prominent narratives arising from the interview data was the discussions of space, and mindfulness as a 'tool.' When we think about a tool, we often think about an object which aids us in achieving a specific task or job. The mindfulness-based interventions use much of the same conceptual modeling of mindfulness as 'tool.' It came as no surprise, that the interview respondents spoke about their experience using the mindfulness practice as a 'tool' which could be employed in daily life. Within the context of this research, I argue that the concepts of space and tool are complementary in their emergence and simply cannot be alienated from one another, as the idea of a mindfulness as a 'tool' was not only referred to as a method of navigating space, but also one of creating it. Of course, the very fact that they were using their phones to access this mode of intervention, may leave the phone itself as the more pragmatic description of 'tool,' especially in the context of mediating technologies. However, I would like to think of the word 'tool' more abstractly, as the interview participants explicated 'tool' and 'space' quite specifically with little regard to the actual use of the smartphone itself. The only time the actual interface with the phone was discussed, was in regard to export of the practice outside of the app – again, an acknowledgement of structure or space in which the users establish meaning.

In the opening quotation of this chapter, Participant 1 detailed his experiences engaging with the Headspace app as something which feels analogous to social interaction with another person. For him, the app was a site of meaning making, or a structure in which he was enabled to think about the social word and his experiences in a very specific way. He elaborated not only

the ways in which he engaged with this intervention, but also the spaces which were opened as a

result of the knowledge about this particular type of intervention.

> *Well you know what… I think it's just differing modes of interaction. I mean like, it happened before… I can think of an example… of like… of the proliferation of print material, and people were able to print like… well I don't know… like when the printing press came out… and it was like more information that came out, and like… people could like... have interactions over pieces of literature more often, than like people ever had before… and like… surely there were people at the time that were like "aw no, this shit is bad"…(Participant 1)*

For Participant 1, the language and instruction used in the guided mediations on the

headspace app opened up a space where he was queued to think about his experiences in the

world using a specific framework. Drawing comparison to the idea of inside jokes with his

friends – a particular type of knowledge which creates both a space of relation and mode of

engagement – Participant 1 described mindfulness in the app as a creation of a "way of

understanding." To explicate the Headspace model of mindfulness as a 'way of understanding,'

Participant 1 juxtaposed the experience using the app with his experiences participating in a

Buddhist group which he felt was quite different.

> *The head nun talks about Buddhist philosophy... so it has that grounding in Buddhist philosophy, so it's like, it was less that it was about that meditative state, but it was more about getting in that state to like think about Buddhist philosophy and that tradition of philosophy in Buddhism, so it was like… she was talking about non attachment, but it wouldn't be like… 'don't feel like"… it wasn't like… "this is good for you that you feel not attached"… but it was almost like you started getting into space where you could engage with the ideas of Buddhism….NOW…. headspace… as a difference, is that… it's all about... they emphasize the idea of a skill... the first thing they emphasize is that meditation is a skill, and meditation is a tool, to be used, to kind of... like it's such a contrast to the one at (respondent names Buddhist society) where it was like "we're going to meditate… but we're going to contemplate these concepts of Buddhist philosophy." THAT was the end goal, that was the goal to meet. - (Participant 1)*

While the mindfulness interventions used in the Headspace app may make no effort to

explicitly propagate a philosophical tradition or even bring saliency to a specific way of thinking,

the ways in which Participant 1 reflected on both experiences of mindfulness meditation settings

required him to conceivably think of his self as an object within both structural frameworks. Juxtaposing the two practices required Participant 1 to identify norms and values specific to each setting, identifying the things which he 'ought' to be doing in the situational context of the institution, and identifying his thoughts and feelings in relation to that expectation. As outlined in the symbolic interactionist framework of identity theory, both experiences Participant 1 had, require him to locate his own experience within a network of positions that organize relations among persons.

In this context, the Headspace application may be seen as a specific site of social interaction even though there is not another individual to propagate or reciprocate dialogue with Participant 1. Rather, there is a set of expectations about who is engaging with the intervention, and how they ought to engage. What can be seen is an establishment of relational proximities in a given social space. Relating to one of the integral components in Stryker's identity theory, the ways in which individuals embody behavior contingent on the role expectations within the social structure may be further seen in this intervention. While 'structure' denotes a broad framework, the structure may again, simply be seen as a specific social setting with its own normative modes of conduct – an institution. In the mindfulness intervention literature previously explored, there is a specific protocol which guides the patients throughout their sessions. This is often dictated by the expert in the room, and for the entire setting to succeed, it requires the specific role adherence of both the patient and the expert – and in this clinical intervention setting, the patient's identity is made contingent on their ability to actively participate in the modification of their thoughts, feelings and behavior. While the objective of Participant 1's Buddhist mindfulness meditation setting may have been different, the role played within the social

structure was very similar. In this case, there need not be a clinical intervention setting as the app established the spatial framework which employed a 'way of understanding.'

With a slight apprehension of the Headspace app, Participant 1 describes the way in which users of the app effectively take on the role of the patient, and the expectation to 'feel better' while using it.

> *And then like, all through this time, this person or this voice… just a disembodied voice, telling you to breathe in a certain way and then like you know... like let thoughts flow and then all of the sudden… like it ends... and it's like "did you not feel better?" …*
> (Participant 1)

Achieving a Particular Type of Headspace

While this app is premised on the principals of specific clinical intervention models, these roles are not necessarily medicalized. That is, the individuals may not recognize themselves as 'patients' in need or reintegrative social strategies, but perhaps just individuals trying to ascertain some form of intellectual or spiritual modification. Participant 4 explicated that there is a 'preconceived notion' of what users of the app ought to achieve, acknowledging a particular type of knowledge about roles and outcomes when engaging with the practice.

> *There is a lot of ideas I think around meditation that are preconceived notions that umm… everyone who meditates gets to this … ironically speaking, this "HEADSPACE." That people who do this can achieve this level of enlightenment, or this level of headspace…* (Participant 4)

Participant 1 outlined the symbolic meaning structures within the particular spaces afforded by the mindfulness app, however the purpose of the practice within a clinical setting and in general practice is undoubtedly one of providing a useful export of these interventional models to the routine intricacies of daily life. Participant 4 further outlines a particular set of meanings which are denoted as existing within the space to which one occupies when engaging with the app. A point of further importance illustrated by the range of experiences discussed by

these two participants, and several to follow, is that the swiss-army-knife connotations that surround the practice are not always taken up evenly nor are they exported coherently. Moreover, issues of access bring about discussions of inequality surrounding mindfulness as an institution - in specifically, who has access and what sort of social contexts value this access.

Participant 5 – a graduate student who used the app for a period of time, acknowledged potential usefulness of the practice, but met the rhetoric surrounding it with friction.

> *If your mindful it's like… I remember when I was a child and you would hear people talk about mindfulness and it was like... "oh this person said something racist but I was mindful, and didn't engage with it, so now I know if things come up in my life, I don't need to engage, I can just be mindful." And that's not necessarily what I think mindfulness is supposed to be about. As opposed to understanding your-self in your own life, and being able to participate in your own life, from a different level of awareness I think. - (Participant 5)*

The 'anywhere anytime' mantra that the Headspace app promotes, illustrates the flexibility of the practice, however this sort of rhetoric may be problematic as it becomes an umbrella term which has the potential to lose it precision. Despite the apprehension with the term 'mindfulness,' Participant 5 outlined the ways in which this practice may enable a reframing of situations that occur in daily life, and what further engagement with them might look like. Placing the self as an object within a social context, and as a process to engage with.

> *Well I think the more and more I use the app, I'm also able to … and I think this should be the point of most of these things… I guess that my personal opinion, but I think the point should be to take what you are learning from these technologies and then apply them in... everyday life situations... where you don't necessarily have to sit down and use the app to do it, but you can be doing it… I guess constantly…* (Participant 5)

Both participants 2 and 5 elaborate on the space created when engaging in mindfulness practice. Within this space there is a specific role which the individual takes on to engage with their own thoughts. I did not specifically ask any individuals about the creation of space, but this theme cut through all of the conversations. The individuals consistently reflected on their sentiments

toward space in regards to 'realness.' Participant 5 states that, "whether or not it is a tangible space, I think it's a real space I would say."

Evaluating the Mindful Space

Participant 2, a university graduate working in a childcare program, further outlined the concepts of space and sentiments of authenticity, when she articulated the difficulties she had implementing the mindfulness techniques in daily life, feeling like the engagement of the app was not 'real life.'

> *Well… okay…. So… When I am using the app, I am creating an environment, in which I can be more mindful... Um… whereas… if I am reminding myself to be more mindful throughout my day, I am in a work environment, a home environment, I'm out with friends- I'm not CREATING that space for myself to be mindful, umm… therefore…this is one of my criticisms… I feel like myself and others might get umm… kind of… more connected with an app and creating an artificial environment for mindfulness... whereas, I prefer to have techniques that I can bring with me throughout my day such as deep breathing strategies…. It kind of feels like an artificial environment... engaging with the app... because it's not real life…* (Participant 2)

I asked Participant 2 if she might be able to elaborate on these feelings of authenticity, or realness she proceeded to explain the context she constructs when the app is used.

> *Yes… The app is more artificial… in terms of… umm… you know… I like to do it in the evenings because I find dimmer lights more soothing… I put on my diffuser… you know… I'm creating this environment that allows me to be the most optimized in terms of mindfulness, whereas you know… if I am going on in a more organic setting such as life… like work…. My worry is that I won't be able to reach those peaks and moments of mindfulness...* (Participant 2)

Participant 6 also shared concerns regarding the export of this practice, outside of proximal engagement with the app stating:

> *It's interesting because there was never any emphasis on "here's what you can do away from the app, or here's what you can do away from your phone." There was never any mention of your phone actually "put your phone down" … nothing... They have little like, animations… and I THINK... there was always a phone in them. –* (Participant 6)

In both of these circumstances, there is an acknowledgment of space being created – within this space, a particular modality of thought which is employed. There are actions to be taken, and normative values which are to be embodied. In these instances, the legitimacy of the space is arguably being evaluated on the ways in which the required thoughts, feelings, and behavior of the individuals exports to symbolic meaning structures outside of the intervention space being established on the app, or more specifically, the ways in which situational improprieties are felt when attempting to do so – I believe Participant 5 recognizes precisely this. Immediately Following her quote of the space being real despite its tangible qualities, Participant 5 elaborated on the structural implications of understanding the self, refereeing directly to symbolic interactionist literature:

> *I think it was mead, but he spoke about the I and the Me, and what I would say is that the self would be the combination and how you think that other people see you, how you see yourself, and how you understand all of those things working together... and I guess its implicated by the institutions and structures around you in your environment.* - (Participant 5)

There is clearly a conceptual framework and understanding of 'space' which is created when engagement with app occurs – this is even denoted in name of the application, Headspace. The outlined mindfulness interventions such as MBSR, MBCT, DBT, ACT, and the smartphone applications are indeed tools even in the most practical sense of the word, and the participants are clearly articulating something much more about the ways in which these practices enable a specific way of thinking, as well as a particular space to be navigated; one which consists of its own normative value structures. However, as I previously argued, these practices also brought about discussions of access when thinking of mindfulness as an institution. Perhaps one of the key forms of cultural purchase mindfulness holds, is in its availability without the need for extensive resources. While this may be the case, it does not mean that mindfulness does not

maintain class-oriented aspects of access. One of the previously stated difficulties in the traditional form of training via group participation models, is that the intervention requires individuals to go to a specific location and take on the training; this may simply not be a reality for many people. The emergence of smartphone-based mindfulness applications is illustrated as a method of making these sorts of interventions, or in the context of this research - tools, more accessible to the public, albeit, this undoubtedly still perpetuates class inequalities. As previously stated, the participants who I spoke to were highly educated individuals who had the means to access to this technology, and clearly the time to use it. While this presents a clear limitation to my sample, it does indicate specifically what sort of class values are translated through these apps. I will return to the discussion of time and management in the consecutive chapters; however my point here is that even with those who are able to access the technology, the conversation of space brings about discussion relating to who has the agency in their life to occupy it. Participant 2 elaborates on this:

> *So… I do feel like I come from a certain… you know… lifestyle… that I'm fortunate to have so… I don't have any children, I work a full-time job. I have the luxury to allow myself space… and… breakup time in my day… to have moments of reflection and mindfulness… If I was comparing that to someone who…. You know… another woman who may be a single mom… to one or more children… umm… who's working full time… umm… it would be hard to break up your day and have that moment of mindfulness within your day… you know…. So, it's something… that I try not to take for granted, because I do know I am in a situation where I can afford to take breaks in my day… to reflect onto myself… but I know it's not a luxury that everyone can afford.* (Participant 2)

Participant 2 is clearly acknowledging that she has the agency in life to be able to make time to engage with this app. Moreover, Participant 2 is indicating that within the space she occupies, these sorts of interventions hold value. This requires the conceptual understanding of a structural framework of norms and values - in this case the time one allocates to work and to children, as well as the recognition of agency employed to navigate the structure, as individual

expresses her ability to recognize the practice holds value and choose to employ it.

Conceptualizing the concept of mindfulness as a social institution as outlined in this chapter,

Participant 1 expands on the kinds of privilege that is associated with valuing these interventions

or even the ability to access them within the broader context of society.

> *Yeah but like… I think this is where that is sold the most… is in that space though… is in… that middle class upper class…. Like the people that can afford this app… that's where concepts of agency and autonomy and such sell the most, because you have the leisure to actually live that way… OK, for example… freedom… freedom to somebody who is wealthy looks like the freedom to be autonomous and to be an agent of the world who can do whatever they want… because like you've afforded that freedom… and then say…. In a lower class setting freedom looks totally different… it's like "I just want to be free from my job" … like THAT'S freedom… it doesn't have an emphasis on agency and autonomy… it doesn't have an emphasis of like I want to do, what I want to do… it has an emphasis of like... actual lived experience… like I have to go to work 7 to 9... and freedom to me would be just not having to fucking do that. Freedom to people that can like leave their house at 7:00 in the morning and go meditate and eat good food… and write… and do whatever I want. - (Participant 1)*

Mindfulness and Symbolic Structures of Meaning

Admittedly, this chapter employs a bottom-up perspective in so far as it grants

considerable agency to the individuals in the creation and navigation of social structure.

Participants 1 & 2 elucidate how the ability to have autonomy over one's day in such a way that

one may employ the agency to choose how they allocate their time, comes from a societal space

of privilege, and a specific cultural repertoire of knowledge. While I will explore the macro

functions of discourse which constitute the knowledge we use to establish these systems of

thought in consecutive chapters, this particular theme is intended to qualitatively explore the

bottom-up process in which individuals create and navigate symbolic structures of meaning. This

project will further expand the self-as-process articulated in the literature, situating mindfulness

as a function in the construction and understanding of self-as-process, and the functions of role

identity and affect as integral markers in this process. Central to the theoretical perspectives

explored in the literature of the self upon which this understanding is constructed, is the notion that within the structures we navigate, the roles we take on are not static, and they are structurally mediated. The central purpose in establishing mindfulness as an institutional structure is to begin to understand *how* we might begin to think about the self, and the context in which this is occurring reflexively. Within the engagement with this app, a space is created in which norms and values are clearly delineated. These individuals situate the self relationally within the framework of the space, establishing roles and affective responses to these values. The export (or lack thereof), to other structural contexts demonstrates how these sorts of technologies assert themselves both as a tool to engage with the self, and as a space to identify the self as a situational process, and an object to become intervened upon.

Drawing on the discussions of class value and privilege surrounding the use of the Headspace app, – and more specifically, the practice of mindfulness – serves to illustrate the ways in which these sorts of interventions may hold vastly different meanings across the cultural landscapes we occupy. This is to say that the 'bottom-up' construction space is premised on an already purposed cultural repertoire from which 'meaning' has been established. Maintaining the metaphorical language of 'tool,' this is to say that a tool is only useful insofar as there is a context within which it may be utilized, and even if the tool is 'multi-purposed,' there is still a context required for its application.

While this may indeed be a particularly reductive way of thinking about a conversation concerning the relationship between agency and structure, there is a particular importance in understanding mindfulness as a tool without context. One of the key arguments which legitimizes the clinical adoption of mindfulness as a medicalized practice within the literature is the idea that it circumvents the proliferating costs of health care and scarcity of medical access

experienced by a large majority of the population. While this may warrant such claims of pragmatism in the clinical adoption of the practice, its successful administration is ultimately premised on the ability of the individuals to establish, situate, and engage, the self within the structural spaces of meaning. Moreover, the experiences of the participants illustrate the ways in which the language surrounding this practice can easily become co-opted and implemented as a means of addressing issues which remain systemically oppressive to the individual in everyday life. While the individuals do indeed speak about the practice as an important site of meaning-making throughout their experiences, the consequences of these technologies will be further explored.

Chapter 6: The [mindful] Individual in Everyday Life

I used it [headspace] *before when I was in child and youth care, but I hated it because the way it was talked about as though it was like a… a distraction from everyday life kind of thing, as opposed to a… let's say like… grounding yourself in everyday life, or grounding yourself in yourself rather… One thing that I have learned from all of the people I have lived with is that I am talking to myself constantly out loud… so I think that I am constantly having a dialogue with myself as if there is another person beside me… so I'd say that I'm constantly aware that there is this other inner dimension that I am engaging with, that is taking in feedback from the world and transforming it, understanding it, and engaging with it… so for me, that's what that looks like… and then… taking moments… like incorporating the app more heavily now, would be taking moments to not engage with that is what I have to do. So not to be able to talk to myself… but to be in a state where things are just… where thoughts are just going uninterrupted* - (Participant 5)

For Mead, we organize our identities in response to an ongoing dialectic of the 'I' and the 'Me,' which not only reflects the importance of social conditions when thinking, feeling or behaving, but also illustrates a deliberative agency responsible for making sense of our past, present or perceived future selves in relation to these social contexts. The 'Me' in this dialectic may been seen as the repository of sociocultural knowledge with which we engage as social actors. Our ability to place our experiences in relation to norms and values within space and place determines how we engage and establish meaning-making processes, and the I is the locus of experience which we are measuring against the Me.

Manford Kuhn (1954) illustrates that the self-attitudes we construct in this reflexive process between society and the individual could be measured quantitatively with twenty answers to the question 'Who am I?' When we think about the ways we might begin to answer this question, we are actively identifying and locating ourselves in relation to social context. That is, space and place mediate the ways in which we can think about this question, and the ways that it will permit us to respond. Of course, 'thinking' about the ways in which we identify in everyday life sustains a tendency to privilege our notions of the self-emerging exclusively out of

cognitive deliberation. How we feel is also an integral component in this process. David R. Heise's (1979, 2002, 2010) Affect Control Theory addresses the ways in which culturally and institutionally informed symbolic meaning structures determine the way that we feel in a situation - playing a key role in the identity processes, and ultimately affecting how we behave. Affect is seen as a central component in determining the ways in which we respond to social settings, and how we negotiate our identities within these contexts. For the purposes of this research, affect should not be conflated with emotion. As Francis & Adams (2018:9) argue,

> Affect is the core concept of ACT, and is distinct from emotion, which is the experienced signal that an event has occurred. Affect, on the other hand, is a broad term encompassing emotions, as well as sentiments, impressions, and motives.

Unpacking mindfulness as more than simply a practice, further illustrates how the intervention contributes to the construction of a symbolic place and space where meaning-making may occur. While the previous chapter examined the ways in which mindfulness may be conceptualized as an institutional structure through with which the individuals identify their experiences in relation to norms and values that are associated with the knowledge of the practice, this chapter will examine the way that participants in this research established meaning – in specifically, meaning surrounding the 'self' through their experiences with the headspace app.

Establishing a Relationship with Thoughts

The individuals often explained the ways they engaged with mindfulness using the metaphor of 'tool.' Unlike a specific job requiring a specific tool, the mindfulness intervention, in principal, is purposed for implementation regardless of the situation or context. The intervention models are designed in such a way that after the program has finished, the patients

have a new skillset which may ideally combat an array of otherwise debilitating circumstances in daily life. The interview participants seemed to be using this mindfulness app consistent with the intended purposes of the practice that has been explored in the literature, such as relaxation, stress, and anxiety relief, affirming the claim that mindfulness meditation is indeed a worthwhile intervention. What was most interesting to me however, was the ways in which the experience of 'being mindful' served to evoke evaluative narratives surrounding life experiences in either past, present, or future contexts. More specifically, the ways in which these narratives were articulated specifically in regards to 'self.' In the conversations I shared with the individuals, they spoke about the ways in which they placed themselves in relation to their own thoughts to establish meaning throughout the mindfulness interventions. The self was often referenced as an object outside of the individual and there were several conversations in which different situational contexts elicited different selves.

In the introductory quote of this chapter, Participant 5 speaks to the contentions she holds with the rhetoric relating to mindfulness mediation. For her, the dominant paradigm surrounding mindfulness has been one in which people seek distraction from everyday life rather than situating themselves within it, or more specifically, situating themselves "within their self." Speaking to the literature, Participant 5 firmly establishes her conceptions of self as a process in which she is taking in information, processing, transforming, and engaging with it. She is locating the self within a social framework as something which is emerging and being shaped by the relationship between her experience and that framework. Through the deliberative recognition of her thoughts and feelings, her 'self' becomes the point to which meaning is ascribed. Her 'inner dimension' is as an object which is engaged with, in the same way one can engage with an app on the smart phone, or another individual in a moment of co-presence.

This is further evident in the ways she maintains a dialogue as though there is a recipient of her speech – however for her, this is the process which she is attempting to resolve. Indeed, the foundational premise of the mindfulness meditation practice is to situate one's focus "in the here and now," and Participant 5 is articulating that for her, there is an identifiable process occurring throughout her life in which she is constantly making sense of the world; she is aware of this. This process of making-sense, requires a reflexive engagement in which she interprets information in relation to its context – in her case, this is occurring through a dialogue she maintains with herself in situations. She also implies that others have made her aware of this. Her experience with mindfulness through the app is one in which there are understandings of these thoughts as though they are objects of observation, but need not become channels of sense-making – instances in which she can allow thoughts to go "uninterrupted."

Participant 5 explains a process in which mindfulness facilitates thoughts and feelings as observational objects to be seen without judgment. This would seemingly indicate a conscious dismantling of the indicators which are attributed to situational context as seen in the outlined models of Affect Control Theory. Participant 5 implies that she used to 'hate' the app, but has now established different feelings about it because it has been purposeful in its application – in specifically, in its ability to situate the self. Within the model of Affect Control Theory previously explored, established affective meaning attached to actors, behaviors, and objects are measured in relation to their context. These moments of presence without assessment have become a meaning-making process in of themselves as they have recontextualized the sentiments Participant 5 holds both in regards to the app, everyday life, and the self, which ultimately serve to evoke a different role identity. Similar meaning-making through establishing thoughts and

feelings of objects of observation were further characterized by Participant 4, as the ability to 'let

go.

> *Meditation has forced me to be more actively present, which is weird because I always thought meditation was the opposite. I thought it was just like… you think about nothing and there is blank space in your head, but it's not… it's forced me to internalize a lot of ideas as to why I have trouble letting go sometimes, and why my mind is so cluttered, and its actually part of the reason, why I started going to a therapist. Was just I realized that… my mind is so cluttered with anxiety and thoughts that don't need to be there. …*
> *…Presence and awareness, I would say is… being in tune with yourself to accept the realities of what is going on. I think a lot of people lack being present and self-aware. As an example of why I say that is because I think a lot of people are rude, a lot of people are mean, a lot of people harm other people because they are not present and they are not self-aware. I truly don't believe any human being would harm another human being if they could be in every way shape and form, present and aware of what they are doing.* (Participant 4)

For Participant 4, the presence and awareness facilitated by mindfulness intervention on

the headspace app allowed him to view his experiences and 'let go' of the evaluative judgements

he had about them, at least for the duration of the intervention. Again, this confers with the

intended implementation of app, and the premise of the mindfulness interventions all together.

However, it was not until he was able to 'let go' of these experiences, that was he able to become

aware, or as he describes as 'realize' that he has issues in everyday life which needed to be

addressed. These experiences translate outside of the intervention occurring in the app, and they

become identifiers as to how Participant 4 understands the self across social contexts. Placing his

self in relation to differential social parameters (pre and post intervention), Participant 4

identified a process of 'realization,' in which affective properties of emotion became identified

as clutter, or "things that don't need to be there." Again, Participant 4 is placing his relationship

to these feelings as a way of understanding the self. He described this meaning-making process

as one which forces him to internalize ideas why he can't 'let go.' For him, the experience was

described through the language of "presence" and "self-awareness." Participant 4 further outlines

attributes such as rudeness and meanness, and frames them as those which are not characteristic

of someone who is 'self-aware,' effectively expressing the way that the transformative meaning-

making process allowed him to re-think self and the role attributes associated with self-

awareness – the function of EPA dimensions as explored in affect control theory become

particularly salient in this instance. Participant 4 illustrates the way that mindfulness has the

ability to facilitate a change in the conceptual understanding of self, through sentiments with

which one identifies. Several of the participants explicated similar understandings however

identifying different selves to which sentiments become attributed – this quite simply described

by him as "having a relationship with your own thoughts. That's all that it needs to be."

Different Selves Across Situational Contexts

> *I guess it's trying to make people pause I guess… I think that's another thing. I think like just pause, take a break…. I don't know where people fit in to it other than… taking a break, and trying to like… again I don't want to say 'sort yourself out' because that's not what it's trying to do, but like… rise above whatever your mind is trying to talk you in to… Emotion was a very big part of the app. It almost like there was two different selves that you had. You had the you in every day, and then the you when you are mediating… it's almost like it's trying to split you, a little bit… into like an analytical self, and your umm… reactionary self…* (Participant 6)

Participant 6 expresses ways that the intervention made him feel there were different

selves with which he identified; one within the use of the app, and the one in everyday life. In

this instance there are two different structural contexts, and the way in which he identifies with

the actionable traits attributed to both selves is determined by the structure in which they emerge.

Further, these selves may be understood through the affective response elicited within each

social structure – 'reactionary' and 'analytical.' Speaking to identity theory, Stryker (1980, 2002)

argues that individuals have many different identities across time and situational context. For

Stryker, identities are cognitive aspects of selves—self-cognitions or self-concepts; they are

defined as internalized role expectations attached to positions in organized sets of social

relationships. By placing himself in relation to thoughts and feelings as an object to be observed, there is arguably a process occurring wherein saliency of the roles such as 'reactionary' or 'analytical,' is being established, and through the app these roles are becoming connected to space and place. The commitment to these roles is determined by the structure which ascribes them to the dichotomous selves he outlines – either everyday life, or when engaging with the app.

Participant 2 also expressed the practice as one in which the app allowed her to become aware of different 'types' of selves:

> *It's made me become aware of… different… types of my self… my anxious self, how I am in a work situation, how I feel at the end of the day… compared to the beginning of the day… umm… what forms of mindfulness should I practice in terms of like… you know… do I need to separate My-self and collect my thoughts, or can I focus on breathing techniques while I'm driving… umm… just to focus on centering myself in those sorts of stages of my-self if that makes sense….*(Participant 2)

Participant 2's selves are also seen in relation to the social role she is taking on, that is whether she is in a work environment or not. There is again the language of 'becoming' aware being employed. It is when Participant 2 uses the Headspace app that she becomes aware of these different selves. The self to which she referrers – the anxious self – becomes understood by ascribing the sentiments she felt to space and place. This reflective deliberation of self comes about through the use of the observational intervention of mindfulness, bringing forward the properties of self.

Although the outlined goal of the intervention is to establish presence without rumination, but rather just to observe thoughts as they come into one's conscious experience, the experiences of the individuals illustrate that there are indeed affective properties of selfhood being established through this intervention even if the intervention is not propagating them through its technique of becoming 'present.' Simply put, this intervention, much like any other

behavioral intervention, is establishing a process of socialization in which the users ultimately

establish different perspectives of self; this places the intervention as its own process of

meaning-making. Participant 5 further unpacks the ways in which the intervention becomes

meaningful even when the explicit function of meditation is to not establish meaning-making

processes.

Reframing Narratives in Life

> *I think that my problem with it is that people use it as a means to escape from the self….is what my contention, as opposed to using it as an engagement with the self, is what it is, but … just being able to be in touch with … just slow down and be in touch with your own emotions. And then make meaning of those emotions. Whether or not you are understanding them… feeling I think… And pulling them on like a t-shirt, and sort of… swimming in them and living in them for a minute… I think that in of itself is producing meaning for people... And myself...* (Participant 5)

The premise of both Dialectical Behavior Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment

Therapy indeed posit that there is an aim to reframe narratives in life which are troublesome and

which cause difficult behavioral or cognitive tendencies, so it comes as no surprises that the

individuals who shared their experiences with me engaged in a similar process of reframing

narratives of their self, however, as previously argued, there is a gap in explaining the qualitative

dimension of this meaning-making processes. The current indicators of these smartphone

interventions being defined by the measurable reduction of anxiety and depressive symptoms

through survey measure. One of the primary purposes of this research is to further unpack these

narratives these individuals are engaging with, and to further understand how exactly aspects of

life are being reframed through these interventions.

> *I find that I have a lot of brain fog almost… so it just kind of lifted that a little bit. I don't know, I am a very stressed person, I constantly think about the demise of the climate and everything. So, it's nice to kind of see those thoughts kind of arise and being able to actually analyze the thoughts you know? It's like the meta-you almost* (Participant 6)

Of course, on its face, mindfulness meditation implicates the general irrelevancy of maintaining 'narratives' as well as an idea of the self to which I am referring; the key purchase is the ability to exist only in the 'present moment' which is trained and facilitated throughout the interventions. However, it seems tacitly impossible that one could remain in this state at all times, as the ways in which we construct our identity and notions of selfhood require us to situate our experiences within a temporal landscape of past, present, and future, developing meaning in relation to the institutions we are situated. In the quote above, Participant 6 refers to a 'meta-you' in the way he can interpret, analyze, and reframe the stress he has about the existential threat of climate change. Much like Participant 6, the individuals in this study explained their engagement with the app as a site allowing engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences as an object, in either past, present, or future contexts. This becomes especially salient in the ways they reference the self as something from which they are removed. I reference the 'self' as a possessive noun because that is precisely how the participants did so as well. When the participants reflected on their experiences, the mindfulness application allowed them to situate the self as a conceivable object within social structures which mediate its properties.

'Presence' and 'rumination' are often conceptualized as antithetical concepts in the practice of mindfulness, they are shown to have similar resolve in the ways in which users may further think about the self and recontextualize the circumstances in which it is emerging. Something as simple as bringing attentional awareness to tasks which are typically conducted without them referenced as 'autopilot' in the mindfulness intervention model, or listening engaging in a guided meditation on the Headspace app, where users are to view their thoughts and feelings as objects of intervention, has a profound capability to transform the ways in which individuals identify with social situations and establish notions of self. When individuals think

about themselves, self-conceptions are constructed that refer to who and what they are, and these self-conceptions are shaped by the social process with which they are engaging – in this case, the mindfulness intervention.

I wanted to understand how exactly the engagement with this process was taking place, and more specifically, how it is something they actively produce, rather than conceptualizing it as something which happens *to* them. Throughout the conversations I had, the participants articulated 'my-self' as a disjointed possessive noun. Despite the foundational purposes of mindfulness as a way to transcend or 'step outside' of the problematic thoughts and ruminative experiences occurring in daily life, the Headspace app served as a method for the individuals to engage with the construction of self as process after they experiences the intervention. It is for this reason that I found it most relevant to situate these experiences within the symbolic interactionist perspectives of self.

I did not initially suspect that this would be an integral component when approaching mindfulness, however conceivably situating this intervention through the language of 'tool' as the participants did, brings saliency to the notion that there is indeed a framework with which the participants model of self is engaging. Further, this understanding of 'tool' illustrates the recognition of a specific task which requires the tool to navigate. The functional account of this become clear in the ways that mindfulness was experienced as a method of observing thoughts, feelings, and behavior in relation to their social context, bringing about realizations regarding specific ways of being, or more specifically, establishing these ways of being. Through both the construction of space, and engagement with the self as a canvas upon which realizations may be ascribed, the mindfulness interventions may be seen as a particular system of thought that is

seen to establish and modify the ways we imagine, understand, and engage with the social

capacities of our being.

Occurring not only during the intervention, but often seen as a result of the intervention,

mindfulness allows for the amalgamation of social process which govern how we think about our

environmental surroundings, ourselves, and those around us – regardless of past, present, or

future orientations – to be understood through a specific lens of intervention. As Participant 1

eloquently stated: "a way of understanding." Participant 4 further explained the ways he believes

this specific method of thinking has impacted his identity:

> *You know, when I meditate… maybe it's more a personal thing, I don't know, I don't talk
> to too many people about it to be honest… but when I meditate it's scary at first how
> much I do realize, how badly I do need to let go, and headspace was really good in terms
> of helping me realize that I am a very anxious person as maybe I had said prior to this
> discussion, and I often times let myself forget that… you know... that… I am a meat vessel
> I am a person, I am growing, I am developing, I've had different experiences than other
> people, and that's what made me part of who I am. so the best me would be someone who
> doesn't forget that, and who is consistently working to improve.* (Participant 4)

Chapter 7: A Market for Mindfulness

I didn't ever think that it would be a tool or a step towards being a better person. Um…. In the words of Big Sean, "working on yourself is the most important kind of work you can do," and I've always believed that. I've always believed that. I've tried to improve myself as a person, and I didn't start meditation to be a better person, I tried to relax, I tried to use it as a relaxation at first, but it's been a big tool in helping me develop as a person. - (Participant 4)

This project has predominantly privileged a micro analysis regarding the ways that individuals engage with meaning-processes, both in relation to institutional structures and the conceptions of self. More specifically, the theoretical concepts used to articulate the process of self which emerges out of relations with space, place, and objects, has not been situated within a broader societal framework. Throughout the conversations that I shared with the participants of this research, there was relation drawn to the economic structures which have precipitated a particular way of operating in the realities of the individuals. This is seen as a culture in which the emphasis on productivity and individuality have allowed for methods of self-intervention such as mindfulness, to become an attractive model for individuals to work on the self through the use of these notions.

The individuals referenced the function of the app as a business model like any other, but also implied the contexts in which there exists a felt necessity to work on their selves with entrepreneurial capacities, and mindfulness as a tool to conduct this work. The literature review of the self utilizes the theoretical perspectives of Foucault (1973, 1978, 1979), Rose (1990), and Binkley (2014) to illustrate the ways in which legitimized knowledge surrounding the self may be seen as a form of governmentality in which neoliberal values become embedded in the ways that we think and engage with the social world, and ultimately the ways we think about what it

means to live a life. Participant 5 references the importance of individualism and mindfulness

stating:

> *I think that is one of the things about the apps… it is a space for people to go and feel like individuals. But whether or not it is exactly that… like is it real individualism… I am speaking as I am thinking…When I think about neoliberalism and hyper-individualism I think about the social Darwinism aspect of it, how am I going to put it… driven by competition… you don't have to worry about anybody but yourself. Partially because you can't, because you are concerned about your own life, but also because you are told that everyone should be able to do things on their own…. I guess ideas of security and risk in relationships now…. And… I think different perspectives pick up individualism in different ways.* (Participant 5)

Within the framework of the post structuralist self employed by Foucault (1973, 1978,

1979), Rose (1990), and Binkley (2014), individuals organize their inner-most experiences

through economic principals such as choice, autonomy, and freedom. Success may be seen to

become synonymous with the ability to cultivate capacities which are conducive to social

mobility and opportunity. This chapter will draw on the relevant literature, to situate mindfulness

as an extension of governmentality, tethering the practice of mindfulness to normative values

which are deemed as beneficial to the individual in everyday life. To clarify, this work is not

intended to make normative claims regarding these functions, but rather to explore how they

operate amongst and within social structures and ultimately the subjective experiences of the

individual in everyday life.

Working on The Self

In the quote at the beginning of this chapter, Participant 4 uses song lyrics to illustrate the

importance he places on 'working on the self.' One of the ways in which he indicated that he

works on the self is through the meditation practice employed by Headspace. Participant 4

contrasts the practice he has learned from mindfulness, to a book written by a spiritual figure

called Ram Dass. He does so to explicate the way in which the construction of the app is 'open-

ended' in its objectives and potential interpretation of its users.

> *I have this headspace tool, and I'm using it to help me achieve something, but that doesn't mean that I'm not going to need to continually use it to help me achieve that…I think as with many things in capitalist society, it [mindfulness] just blankets it to target the most people possible… Specifically headspace… it is an amazing app… very well put together… but very just shotgun approached… "let's hit the most people we can, and just sort of leave it at sort of a base level" In Ram Dass' book, he has a very targeted end goal… you know, he is all about "you do this, to achieve this" You do spirituality to achieve attunes openness… to become a god… to whatever his message is… I think headspace is very broad for very specific reason, it allows people to take whatever meaning they want from it, assign it to that… and use it for themselves… whereas, that's not someone like Ram Dass' message.* (Participant 4)

The language of tool is employed here again, however in this instance, it is illustrating the ways

in which the app and the practice allows for users to take whatever meaning, and use it for

themselves. In contrast to the spiritual tradition Participant 4 had been researching, the function

of the app allowed for an open-ended option in which individuals could derive meaning how

they saw fit, however for him, the app enabled productivity – or rather, a potential avenue of

working on himself. Cultivating the capacities to govern one's own thoughts and feelings for

specific purposes ran throughout all of the interviews, further underscoring the ideological

framework within which these apps function.

Participant 3 had extensive experience with mindfulness practices outside of the app

having participated in meditated retreats and studying eastern philosophy. For him, there was a

specific way that mindfulness is perceived and picked up in the west, particularly in regards to

the normative connotation we carry surrounding positive affect.

> *So… mindfulness in the West, is marketed as this weird thing that'll just make you experience your sensory environment… it'll be better, everything will be better. You'll just enjoy sitting in your house alone better, you'll enjoy meals more… and I'm not saying it can't do that, but umm… that's the way a lot of people picking up those apps use it… They're like "I'll just hit this for twenty minutes a day, this guy will guide me through it, and my experiences… will just get better."* Participant 3

Participant 3 argues that there is a particular sort of fulfilment employed in the rhetoric of

Western mindfulness practice, particularly one which is focused on making things better. While

his observations did not necessarily problematize these values, Participant 1 unpacked the same

emphasis placed on governing the mind in such a way that there was a detriment to these

perspectives of affect.

> *In those little videos they give you… One of them was like storm clouds… like "you can't
> have too many storm clouds in your sky, like … you want to have a clear blue sky." But
> like… those storm clouds… are kind of like… well…. Why get rid of them? It was just like
> an implicit value being placed on getting rid of these storm clouds. And it's like … Yeah,
> well what if that's fucking real, like that's some like real shit, like that's some real
> pressures in my life, and like getting rid of that… what benefit does that serve me….
> Other than coming out of it and you know... just not being critical anymore or something,
> It's just like "storm cloud" don't worry about the state of like your life or your job or
> anything like that because you know… you find peace within yourself… that seems so
> strange to me…. You know, and it's like, yeah dark clouds suck sometimes and they can
> make life difficult, but like, I think you need... I think it's important to look at them
> sometimes, not just get rid of them… but I think the worst part of it is that it's just
> implied. It's just implied that you would prefer to be in this state of bliss, or this state of
> empty mind… as they say… Like the one storm cloud was about feelings. about having
> strong negative feelings…. But I don't know… someone pisses off, it pisses me off...like I
> don't feel like I should feel like that wrong you know...* (Participant 1)

Participant 1 unpacks what he feels is a cultural emphasis on the need to govern our emotions, or

more specifically, to avoid feeling negative emotions, stating that there are value claims attached

working towards 'feeling good.'

Of course, one may ask, what is the problem with this? The point that I am trying to make

here is that there are particular sorts of normative boundaries we place around personhood. The

prior chapters have explored the specific way that mindfulness brings about ideas of the self and

social structure, and in the conversations that I shared with the individuals, there is an

explanation for practicing mindfulness as a means to achieve what we as individuals ought to do.

In this light, the sorts of emergent properties brought about by the practice of mindfulness may

be seen as a mere reflection of neoliberal values through which we are understanding the

function of our selves.

> *Um… to me, it means… I guess I'm a bit of a 'wonderer,' and I get anxious... for me I guess it is just remembering to stay calm and focused. So being 'mindful' of my thoughts or my body, or my anxiety…. To stay present as well… I guess that's what being mindful is to me…so like for example, my job when I am working with kids… umm… if I'm remaining mindful throughout my day, that would mean I am staying focused and present… umm… and then reminding myself to… umm…. To stay focused on a specific task or goal. If I am working with a child… especially a child with autism, I need to remind myself to stay… for me in that moment... to stay present… to focus on a specific goal, and not to distract my-self with umm... other thoughts, and other things about the day. I would like to remain like at a certain level of mindfulness throughout the day… especially when I am doing like stressful tasks.* - (Participant 2)

Productivity as Well-Being

In the above quote, Participant 2 articulates the ways that employing a mindfulness practice

helps get her through her work days. In this case mindfulness again, may be seen to cultivate

productivity. Moreover, Participant 2 continues to articulate the ways in which engaging in this

state in conducive to her well-being.

> *If I wasn't practicing mindfulness... I would be operating on more robotic level… so in terms of being on a robotic level... for me that means I would be going throughout my day, and I'd be a person who wakes up in the morning and makes coffee because that what I do… and then I would go to work, and then I would complete the tasks according to the task lists, I would come home, I would make dinner, exercise, and just repeat and repeat. Whereas, mindfulness… to me… brings me more inward and allows me to reflect more on my-self and my being… and how myself responds to certain things that come up in my day. So, reflecting instead of going to work and completing tasks in a more robotic form, I therefore… for me being mindful… would mean to… put more emphasis on some tasks, if something comes up and it makes me feel anxious… I would then be looking inward and perhaps maybe asking myself... and finding the reasons why… I think that practicing mindfulness, is a part of my well-being, and fostering and nurturing my well-being… will be a direct benefit to umm... my work life… or what I am creating or what I am doing… I am controlling my physiology through my mind…. I feel like that's the whole goal of mindfulness… is to having more control of your physiology, and thoughts that come in and out of your head.*

What may be seen here is again a meaning-making process in which Participant 2 is reframing the experiences she has in her day-to-day work and personal life, however, there is a specific way in which her well-being is being articulated through the ability to successfully focus on these tasks and perform optimally. Her well-being is defined through the lens of being productive. The sentiments of implementing mindfulness as a tool of productivity were further echoed by Participant 3

> *I mean, I can see why corporations would want their employees to learn mindfulness-based stress reduction and stuff like that…. It's kind of known too… in like Buddhist circles, that if you have a job that requires like… a very… refined level of focus on your own. So, you're not being bombarded, you're not having conversations, you're not being bombarded by sensory information… you are having to do a task on your own like a lawyer, like reading a bunch of stuff… you'll probably have a better ability to do a concentrative type meditation, because you've already developed that skill to a large degree. So, a corporation would have benefit… because okay, if a corporation can send you to a class that's going to make you feel less stressed, that's going to make you have more positive emotion, better able to deal with negative emotion, better able to communicate with people, increase your concentration… why the hell would they not want to send you to that class… that's like the best idea ever. I mean, we have terrible attention spans in the west.*

Participant 3 outlines instances where he has read that corporate setting institute mindfulness-based training for employees to more effectively engage in their physiology in such a way that they become better performers in the workplace. From both Participant 2 and Participant 3, what may be seen is the construction of a normative of what it understands to be an effective employee as well as a productive citizen. Speaking to the literature, the normative boundaries of selfhood, become understood through one's ability to govern the self effectively. Returning back to the Western emphasis on this mindfulness practice, it may be seen in such a light, that taking up mindfulness in a Western context is premised on ideas of individual responsibility.

Participant 4 further elaborates on individual responsibility component, contrasting work environments in Japan, with those in a Western context.

In Japan, umm… you go out drinking after work with everyone who you work with… you know, your boss goes, all thirty people in your pod go, and you don't even have a choice necessarily… you just…. You do that… that is just a societal thing... a cultural thing… so, here in the west... here in Canada… and we'll just return to this hypothetical situation again… you slap up a poster and say "hey we have these mindfulness things on Saturdays, and you have the same poster in Japan… is the onus on the individual to go to that?" Because if the rest of my office is doing it in Japan, I am just going to do it. But if the office is doing it in Western society, I don't think that is a reason not to do it, or to do it. I think we have more onus on people to try and grow themselves if it's possible, but I think we dearly lack support on PROPER ways how to do that. (Participant 4)

Participant 4 has admittedly felt tremendous benefits from employing mindfulness through the headspace app, but what he is articulating here is that mindfulness is beneficial, however, in our Western context, the ways in which we define 'growing' the self are subject to question. He argues that the mindfulness workshops, might be good, but we place onus on the individual, as though the responsibility is on them to engage with these things. Participant 2 also found tremendous benefits employing mindfulness intervention in his life, however he also spoke extensively to the ways in which mindfulness may be used as a figurative baseline measure in a corporate setting

So, if our society… if someone freaks out at like a big corporation, and then they have a meeting, and they're like "ok, well this guy doesn't seem very aware of his behavior and his actions, we'll send him to a mindfulness thing, that will help him get a handle on that." There is no doubt in my mind that different people have different baselines for skill… there is clearly people who are more aware of their own intentions and what not right… and I think you can train it too… (Participant 3)

In these contexts, the ability to cultivate levels of mindfulness may be seen as both a means to greater productively, which is also synonymous with well-being. Participant 6 spoke specifically to the digital functions of mindfulness as means of redirecting attention away from the things that distract us the most.

Umm… I mean…. Its working… I guess…I'm sure you aware of Apple's usage app and Google's well-being app that they are kind of integrating into their systems… Google and Apple both this year decided to tell you how much time you are spending on certain apps.

So, it will be like "this week you spent 8 hours on Facebook, and 20 minutes on your notes app" or whatever it is you know… So, it's interesting because there is kind of this… whole well-being movement, and a whole "technology is not as good as we think it is" well not technology but smartphone usage... "smartphone usage is super addicting, we need to find a way to ween people off" essentially… you know… "use your tech in a better way." Which I can see hoe headspace can kind of coincide with that, but then like… it's weird because we are using our phones to stop using our phones. It like trying… back in the 50's when they were like putting up all the stop smoking campaigns, and you like smoke a certain cigarette to stop smoking cigarette kind of thing… but SO FAR, the only people who have been telling us what our digital well-being should be is google, apple, Facebook. Those are the three companies that have been talking about how to limit your time, it's also the only thing that has been feeding us information
Participant 6

Interestingly, Other than Participant 2's claim that the Headspace app created an environment that felt artificial, Participant 6 was the only individual who really identified the explicit mediated functions of governing attention. That is, the context of mindfulness within the use of the app and the contradictions that arise as a result of it being part of the digital media infrastructure. Moreover, for him the ability to ascertain well-being, or in his operational definition of 'digital well-being' was defined by the ability to govern our attention in such a way that we were allocating less of it to the digital media infrastructures which are trying to capture our attention in the first place.

The point of this chapter is predominately to illustrate the consequences that may arise when form our conceptions of selfhood through the parameters of self-intervention – in this case, mindfulness. Participant 1 expands on his work in the educational sector and some of the ways that this model of self-government is picked up to establish parameters of pedagogy, and ultimately may contribute to issues of inequality.

in education we've been introduced to umm mindfulness several times… and it's a sense of getting students to practice mindfulness as a skill… to have them better engaged in class, to have more social and emotional literacy, and to understand themselves as people better, it has these tags to it… so I can kind of see you know… "oh your just not mindful enough… l Like you haven't quite reached it… or like.. o damn this person is so

mindful…like you're a level 9 and I'm a level 7… I would even like to comment on the social order… because… if you think about it… it gives way… for say people who start to use this app, who are in a certain class… to look at other people and be like… YOU could access this app, YOU could use this app, YOU can gain these skills, and now it's YOUR fault that you are in the situation you are in, because you could just do these things, like use headspace like me, and like… actually have some ambition….Fuck I can just hear the narrative already start to construct… like…. "well... what do you do every day after your job… I use headspace… so that I can be in the right mode, so that I can be productive and do things… and I EARN my social position because I do those things that get me here."

Of course, the Headspace app may not explicitly be reinforcing the normative boundaries of personhood. But the way that these sorts of tools become situated brings forth consequences to the ways in which we begin to understand ourselves. Speaking to the literature of Foucault, Rose and Binkley, this discourse of mindfulness may be seen to exist and contribute to a culture in which the therapeutic narratives such as the ones established by mindfulness-based interventions are situated at the core of personhood. Consequently, this enables the ways in which we understand ourselves to be become fundamentally contingent on our ability to actively engage in the neurobiological underpinnings of our mind. Through this theoretical paradigm, the ability to recognize and govern the emotional experiences occurring in even the most mundane intricacies of everyday life has the metric through which the potentiality for human fulfilment and productivity becomes measured. Given that this explanation of a 'market for mindfulness' implies the economic incentivization of mindfulness, in specifically, the governance of the cognitive capacities of attention, there remains a necessity in unpacking an economic framework.

The Attention Economy

Capitalism within a contemporary Western context has continued to elicit theoretical distinctions which point to the persistence of a 'knowledge economy.' Within this framework of capitalism, the emphasis of production is not one rooted solely in the production of goods, but

rather one of knowledge-based services imperatively constructed for market consumption.

Powell & Snellman (2004, pg. 201) argue that a knowledge economy is premised upon a greater

reliance of intellectual capabilities rather than physical inputs or natural resources. This

framework allows economic growth to become dependent on the quantity, quality, and

accessibility of the information available, rather than on the traditional 'means of production'

model. What is specifically changing within the economic structures of a knowledge economy is

the reconfiguration of both labour and capital. Many theorists argue that the knowledge economy

dialogue is inadequate in articulating the current conditions of capitalism, and that the

persistence of an attention economy better explicates both the implications to commodification

and subjectivity.

Crogan & Kinsley (2012) make the argument that the commodification of the human

capacities of attention has shifted us into what has been coined as the 'attention economy,' of

which they argue "is an inversion of the 'information economy', in which information is

plentiful and attention is the scarce resource." Herbert Simon (1971), an economist who coined

the term 'attention economy' articulates,

> [T]he wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that
>
> information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the
>
> attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.
>
> (Simon, 1971: 40 in Crogan & Kinsley, 2012)

Goldhaber (1997) further expands on the attention economy by articulating attention as a

commodity which propagates a rise of immaterial labor in which attention becomes the medium

through which an individual may achieve potentiality. As Goldhaber articulates, attention is not a

momentary circumstance "but something that has prolonged effects. Thus, when attention is garnered it builds a potential for further attention in the future: obtaining attention is obtaining a kind of enduring wealth, a form of wealth that puts you in a preferred position to get anything this new economy offers."

With such an arrangement of attention as the primary medium through which potentiality of the individual is procured with economic imperative as the underlying rationale, it stands to reason then, that the capacities to govern attention itself, present the primary apparatus through which wealth in the new age of the attention economy may become generated. the ability to direct our attention to our experience as it unfolds, engaging in what may otherwise be seen as an active engagement of passivity, becomes the method through which individuals procure the means to 'well-ness'. In this model the understandings of selfhood become rooted simply in the ability to be in the moment, further illustrating the continual process of self-government in which successful participation requires the individual to establish relationships to, or in contrast to, their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

While sharing much different perspectives, and coming from seemingly different life experiences, the six participants in this research provide a remarkably similar account of their experiences practicing mindfulness using the Headspace app. Much like my own experiences with mindfulness, the participants using the app in this research engaged not only in a practice of training the mind, but also in profound meaning-making processes. More specifically, these experiences enabled them to conceivably situate the mindfulness intervention as a social institution. That is, mindfulness functioned as a site much like the institutions outlined in the symbolic interactionist literature. Through the construction and navigation of this space the individuals recognized and adopted specific role-identities, and also experienced different sentiments about the social context. Much like Grigsby's (2009) study in the University setting, these individuals had different evaluative feelings about their selves particularly due to the space they inhabited within the context of the intervention. This intervention was not momentary, the individuals translated these experiences outside the context of the intervention, arguably demonstrating what I would argue is one of the most powerful functions of the app. It is perhaps not necessarily the breathing exercises or body scans employed in contexts outside of the intervention model which function to change the individual's behavior, but rather the embodiment of a different set of norms, stemming from the space they created using the app- lending some credibility to the name of the app itself.

This brings me to the second main theme explored in this project- *The mindful Individual in Everyday life.* One of the profound functions of this intervention taking place through the app was in the ways that the individuals established relationships with their own thoughts. Much like

the ways in which the processes of socialization through which individuals establish meaning. Thinking about Blumer's (1969/1986) interpretive method which approaches meanings that underlie human interaction as those which are consistently being negotiated and renegotiated through interaction, the individuals in this study engage in this process through their ability to establish a relationship to their own thoughts like they would another social actor. Further, speaking to the Kuhn's (1954) quantitative approach, this intervention and perhaps my discussion with the individuals, required them to consistently reflect on the question of 'who am I.' This is arguably where the conversations of 'realization' may be best approached. It was as though the individuals were excavating some sort of truth about themselves, in the same way I did when I initially took the eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program. Arguably, it was when the individuals established themselves in relation to their own thoughts, these 'realizations' could occur. Interestingly, this is the main point of contention that can be seen regarding the mindfulness interventions as they are laid out in the literature. One of the sole purposes of the programs employed such as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, is to avoid ruminative and problematic thoughts, and to remain present. And while this may certainly be a functionally achievable task, to observe something to situate one's self in relation to it. Looking to this intervention with a sociological lens, as well as the articulated experiences of the individuals illustrates that there is something much more profound than a simply observation of thoughts going on here; there are relational processes being stablished to one's past, present, and future, selves. These processes allow the individual to construct the self in proximity or in juxtaposition to these selves.

Perhaps most importantly, these micro level interactions between the self and social structure take place within an economic framework through which the individuals come to

understand what it means to live a life through neoliberal values such as choice, freedom, and potentiality. It is not to say that these things are inherently nefarious, but rather that they present consequences as to how we understand ourselves. That is, these individuals, nor myself for that matter, should not be seen as cultural dupes – rather, the framework which within these interventions and ultimately the micro-processes of socialization occur, are shaped and constrained by the economic structure within which they reside. This becomes particularly salient when the individuals speak about the Headspace app as a tool which would help them be more productive, while also implicating productivity as the way well-being may be defined. This is precisely the same reason I took the MBSR class in the first place. Of course, I wanted to be less stressed, but for me, the way to do that was through employing techniques which would help me become more productive in my writing process.

From this perspective, the ability to recognize and govern the emotional and cognitive experiences occurring in even the most mundane intricacies of everyday life becomes the metric through which the potentiality for human fulfilment and productivity becomes measured. In their manual which employs mindfulness intervention for anxiety and depression, Segal, Williams, & Teasdale (2013) state that "by becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings and body sensations, from moment to moment, we give ourselves the possibility of greater freedom and choice." While the micro processes of socialization functionally account for the mechanisms through which individuals establish space and ultimately the self, they do so in a context where the management of attention is not only an advantageous endeavor, but also the guiding principal of what it means to conduct one's self purposefully. It should come as no surprise that mindfulness is not *merely* a model of intervention, but also a multi-billion-dollar enterprise. There is evidently a market for the management of attention.

Jon Kabat-Zinn's (1979) defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." While this is ultimately the practice or surface intervention being employed, it is simply too reductive to view this intervention as an exercise which merely directs attention in a purposeful way. Returning to Elias' (1978) argument that "sociology is concerned with problems of society, and society is something formed by oneself and other people together," developing a sociological critique of mindfulness is to ask what exactly is going on when we are to 'direct' our attention purposefully. Further, how can such a seemingly benign verbal cue to direct attention to something be so profound in the way that it shapes our subjective experiences? Clearly mindfulness has profound implications as to the way that we may manage daily life both pre and post intervention, and to understand this most adequately requires us to investigate the relationship between the individual and society. This relationship itself is influenced by knowledge of what it means to live a life in contemporary Western culture. Mindfulness is a valuable site of sociological inquiry as it serves to elucidate a practice in which the economic frameworks which shape and constrain the knowledge of what it means to live a life are taken up and employed in the most mundane intricacies of everyday life. Through mindfulness, every corner of private life may be seen as a site of potentially, further establishing ideas of well-being, fulfilment, and purpose as those which are tied to the ability to manage the self, and manage the mind.

References

Baer, R. A. (Ed.). (2015). Mindfulness-based treatment approaches: Clinician's guide to evidence base and applications. Elsevier.

Becker, H. S. (1996). The epistemology of qualitative research. *Ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry*, *27*, 53-71.

Blumer, H. (1986). Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method. University of California Press.

Burke, P. J. (2006). Identity change. Social psychology quarterly, 69(1), 81-96.

Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). Identity theory. Oxford University Press.

Binkley, S. (2009). The work of neoliberal governmentality: Temporality and ethical substance in the tale of two dads. *Foucault Studies*, 60-78.

Binkley, S. (2009). Governmentality, Temporality and Practice From the individualization of risk to the contradictory movements of the soul'. Time & Society, 18(1), 86-105.

Binkley, S. (2011). Happiness, positive psychology and the program of neoliberal governmentality. Subjectivity, 4(4), 371-394.

Binkley, S. (2011). Psychological life as enterprise: Social practice and the government of neo-liberal interiority. History of the Human Sciences, 24(3), 83-102.

Binkley, S. (2014). Happiness as enterprise: An essay on neoliberal life. Suny Press.

Carter, M. J., & Fuller, C. (2016). Symbols, meaning, and action: The past, present, and future of symbolic interactionism. Current Sociology, 64(6), 931-961.

Cast, A. D. (2003). Power and the ability to define the situation. Social Psychology Quarterly, 66(3), 185.

Chaykowski, K. (2017, January 8). Meet Headspace, The App That Made Meditation A $250 Million Business. Retrieved February 10, 2017, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathleenchaykowski/2017/01/08/meet-headspace-the-app-that- made-meditation-a-250-million-business/#5962945f1f1b

Creswell, J. D. (2017). Mindfulness interventions. Annual review of psychology, 68, 491-516.

Crogan, P., & Kinsley, S. (2012). Paying attention: Towards a critique of the attention economy. *Culture Machine*, *13*.

Daudén Roquet, C., & Sas, C. (2018, April). Evaluating Mindfulness Meditation Apps. In Extended Abstracts of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (p. LBW575). ACM.

De Vibe, M. F., Bjørndal, A., Fattah, S., Dyrdal, G. M., Halland, E., & Tanner-Smith, E. E. (2017). Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) for improving health, quality of life and social functioning in adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

Elias, N. (1978). What is sociology?. Columbia University Press.

Evans, S., Ferrando, S., Findler, M., Stowell, C., Smart, C., & Haglin, D. (2008). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for generalized anxiety disorder. Journal of anxiety disorders, 22(4), 716-721.

Feliu-Soler, A., Pascual, J. C., Borràs, X., Portella, M. J., Martín-Blanco, A., Armario, A., ... & Soler, J. (2014). Effects of dialectical behaviour therapy-mindfulness training on emotional reactivity in borderline personality disorder: preliminary results. Clinical psychology & psychotherapy, 21(4), 363-370.

Forbes. (2017, September 29). Mindfulness Is More Than A Buzzword: A Look Behind the Movement. Retrieved November 22, 2017, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/payout/2017/09/29/mindfulness-is-more-than-a-buzzword-a- look-at-the-neuroscience-behind-the-movement/#4f45b90f372f

Foucault, M. (2002). The birth of the clinic. Routledge.

Foucault, M., Davidson, A. I., & Burchell, G. (2008). The birth of biopolitics: lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979. Springer.

Francis, L. E., & Adams, R. E. (2018). Two Faces of Self and Emotion in Symbolic Interactionism: From Process to Structure and Culture—And Back. Symbolic Interaction.

Gardiner, M. (2002). *Critiques of everyday life: an introduction*. Routledge.

Goldhaber, M. H. (1997). The attention economy and the net. *First Monday*, *2*(4).

Green, B. Q. (2010). College life through the eyes of students - by mary grigsby: Book reviews. Rural Sociology, 75(3), 520-523. doi:10.1111/j.1549-0831.2010.00022_3.x

Grigsby, M. (2014). College life through the eyes of students. Suny Press.

Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S., & Walach, H. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. Journal of psychosomatic research, 57(1), 35-43.

Hartwell, C. (2018, April 02). Proliferation of Mindfulness Apps. Retrieved April 6, 2019, from https://medium.com/@charliehartwell/proliferation-of-mindfulness-apps-bdd34ea9d734

Hayes, S. C. (2004). Acceptance and commitment therapy, relational frame theory, and the third wave of behavioral and cognitive therapies. Behavior therapy, 35(4), 639-665.

Hayes, S. C., Luoma, J. B., Bond, F. W., Masuda, A., & Lillis, J. (2006). Acceptance and commitment therapy: Model, processes and outcomes. Behaviour research and therapy, 44(1), 1-25.

Heard, H. L., & Swales, M. A. (2016). Dialectical behaviour therapy: distinctive features. Routledge.

Heise, D. R. (1979). Understanding events: Affect and the construction of social action. CUP Archive.

Heise, D. R. (2002). Understanding social interaction with affect control theory. New directions in contemporary sociological theory, 17-40.

Heise, D., & MacKinnon, N. (2010). Self, identity, and social institutions. Springer.

Hofmann, S. G., & Asmundson, G. J. (2008). Acceptance and mindfulness-based therapy: new wave or old hat?. Clinical psychology review, 28(1), 1-16.

Jayawardene, W. P., Lohrmann, D. K., Erbe, R. G., & Torabi, M. R. (2017). Effects of preventive online mindfulness interventions on stress and mindfulness: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. Preventive medicine reports, 5, 150-159.

Jones, R. (1995). Why do qualitative research?

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: past, present, and future. *Clinical psychology: Science and practice*, *10*(2), 144-156.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). Wherever you go. *There you are: mindfulness meditation in everyday life*.

Karremans, J. C., & Papies, E. K. (Eds.). (2017). *Mindfulness in social psychology*. Taylor & Francis.

Kuhn, M. H., & McPartland, T. S. (1954). An empirical investigation of self-attitudes. *American sociological review*, *19*(1), 68-76.

Kuhn, M. H. (1964). Major trends in symbolic interaction theory in the past twenty-five years. The Sociological Quarterly, 5(1), 61-84.

Kuyken, W., Warren, F. C., Taylor, R. S., Whalley, B., Crane, C., Bondolfi, G., ... & Segal, Z. (2016). Efficacy of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in prevention of depressive

relapse: an individual patient data meta-analysis from randomized trials. JAMA psychiatry, 73(6), 565-574.

Labuschagne, A. (2003). Qualitative research-airy fairy or fundamental?. *The qualitative report*, *8*(1), 100-103.

Laurie, J., & Blandford, A. (2016). Making time for mindfulness. International journal of medical informatics, 96, 38-50.

Lieb, K., Zanarini, M. C., Schmahl, C., Linehan, M. M., & Bohus, M. (2004). Borderline personality disorder. The Lancet, 364(9432), 453-461.

Mantzios, M., & Wilson, J. C. (2015). Mindfulness, eating behaviours, and obesity: a review and reflection on current findings. Current Obesity Reports, 4(1), 141-146.

Martin, J. (2007). Interpreting and Extending GH Mead's "Metaphysics" of Selfhood and Agency. Philosophical Psychology, 20(4), 441-456.

Mead, G. H. (1934). Mind, self and society (Vol. 111). University of Chicago Press.: Chicago.

Osgood, C. E. (1962). Studies on the generality of affective meaning systems. American Psychologist, 17(1), 10.

Pew Research Center, February 2019, "Smartphone Ownership Is Growing Rapidly Around the World, but Not Always Equally"

Pickert, K. (2014). The mindful revolution. TIME magazine, 3, 34-48.

Potkewitz, H. (2018, December 15). Headspace vs. Calm: The Meditation Battle That's Anything but Zen. Retrieved April 05, 2019, from https://www.wsj.com/articles/headspace-vs-calm-the-meditation-battle-thats-anything-but-zen-11544889606

Powell, W. W., & Snellman, K. (2004). The knowledge economy. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.*, *30*, 199-220.

Rohall, D. E. (2011). Social psychology: Sociological perspectives. Pearson.

Rose, N. (1998). Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood. Cambridge University Press.

Rose, N. S., & Abi-Rached, J. M. (2013). Neuro: The new brain sciences and the management of the mind. Princeton University Press.

Rose, N. (2016). Reading the Human Brain How the Mind Became Legible. Body & Society, 22(2), 140-177.

Miller, P., & Rose, N. (1990). Governing economic life. Economy and society, 19(1), 1-31.

Schecter, D. (2010) *The Critique of Instrumental Reason from Weber to Habermas*, New York: Continuum.

Scott, S. (2009). *Making sense of everyday life*. Polity.

Segal, Z. V., Williams, M., & Teasdale, J. (2013). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression. Guilford Publications.

Shapiro, S. L. (2009). The integration of mindfulness and psychology. *Journal of clinical psychology*, *65*(6), 555-560.

Simon, H. A. (1971). Designing organizations for an information-rich world.

Smith-Lovin, L. (1995). The sociology of affect and emotion. Sociological perspectives on social psychology, 118-48.

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. Social psychology quarterly, 224-237.

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2005). New directions in identity control theory. In Social identification in groups (pp. 43-64). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Stryker, S. (1987). Identity theory: Developments and extensions.

Stryker, S. (2004). Integrating emotion into identity theory. In Theory and research on human emotions (pp. 1-23). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Stryker, S. (2007). Identity theory and personality theory: Mutual relevance. Journal of personality, 75(6), 1083-1102.

Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity theory. Social psychology quarterly, 284-297.

Thorsen, D. E. (2010). The neoliberal challenge. What is neoliberalism?. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, *2*(2), 188-214.

Turkle, S. (2017). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Hachette UK.

Walsh, K. M., Saab, B. J., & Farb, N. A. (2019). Effects of a Mindfulness Meditation App on Subjective Well-Being: Active Randomized Controlled Trial and Experience Sampling Study. JMIR mental health, 6(1), e10844.

PANEL ON
RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Spencer Huesken

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue:　　**7 November, 2016**

The Identity Project: *Mindfulness and the mediation of selfhood through the use of 'headspace'*

Principal Investigator: Spencer Huesken, Department of Sociology, Queen's University

Supervisor: Dr. David Murakami Wood, Department of Sociology, Queen's University

Letter of information/consent

I am asking individuals to take part in a research study examining the experiences of individuals using the headspace application. This research will contribute to my master's thesis at Queen's University, under the supervision of Dr. David Murakami Wood. The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of how individuals use the *headspace* application in the context of selfhood. More specifically, this research is concerned with exploring the ways in which individuals understand the 'self' and or their own identity as a result of this digitally mediated mindfulness practice.

If you agree to take part, I will interview you for approximately 30 minutes in a location of your choosing. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. While this study has been designed as low-risk to its participants, questions will be asked which may potentially reveal or prompt unexpectedly sensitive or emotional information as the project is aimed at exploring subjective conceptualizations of self. In order to take the best steps toward mitigating this risk, you will be shown the interview questions and asked to identify any areas which you do not wish to discuss prior to the interview. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. Study results will help inform how mindfulness informs the experiences of selfhood in everyday life.

There is no obligation for you to say yes to take part in this study. You don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to. You can stop participating at any time without penalty. You may withdraw from the study up until one month after this interview by contacting me at 17SAH5@queensu.ca

I will keep your data securely for at least five years. Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible by replacing your name with a pseudonym for all data and in all publications. The code list linking real names with pseudonyms will be stored separately and securely from the data. Other than me, only my supervisor Dr. David Murakami Wood will have access to project data.

I hope to publish the results of this study in academic journals and present them at conferences. Furthermore, this research will be part my Master's Thesis project at Queen's university. I will include quotes from some of the interviews when presenting my findings. However, I will never

Examples GREB Combined Letters of Information/Consent Forms v.2016NOV17

include any real names with quotes, and I will do my best to make sure quotes do not include information that could indirectly identify participants. During the interview, please let me know if you say anything you do not want me to quote.

Although it was not advertised upon contact for requirement, you will be compensated with a $20 Starbucks gift card for taking part in this research.

If you have any ethics concerns please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-844-535-2988 (Toll free in North America) or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact me at 17SAH5@queensu.ca or (604)-703-4801

This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice regarding participation in this research. All your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study.

Keep one copy of the Letter of Information for your records and return one copy to the researcher, Spencer Huesken.
By signing below, I am verifying that: I have read the Letter of Information and all of my questions have been answered. Furthermore, by signing this letter of informed consent, I am allowing the contents of this interview to be transcribed, coded, and used as data in Spencer Huesken's thesis project.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____