

**MindUp and Mindfulness – An Optimistic
Expansion of the Mission and Vision of the MindUp
Program through Contemplative, Moral, and
Ideological Inquiry**

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Abstract

Due to “ the alarming jump in stress, depression, and violence among today’s children and young people” (The Hawn Foundation, Foundation History, para. 1) caused by the modern world which has created “everything from pollution, environmental toxins, noise, information overload [and] the relentless struggle to survive and succeed” (Liu & Blank, 2011, 81), The Hawn Foundation’s mission “to equip children with the social and emotional skills they need to navigate the challenges of the contemporary world in order to lead smarter, healthier, and happier lives (The Hawn Foundation, Mission and Vision, para. 1) is a noble and worthwhile cause.

A thorough examination of the MindUp’s website reveals a dependence on the credible research in the field of Social and Emotional Learning. Nevertheless, excluding the media archives, monographs, and articles, nothing explicitly explains to the web browser how The Hawn Foundation interprets the nature of thinking, the mental and physical state of mindfulness, or the moral responsibility it has undertaken to help students cultivate “wellbeing, emotional balance, and resiliency” (The Hawn Foundation, Mission and Vision, para. 2) by having schools foster the skills of “focused attention and nonreactive monitoring of experience from moment to moment without judgement” (The Hawn Foundation, Mission and Vision, para. 2). Moreover, the website does not address any concerns about their program. I argue this paper proceeds on the assumption that that it is the responsibility of the Foundation to unequivocally articulate in their own words the key assumptions and beliefs underlying their curriculum, and, in particular, their understanding of the dynamics of thinking, the mental and physical state of being mindful, MindUp’s moral underpinnings, and any prior allegations against the MindUp’s mission and educational philosophies that have been resolved through democratic discourse. This paper will

support the mission of The Hawn Foundation by first explaining what the MindUp program is, and then describing some of its' successes inside the classroom and research lab. The second section will then provide an explanation of the nature of living a mindful life, address the psychological nature of thinking and its' inherent dysfunction, and articulate how the two understandings point to the wisdom embedded in the words "know thyself". The third section of the paper will argue why it is a moral responsibility of schools to teach children to be mindful of aimless thinking of past and future events by first explaining how teaching, schools, and school leadership are moral activities, and then illustrate how The Hawn Foundation infers their moral responsibilities in each of the three categories of education. The final section of the paper will explore how paradigms pose a challenge for notable issues worth addressing in future academic inquiries about the MindUp Program, and conclude with an examination of the concept of change, and how it specifically applies to mindfulness in schools.

The Bathtub: A Personal Experience of Stillness

I was filling my bathtub with water in preparation for a time of relaxation after a hard day's work. I was observing the water pouring out of the faucet and crashing into the bathtub until it had been filled with the desirable amount of water, at a temperature conducive for relaxation. Through gradual counter-clockwise turning motions of the hot and cold taps, I caused the water descending from the faucet to cease. I noticed shortly thereafter that either the hot or cold water tap had not been completely closed, because there was a consistent flow of about 200 drops per minute. I reached to turn both faucets all the way off, but instead I started to observe the rhythm of the drops, and the $\frac{1}{2}$ millisecond space in between each one, only to experience a moment that is both simple enough to articulate, and yet beyond the words I have chosen to explain it. I turned both taps slightly to the left to decrease the number of drops from the faucet till it started dripping at approximately 45 drops per minute. As I watched the flow and rhythm of these droplets, a soft intuitive voice in my head said: "the space between each drop is the stillness (the peace of mind) we are all seeking, but the dripping water represents humanity's cultivated difficulty (perhaps impossibility) to completely turn off their hot and/or cold (happy and/or unhappy) faucet of ongoing thoughts". It was at this moment that I finally realized that "underneath [all] the distractions and bewilderment, something else is going on . . . the mind's underlying stillness" (Mipham, 2003, p. 32). The space in between the drops temporarily became a reflection of my own state of mind.

My personal experience has a metaphorical similarity to a lesson Jack Kornfield taught in his audiobook "Meditation for Beginners" when he said that "observing how much we are lost in thought . . . is like "seeing the waterfall" (Kornfield, 2008, track 9). My interpretation of those words is that people's thoughts are always "pouring" out of their stream of consciousness, much

like how water has an unstoppable momentum when it flows over the edge of a cliff forming a waterfall. What happens if the “waterfall of thoughts” loses momentum and is merely reduced to droplets? I believe the answer is beautifully expressed metaphorically by Daniel Levitin when he talked about “the space” in between music notes, referring specifically to when “Miles Davis famously described his improvisational technique as parallel to the way that Picasso described his use of a canvas: The most critical aspect of the work, both artists said, was not the objects themselves, but the space between objects. In Miles's case, he described the most important part of his solos as the empty space between notes, the "air" that he placed between one note and the next” (Levitin, 2007, p. 18 - 19). In other words, it is the space in between the notes (in between thoughts) that also contributes to the quality of music (the quality of our peace of mind). Music (like thinking) is very rarely interpreted and felt in terms of the spaces in between notes (in between thoughts), and yet metaphorically speaking, if we only took the time to listen, the space in between notes (in between thoughts) is just as present as the noise.

In conclusion, on the evening of my brief moment of absolute stillness, I finally knew (without knowing in the logical sense of the word) that there is a sense of aliveness in between the incessant flow of the stream of thinking. I learned throughout my life's journey how to be mindful of my thoughts and feelings, which are two aims in the MindUp program. Now my efforts have got me to a point where I can now be mindful in moments of stillness.

PART 1 – An Introduction to MindUp

Mindfulness in Schools - What is the MindUp program?

“Wake up all the teachers, time to teach a new way. Maybe then they'll listen, to what you have to say” – John Legend and the Roots

“MindUp is an evidence – based teaching model and curriculum for students in kindergarten through grade eight. It is aimed at fostering children’s social and emotional competence and psychological well-being” (The Hawn Foundation, N.d.) by “help[ing] children become more aware of their own state of mind, ultimately improving their focus and academic achievement, reducing behavior and emotional problems, and increasing students’ enthusiasm for learning” (Padrini, Personal Communication, October 9, 2012). With over 80 schools in the United States and over 140 schools in the cities of Vancouver and Coquitlam that have “teachers, school leaders, staff members and other educators . . . trained in MindUp” (The Hawn Foundation, Participating Schools, para. 1), this program clearly has generated some attention in North America, specifically in the province of British Columbia. MindUp is also supported by academic research done at University of British Columbia that claims MindUp is successful in what it attempts to achieve.

MindUp has received praise and accolades for addressing and overcoming many concerns extant school-based prevention programs were limited by (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 2). For example, MindUp is grounded and supported by professionals in the field of neuroscience and social and emotional learning, which makes it unlike any of the other

many [available] programs . . . [that] lack scientific theory and research in their content, structure, and implementation . . . Many of the [extant] programs focus only on one development domain of competence . . . ; many programs are of very short duration and are not easily integrated and extended into the regular school curriculum . . . , [and] many of the existing programs have focused primarily on reducing problem behaviors (e.g., aggression) and have not kept pace with recent advances in the field on the ways in which to cultivate and foster the development of positive human qualities and traits associated with well-being (e.g., optimism) (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 2).

For example, a “quasi- experimental study evaluating the effectiveness of [an earlier version of the MindUp program called] the Mindfulness Education (ME) program” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 1) demonstrates that MindUp is an effective curriculum in teaching mindfulness

to K-8 students. The study published in 2010 was designed to test the effectiveness of the ME program; a program that made it “possible to somehow find a way to allow each worker a day of mindfulness” (Hahn, 1987, p. 31) by “incorporating it into daily classroom activities” (Padrini, Personal Communication, October 9, 2012). Results from this study show that

teachers in the intervention classrooms described their students as significantly more attentive, emotionally regulated, and socially and emotionally competent than did teachers in the control classrooms . . . students exposed to the ME program, in contrast to controls, were rated by their teachers as significantly improved in Attention and Concentration and Social and Emotional Competence. Significant improvements (decreases) in aggression and Oppositional / Dysregulated Behavior also emerged among students who received the ME program intervention in contrast to controls (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 10).

Teacher implementation fidelity rates also reported “relatively high frequency – [with] an average of 87%” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 11), and teachers “found the ‘core’ mindful attention exercises easy to implement” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 11) into their rigorous work schedule, which is a significant finding for three reasons. Firstly, teachers have also reported that they like the program, so if you take into consideration that “intrinsically satisfying work . . . leads to higher levels of commitment and performance, . . . [and] it is right and good for teachers and others to find their jobs satisfying and meaningful, that [addresses] the moral side of the equation” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 65). It is recognized by professionals working in the field of education that “students and teachers are ‘tuned off’ [to] schooling when they perceive no intrinsic meaning in what they are required to do” (Vokey, 2001, p. 3), but research has shown that MindUp does have intrinsic meaning for both teachers and students. Therefore, if MindUp has been reported to be intrinsically motivating for teachers to implement, as Sergiovanni had previously said, this finding addresses moral satisfaction that should come with ones’ profession.

Secondly, Nel Noddings has stated that “good teachers often wish there were time in the day to co-teach unconventional topics of great importance [like the importance of mindful breathing], and they even admit that their students are not getting what they need for full personal development” (Noddings, 1995, p. 676). Not only is the MindUp program effective in teaching unconventional topics, but it also does not “occupy a full period everyday” (Noddings, 1995, p. 677), which is imperative to MindUp’s success because “the constraints to which school structure is adapted arise from the processes of cultural change and social control that create and maintain institutionalized beliefs about what schools are like and about the meaning of categories of school attainment” (Bidwell, 2001, p. 104). In other words, the MindUp program is efficient in the sense that it is not a radical or forceful attempt to implement mindfulness into a school curriculum, but a gradual adaptation into a painstakingly structured bureaucracy that is constantly undergoing changes in its’ social and cultural controls of what the purposes of school should be.

Thirdly, the majority of teachers still have to work with “an industrial model of schooling that is our inheritance from the nineteenth century (Palmer, 1999, p. 19) in which “teaching is heavily scripted by a bureaucratic system that programs what teachers do, when they do it, how they do it, and even why” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 64). It is prevalent in western education that “teachers are losing whatever gains they made towards becoming full partners in education. Policy-makers deem them unworthy or unqualified to contribute to decisions about direction setting in education” (Pool, 2008, p. 35) because “an increasing number of governments around the world are implementing technical – rational approaches to education that they hop[e] [will] produce workers to meet the needs of global capitalism” (Pool, 2008, p. 23). This present system not only discourages teacher autonomy, but “educational discourse [becomes] trivial and

depoliticized when it concentrates only on the technical aspects of issues such as standardized tests, homework, or grading and ignores the moral and spiritual crisis in education” (Nash, 1991, p. 170). Palmer would argue that this crisis stems from our obsession “with the externalities of history – that [never connect] with the inwardness of [life], because the inwardness of [historical] events [are] never [revealed]. Everything [is] objectified and externalized” (Palmer, 1999, p. 24). MindUp was designed with the abovementioned concerns taken into consideration. MindUp allows teachers to encourage students to explore the inwardness of life, even under the watchful eyes of a highly regulated school bureaucracy that gives teachers very little input within educational discourse, and matters pertaining to policy-making designed specifically to attend to the requests of 21st century global capitalism.

In conclusion, the founders and supporters of MindUp have also acknowledged that “understanding and respecting research is essential, but converting that knowledge to effect change in human conduct within an organization requires political, managerial, psychological, and leadership skills along with a willingness to risk reputation and perhaps even position” (Allison and Schumacher, 2011, p. 12). Although the ME study is only one study conducted on a relatively young mindfulness program, it certainly “adds to a growing empirical literature on mindfulness- based practices in schools” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 12). Kim and Lawlor have also noted that “a randomized trial is the next logical step to advance the research on the effectiveness of mindfulness-based practices with children and youth and improve the science and practice of such programs across contexts” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 12). The research conducted on the MindUp program has addressed and answered many relevant issues regarding its’ validity and its’ successes, and the research has been properly articulated into language that has become readily available to the public. However, explicit research results

being discovered and promoted about the MindUp program by academics is not the same as the developers of the program being explicit about the Hawn Foundation's understanding of the purpose of living mindfully, the limitations as well as the advantages of thinking, the moral dimensions of their educational undertaking, or the advantages of their assumptions in contrast to opposing educational paradigms. Each of these concerns will be addressed in the subsequent section of this paper, starting with a definition of mindfulness.

PART 2 – Mindfulness, Thinking, Words, and Know Thyself

Advocates of the MindUp program like Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor have taken their research studies to test MindUp's validity, and have presented results that are clearly hopeful for MindUp's future. The concern being addressed in this section is the absence of a clearly defined, unilateral definition of mindfulness and the nature of thinking on The Hawn Foundation's website. This is not to suggest that there is problem with the curriculum itself; for example, that the developers of MindUp ineffectively translated the outcomes of Social and Emotional research into the MindUp curriculum. It is in the interest of this paper that the media archives on the MindUp website properly attends to the latter two issues. However, if The Hawn Foundation was started to help bring mindfulness into a classroom, then the website should explicitly define their distinctive interpretation of mindfulness and discursive thinking for unaware and uninformed people that are curious of MindUp's aims, goals, and objectives. Therefore, this section of the paper will offer an interpretation of what mindfulness is, and how discursive thinking plays a role in one's ability to attain long lasting mental states of mindfulness.

Mindfulness by definition

It is first necessary to acknowledge that nobody (including myself) has absolute truth; not everyone will see mindfulness exactly the same way I do, regardless of how substantiated my definition is. I also believe this definition, even though I do not know the author's thoughts, offers something that reflects their ideals, and in my opinion, is congruent with what the website is lacking. With that being said, my understanding of mindfulness is that it is a "meditative act of paying close, nonjudgmental attention to the features of present-moment experiences, such as breath, bodily sensations, and thought" (Repetti, 2010, p. 7) that is concerned "with the quality of consciousness itself . . . that may contribute to well-being and happiness in a direct way" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 823). It is the practice of "psychological flexibility, [which] involves being clear about one's values, and mindful of one's thoughts and feelings and acting in the service of one's values, even when thoughts and feelings discourage taking valued action" (Biglan et al., 2012, p. 263). Mindfulness cannot be attained at a weekend retreat or three hour seminar, it is a way of life that must be practiced everyday; a pattern of living in which "one's consciousness [is] alive to the present reality" (Hanh, 1987, p. 11), meaning an individual is completely conscious of every simple task they do in the present moment, continuously having to "observe [the movement of the mind] without being swept into it" (Mipham, 2003, p. 64).

One of the benefits of being mindful is "increase[d] attention by enabling the mind to focus and sustain attention on one's thoughts and by inhibiting distractions or unwanted thoughts" (Oberle et al., 2011, p. 569), which requires the familiarity of the mind's natural stability and instability. This is not to suggest that all personal and contextual problems will be eradicated once one has become accustomed to functioning in a mindful state of being. However, the techniques of maintaining mindfulness in every action "can be used as a tool to teach and

improve both self-awareness and impulse-control while decreasing emotional reactivity” (Oberle et al., 2011, p. 569). One of the alleged results of maintaining a mindful and healthy state of consciousness through increased psychological flexibility is that, once the mind has been tamed, “it stays in the present moment” (Mipham, 2003, p. 54); the one and only moment the wandering mind would rather not be.

The only way to strengthen mindfulness is “through consistent and regular practice” (Mipham, 2003, p. 50). For example, in attempting to achieve this state of consciousness, one of the most common practices for people to do is to focus completely on their breath. It is believed that the most important step to mindful living is the breath; “becom[ing] familiar with the breath and remember[ing] to return . . . [to] this continuous state of not forgetting” (Mipham, 2003, p. 53). Breathing is a tool each of us is born with that connects the body to thought and prevents distraction from the present moment. Whenever one finds themselves lost in aimless thinking, simply watching the breath is a method that should always be used (Hanh, 1987). The argument being made here is that, by focusing simply on this ordinary activity we do automatically, the discursive voice in our head that loves to run rampant becomes more stabilized. It is also important to consider that you need to return to the breath over and over again because the voice “has the momentum of thousands of years of collective human unconsciousness behind it” (Tolle, 2006, p. 64) that is occupied by the “rumination [and] absorption in the past, or fantasies and anxieties about the future” (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 823). In other words, it is a common habit for many people to “watch a breath, watch a second breath, watch the beginning of a third and fwoop, the mind is [lost] . . . in planning or remembering, fantasy or analytical thought” (Kull, 2008, p. 78). Returning to the breath as an “object of meditation is very good because the air moving in and out allows us to have some kind of steadiness in contrast with our

discursiveness” (Mipham, 2003, p. 41). Using the breath in mindfulness is not just about breathing, it is more about “notic[ing] the sensation of the breath. Feel[ing] the air moving in and out of [the] body. Notic[ing] how the chest and abdomen expand and contract slightly with the in and out breath” (Tolle, 2006, p. 244). As simple as this sounds, when one begins this practice, “various feelings and thoughts may arise. If you don’t practice mindfulness of the breath, these thoughts will soon lure you away from mindfulness” (Hahn, 1987, p. 38). Developing a conscious awareness of thoughts and the vast sensations present in such a mundane activity is considered to be one of the gateways into this lifestyle.

Consciousness and Thoughts - Functional and Dysfunctional

An understanding of how the nature of thinking operates is essential if one were to question MindUp’s purpose of adapting mindful practices in schools. Therefore a brief understanding of consciousness will be first presented, followed by an exploration of the conditioned patterns of human thinking. Please note that this paper will not attempt to elaborately explain or define consciousness because “people [for years] have been trying to explain consciousness and trying to figure out what exactly it is; what it means for us as human beings, why we even have it” (Arntz et al., 2006), but have not mutually agreed on an exact definition. However, “if the [concept of thinking] is to be useful for anything, it must preserve the core meaning of the original concepts [of consciousness] in terms of which we have come to understand and articulate our educational purposes” (Coombs, 1991, p. 33). It should also be noted that the research done on one’s emotional intelligence and one’s ability to regulate emotions for the sake of personal well-being is just as critical in maintaining the order of consciousness and a state of mindfulness. Research conducted on an individual’s capability to

“deal effectively with unpleasant emotions and to promote pleasant emotions in order to promote both personal growth and well being” (Brackett et al., 2011, p. 95) is thoroughly examined in the field of Social and Emotional intelligence, however the purpose of this paper is not to address the latter concern in detail. This section will focus specifically on the nature of thinking.

“A simple way of defining [consciousness] is it has to do with awareness, and in particular, awareness of the self” (Arntz, et al., 2006). Csikszentmihalyi attempts to explain this awareness by pointing out that “a person can make himself happy, or miserable, regardless of what is actually happening ‘outside’, just by changing the contents of consciousness . . . this ability . . . is probably the most important trait not only for succeeding in life, but for enjoying it as well. To develop this trait, one must find ways to order consciousness so as to be in control of feelings and thoughts” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 24). In other words, one must first become aware of his/her internal voice if they are to succeed in redirecting their consciousness to be more mindful of its’ own thoughts and the feelings in the body. Csikszentmihalyi’s claim is both profound and grounded in psychological research. However, conditioned patterns of the human mind and the collective mental state of western culture reveals that “maintaining mindfulness in a social environment is difficult” (Kull, 2008, p. 80). For example, if we are having a personal, health related, professional, financial, or existential problem in our lives, we have been taught that somebody's ability to think, reason, and understand “can be used to expand the space of awareness and enrich the experience of living” (Kull, 2008, p. 156). Or to put it another way, the voice in our head that has the ability to reason, think, understand, “comment, speculate, judge, compare, complain, like, dislike, and so on” (Tolle, 1995, p. 14) is a trustworthy source to refer to in making a good decision about a dilemma. This belief gives people the illusion that they are in control of their thoughts, but unfortunately

the greater part of most people's thinking is involuntary, automatic, and repetitive. It is no more than a kind of mental static and fulfills no real purpose. Strictly speaking, you don't think; thinking happens to you. The statement "I think" implies volition. It implies that you have a say in the matter, that there is choice involved on your part. For most people, this is not yet the case. "I think" is just as false a statement as "I digest" or "I circulate my blood." Digestion happens, circulation happens, thinking happens. (Tolle, 2006, p. 129).

This is not an attempt to disprove the fact that we occasionally use conscious control of thoughts to solve problems from time to time, but to point out that thinking is also involuntary, and it is a part of the human condition, therefore the statement "I think" is actually a slight misperception of the true nature of thinking. The concern being addressed here is that thinking is partially conscious when we use it for solving a dilemma, but thinking also has an embedded quality of "racing from distraction to distraction, from sound to sight to smell, from feeling of desire to disappointment . . . on any given day, our consciousness [can be] fragmented and scattered in all directions" (Mipham, 2003, p. 58). Another way of understanding the abovementioned claim is by asking yourself if you "can [be] free [your] mind whenever [you] want to? Have [you] found the "off" button?" (Tolle, 2006, p. 13).

Practicing mindfulness is important in its attempt to remedy the habitual nature of much discursive thinking because "practicing mindfulness / awareness meditation facilitates personal transformative change by enabling us to see habitual patterns clearly" (Vokey, n.d, 17). However, if one is not aware of habitual thought patterns; if "an unfocused or 'loose' mind [that wastes] energy" (Hymas, 1982, p. 78) continues to rapidly fluctuate between one thought after another, "there will be no power of concentration; and for him without concentration there is no peace, and for the unpeaceful, how can there be happiness" (Hymas, 1982, p. 17)? Or in other words, if the untrained mind continues to run its course without awareness at the forefront of this compulsive thinking habit, "the bewilder[ment] that causes its own suffering [as opposed] to the

mind that is stable, clear, and strong ” (Mipham, 2003, p. 24) will continue throughout the course of the lifetime and keep a person trapped “within a world that is purely in [the] mind” (Schuchardt, 2003, p. 16).

Words and Logic – an Ally and an Enemy to Knowing That Which is beyond Thinking

In continuing onward with the discussion about the nature of thinking, this section will now look at both the usefulness and ineffectiveness of words, and a drawback to logical thinking. To begin with, we have become so reliant on the words built into our respective languages to “structure our perceptions and representation of reality” (Felluga, 2003, p. 73) that we have lost touch with an understanding of the world prior to our addictive quality of labeling the world with the words we’ve learned throughout our lives. This is not meant to discourage the usefulness of words that separate us evolutionarily from any other species on the planet because the simplest ordering system we have as a species is to use words to categorize things and to abstractly store our life experiences into memory. Using words to describe experiences is a pleasurable activity for some. (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). In fact, when it comes to teaching children, “the most direct way to explore children’s thinking is through language” (Cullingford, 1991, p. 7). It is also believed that words are “the most powerful tool[s] you have as a human; [they are] the tool[s] of magic” (Ruiz, 1997, p. 26). However, if one were to ponder the value of words when it comes to automatic repetitive thinking, it is worth noting that “thinking is magical, but it has a dark side. It is easy to get lost in the words” (Kull, 2008, p. 43) that “reduce reality to something the human mind can grasp, which is not very much.” (Tolle, 2006, p. 27). Consider, for example, the thing “sugar”. For those who have had an experience with sugar, the voice in the head labels the word sugar, and therefore the experienced individual identifies with that label. However, if you were

to ask a child who had never tasted sugar what sugar is, they would be bemused by such a question because they haven't experienced sugar. "How do we explain the taste of sugar? Verbal descriptions do not give us the sensation. To know the taste one must experience it . . . thus, inevitably, words will convey only part of the meaning" (Hymas, 1982, p. 5).

The argument being made here is that people have become so dependent "on language to structure the world around [them]" (Felluga, 2003, p. 79) that they have lost touch with "the territory [that preceded] the map" (Felluga, 2003, p. 75). The map metaphorically are the words used as a means for "data, logic, analysis, and a systematic disconnection of self from the world" (Palmer, 1999, p. 19), and "the territory" are the experiences that are necessary prior to our minds placing an analytical definition on the world. In specific reference to the above citation from Palmer, our cultural admiration for those with the strongest logical and analytical skills is based on the idea that thinking is essential for success in the workforce. Even though "preparation for participation in the workforce is one important goal in education, it is by no means the only goal . . . what do these studies tell us about the mistakes, pitfalls, habits, perspectives, attitudes, self images that are destructive, harmful to a sense of community, childish, repugnant', in other words, contrary to what it means to be a reasonably mature and socially responsible human being" (Starratt, 2005, p. 400-401)? Discrediting the value of logic, data, or analysis is not my intention, but to simply state that using data, logic, and analysis for understanding and interpreting the world is a perception that lives "exclusively through cognitive rationality and the powers of the intellect, [and] live[s] out of touch with . . . intuition, feeling, emotion, relationship" (Palmer, 1999, p. 17). Cultivating a student's cognitive rational abilities should be one of the necessities for achieving school aims, however it should not be the only one. "Social and emotional competencies [are also] associated with greater well being and school

performance” (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406); competencies that do not necessarily depend on a repertoire of words or logical thinking to be cultivated.

To experience that which is beyond words and logic, what is required is that “we not only hear the words, but also embrace, accept and gradually let go of our own inner clamoring” (Issacs, 1999, p. 83) and “[suspend] one’s own assumptions, judgments, and emotional reactions” (Gail, 2004, p. 224). Moreover, “we should be mindful of saving stillness in a digital age where a kind of solitude that refreshes and restores a person is valued. Stillness is a particular concern that . . . [arguably] is essential to identity formation and healthy adolescent development in the 21st century” (McRae, 2010, p. 3). In Zen, it is believed that flashes on enlightenment happen when the mental gymnastics slow down and eventually come to stillness, thus “allowing patience and stillness to take over from anxiety and frantic activity” (Hymas, 1982, p. 48). In other words, the mind needs to be both still and silent for a state of consciousness to awaken that Maxine Greene would define as “wide-awakeness . . . a type of awareness, plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirement” (Greene, 1978, p. 42). A term Sakyong Mipham uses for describing this state of mind that we have lost touch with is ‘peaceful abiding’ “a traditional translation of *shiné* which is the Tibetan rendering of shamatha (Sanskrit)” (D. Vokey, Personal Communication, October 18, 2012). “*Peaceful abiding*” means the mind can watch itself weave from one idea, thought, and emotion to another, without getting totally absorbed into the chaos of discursiveness (Mipham, 2003). What Mipham is suggesting is that humans have inadvertently learned to cut themselves off from a ‘natural’ state of peaceful abiding, and have learned to identify with “a mind that is constantly giving birth to thoughts and emotions” (Mipham, 2003, p. 26). This is not to say that peaceful abiding will solve all our problems, but to acknowledge that without the

proper education and awareness, people will continue to “ingrain the tendency to follow distractions – which is the opposite of stabilizing the mind” (Mipham, 2003, p. 30). Conversely, “if we identify our need for stillness as something that is part of our human purposes, we will find ways to bring it back into our lives” (Dretzin, 2009).

A Mindful Life and the Stability of Consciousness – Know Thyself

The term “Peaceful Wakefulness” will now be used in reference to both the mental states of peaceful abiding and wide-awakeness that is a significant contribution to the varying and rich perspectives of the world. Peaceful Wakefulness is meant to point to an underlying truth that an unawake mind is “always abiding somewhere – not necessarily in its peaceful natural state” (Mipham, 2003, p. 26). Unfortunately, being unaware and completely absorbed by discursive thinking is not considered in western culture to be a concern that schools need to address and bring into awareness because “almost everyone is suffering from it” (Tolle, 2005, p. 12). It is also important to consider that once someone has familiarized themselves with mindfulness and discursive thinking, one cannot simply choose to enter the state of peaceful wakefulness freely because “there is something else in you that wants the drama, wants the conflict . . . there is something in you that is at war, something that feels threatened and wants to survive at all cost, that . . . would rather be right than at peace” (Tolle, 2006, p. 77) that “define[s] [reality] through suffering and misery” (Felluga, 2003, p. 81). It is not an unwarranted claim to say that people define themselves through their suffering if you consider the reality that “social science from the beginning has been grounded in understanding deviance, evil, dysfunction, mental illness, abuse, and abnormal behavior . . . those are the things we’re usually trying to work through or get over” (Ellis, 2004, p. 43). The connection intended to be made here is that attachment to discursive

thinking is contributing to the suffering of humanity, and discursively thinking is one of the reasons for the origin of social sciences like ethnographic research, which is grounded on “the belief that it is what goes on inside the mind is most significant” (Cullingford, 1991, p. 7).

For centuries people have had to deal with the voice that has kept them from being at peace with themselves and in their lives. Anyone who claims to have attained a permanent state of Peaceful Wakefulness would point to a “simple truth - the control of consciousness determines the quality of life, [and this] has been known for a long time; in fact, for as long as human records exist. The oracles advice in the ancient Delphi “know thyself” implied it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 20), and to know thyself has nothing to do with the content or ideas in someone’s mind. Knowing yourself is being able to disidentify with age, health, relationships, finances, work, living situation, events, and your mental-emotional state because the aforesaid are all content-based form identities (Tolle, 2006). In summary, it is common for people to use their thoughts as pointers to who they are, but to truly know thyself, people need to first “become skilled at noticing their thoughts and feelings as *thoughts and feelings*, [and] become better to detach from their struggles to control them” (Biglan, et al. 2012, p. 263). The italicization of the words “thoughts and feelings” in the former statement is meant to direct the reader’s attention to the fact that thoughts and feelings are actually a separate entity from who they truly are, yet paradoxically, thoughts and feelings are undeniably very much a part of the lived experience for people. The ambiguous distinction being made here is that thoughts and feelings exist in every person, but it is possible to separate your sense of self from them. It takes a type of specific and dedicated work to “know how to observe and recognize the presence of every feeling and thought which arises in you” (Hahn, 1987, p. 37), thus the purpose of becoming more peacefully awake is not trying to “prevent unpleasant thoughts and feelings from entering, but rather to

stabilize consciousness itself – the context within which all thoughts and feelings arise” (Kull, 2008, p. 268).

PART 3 – MindUp’s Moral Undertaking

This paper has examined the research conducted on the MindUp program, the nature of mindfulness and discursive thinking, our attachment to words and logic, and pointers to the wisdom rooted in the saying “know thyself”. Now we will look specifically at how teaching and schools are moral endeavors, why schools have a moral responsibility to meet the needs of students the MindUp program attempts to address, and examine how the MindUp program attempts to understand the specific morals of school administrators interested in employing the MindUp program.

Learning, Teaching, Schools, Student Needs and MindUp – Moral Endeavors

To begin with, the mindfulness activities in the MindUp curriculum help children to calm their wandering minds and learn to be more focused in everyday interactions with their peers, teachers, and the world outside of class. Being mindful of ones’ relationship to the world and with other people combines the virtues of presence that Robert Starratt advocates for in being

present, as fully present as possible to the material world or topic under study. Presence implies a dialogical relationship between the learner and the material under study. As with two persons, their mutual presence to each other makes the relationship possible, a relationship bonded by telling and listening . . . if one of the parties to the dialogue becomes distracted and fails to be fully attentive to the other person, then the mutuality of presence is diminished, if not broken; the integrity of the dialogue and the relationship that was developed is put in jeopardy (Starratt, 2005, p. 403).

In other words, presence is a relationship between two people, and the student-learner needs to learn how to be present if a genuine interaction between the teacher and the taught is to manifest. However, if the student’s attention is absorbed by discursive thinking, then the potential for learning is weakened. The MindUp curriculum is designed to help students and teachers become

more present in the moment by attending to the tendencies of a wandering mind, thus allowing the potential for a genuine learning experience to come into fruition.

Taking the former into consideration, if we now look at the essence of teaching, “regardless of grade-level, a teacher is called upon to be an expert pedagogue and content specialist, psychologist, social counselor and mentor, mediator, logistical whiz, and occasional stand-up comic—just to name a few of the many jobs teachers perform every day.” (The Hawn Foundation, *Teacher’s & School Leaders* para. 2). Moreover, teaching “is defined not by the technical skills of its practitioners but by the educative intentions and moral purpose with which they undertake their work. [The] knowledge base helps teachers teach more effectively than they could before, but it does not clarify what it is that teachers ought to teach or at what purposes this improved teaching is aimed” (Fenstermacher, 1990, p. 139). A closer look at the historical purposes for the establishment of schools reveals that “schools were established to serve a high moral purpose, to prepare the young to take their responsible place in and for the community. Besides the legal and professional obligations of the educational administrator, the moral obligation is to see that the institution of the school serves society the way it was intended” (Starratt, 1991, p. 191). In short, the practice of teaching is defined by morally motivated intentions a teacher has intrapersonally agreed to, and schools were first established based on a moral responsibility to prepare young people for their place in society. My intention is not to debate whether education is viewed in the same light presently, but to simply point out that teaching and educational institutions arguably are motivated by moral purposes.

In preparing young people for their proper place in a community, it is essential to first recognize that, at any developmental period of a student, “the learner has certain needs, and it is the business of the educator to meet those needs” (Biesta, 2006, p. 21). Those needs are not

grounded in “dry subject matter [that is] removed from the immediate lives of children and young people” (Bidwell, 2011, p. 102-103), nor do those needs force teachers to teach subjects that “have little to do with their subsequent lives” (Cullingford, 1991, p. 16). First of all, the MindUp program has been reported to be neither boring nor intrinsically dissatisfying for the teachers and students involved. Secondly, the MindUp program addresses real student needs by attending to the “growing portion of school-aged children experiencing a myriad of social, emotional, and behavioral problems that interfere with their potential to become competent adult and productive citizens” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 1). These are specific student needs that are necessary for one to take their responsible place in the community. It is not my intention to argue whether the latter concern was or was not a prevalent concern in the last century, but to recognize that “mental health problems are on the rise with approximately one in five children and adolescents experiencing problems severe enough to warrant their need for mental health services” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 1). It has also been reported that the MindUp program has “empirical evidence of its effectiveness” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 2) in dealing with the countless factors leading to social, emotional, and behavioral problems in children. Therefore, if it is a moral responsibility of teachers and schools to address the needs of the students, and research conducted on child well-being has pointed to a list of needs not being addressed in education, then the research supporting The Hawn Foundation’s mission to enrich the wellbeing of children is in fact a moral and noble undertaking. By having students participate in MindUp’s mindful curriculum, students can begin to become aware of their discursive thoughts patterns, which is one of the myriad factors in students experiencing social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Moreover, Dr. Daniel J Siegel believes that the cultivation of mindfulness “actually shapes the brain . . . reading, and writing [as well] shapes the

brain to a certain fashion” (Siegel, 2009), but Siegel believes that nurturing an ‘integrated brain’ in educational institutions must also cultivate “all dimensions of human development by attending to the physical, emotional, aesthetic, social, moral, and spiritual potential of students as well as their intellectual abilities” (Vokey, 2001, p. 5). For the foregoing reasons, MindUp successfully addresses the moral component of schools and teaching by offering a curriculum that specifically addresses important student needs, and helps shape the brain for the benefit of integrated development.

School Leadership and MindUp – A Moral Endeavor

School leaders (administrators) are in the position to make sure that their schools serve the moral purpose that schools were designed to do. One of the duties of an educational administrator is “to manage, not simply any old organization, but an educational organization. The educational program housed in that organization is [also] supposed to serve moral purposes (the nurturing of the human, social, and intellectual growth of the youngsters)” (Starratt, 1991, p. 187). Moreover, an administrator’s leadership style is grounded in their moral choices, considering that

the heart of leadership has to do with what a person believes, values, dreams about, and is committed to – the person’s personal vision . . . [and] the person’s interior world, which becomes the foundation of his or her reality. The head of leadership has to do with the mindscapes . . . that leaders develop over time, and with their ability, in light of these theories, to reflect on the situations they face. Reflection, combined with personal vision and an internal system of values, becomes the basis of leadership strategies and actions (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 7).

It is important to note that Sergiovanni makes a distinction between the heart and the head of leadership that work together to form the basis of an administrator’s style of leadership.

Although in Sergiovanni’s book “Moral Leadership”, he did not use the word morality in his aforementioned definition of the “heart” of leadership, “the argument that educational leadership

is fundamentally a moral endeavor has been developed by many scholars in recent years” (Gail, 2004, p. 21), therefore it is in the interest of this section of the paper that a person’s values, their beliefs, and their dreams about their personal vision also include his/her moral decisions.

MindUp both recognizes and attempts to encourage moral leadership from school leaders by ensuring that administrators have thoroughly familiarized themselves with MindUp, and that their values, beliefs, and dreams are aligned with The Hawn Foundations vision of fostering “a dynamic community of like-minded teachers and school leaders, parents, children and young people, researchers, civic leaders, and others to . . . work together to improve the quality of education in [North] America, and enhance the wellbeing of children and the adults in their lives” (The Hawn Foundation, Community, para.1). The Hawn Foundation has a meticulous process that attempts to understand a school administrator’s morality by having him/her demonstrate “sustained enthusiasm and fidelity to the MindUp program and [fulfill] various criteria [to] become a MindUp School or MindUp Select School. After deciding to adopt MindUp and submitting a ‘School Profile’ and ‘School’s Letter of Agreement,’ The Hawn Foundation’s Director of Educational Programs and Initiatives reviews these documents and discusses other pertinent issues with school leaders. Continuous dialogue between a school and The Hawn Foundation prior to on-site training ensures that all workshops activities are coordinated with the school and it is prepared well in advance to engage fully in training.” (The Hawn Foundation, Becoming a MindUp School, para.2). School leaders are also “asked to develop and submit a two-year strategic sustainability plan for MindUp and designate one or two staff members as MindUp School Coordinators” (The Hawn Foundation, Becoming a MindUp School, para.3).

This process clearly laid out on The Hawn Foundation website shows that they take into serious consideration the heart of a school leader by insuring that The Hawn Foundation and the school administrator have the same moral vision and beliefs for children in North America.

A school leader's moral vision for the psychological health of his/her teachers is also recognized by The Hawn Foundation. In the business of educational leadership, not only does one have to ponder over their beliefs, vision, and dream they have for the school and the children that eventually go through it, but also the working condition and well-being of the adults that keep the school in operation. Implementing MindUp

allows adults in the classroom to maintain focused attention in and out of the classroom, form more accurate perceptions of students, think more clearly and make more informed decisions, especially under pressure, improve communication with staff, students, and parents, improve the overall classroom climate and learning environment by infusing both with optimism and hope, help to create a stronger, more vibrant school culture, be happier, more joyful and grateful—a disposition that ultimately spills out of the classroom and into private life, [and] find greater job satisfaction. Through MindUp™, teachers can more easily manage the classroom, maintain an environment more conducive to student learning, and find greater professional and personal fulfillment (The Hawn Foundation, Teachers & School Leaders, para.3).

In summary, “educational administrators, who play an important role in the management of teacher identity, need to consider the moral implications of their actions” (Pool, 2008, p. 23). The procedure each school leader must go through in order to be selected to become a MindUp school is a thorough attempt at understanding the morals of a school leader, and also the vision a school administrator has for the teachers he/she has to lead.

In specific reference to the head of leadership from Sergiovanni's book, there was mention of one's ability to reflect on a situation. In reference to being mindful of discursive thinking, if one has not cultivated the ability of reflection, specifically about their own discursive thoughts patterns, life can become a stream of mental labels, constantly fluctuating between “believing that thought patterns are a solid self, [which] is the source of our bewilderment and

suffering” (Mipham, 2003, p. 63). Without the cultivated gift of reflection, most people’s instinctive reaction to bad or unwanted thoughts is to “chase it away, hate it, worry about it, or be frightened by it” (Hahn, 1987, p. 38), and counterproductively, it maintains its’ momentum in the body. However, “when you acknowledge these [thoughts], you no longer have to pretend to be that which you are not. It is not that there’s anything inherently wrong with thoughts and emotions – in fact, the point of making our mind into an ally is that we can begin to direct them for our benefit . . . we begin to see that we have to work with these intense [thoughts] because if we don’t, they’ll grow. Once they grow, we act on them. When we act on them, they create our environment” (Mipham, 2003, p. 26). In other words, “thoughts are not dangerous. However, if you focus on those thoughts, nurture them, and give them weight, then you may take actions necessary to bring those thoughts into reality” (Liu & Blank, 2011, p. 72). Siegel also address the moral component of the head of leadership by saying that one’s ability “to see the internal subjective world of themselves and the internal worlds of others” (Hawn & Siegel, 2010) promotes “this capacity for morality, to realize that we are a part of a larger whole, and we enact behaviors and can imagine what it is like to be for the greater good . . . we can develop [this] in children . . . so that we deliver in education ‘an integrated brain’, and what we would have then in conclusion, is a child who honors the way the mind is important . . . so they realize they are a part of a larger whole, they feel attuned to themselves, they feel committed and responsible for others” (Siegel, 2009). Supporters of the MindUp program like Siegel have explicitly addressed the moral component of the head of educational leadership by encouraging those in such a position to help “totally revamp education” (Siegel, 2009) by cultivating not only the ability to reflect within themselves, but also to encourage this type of thinking amongst their students.

In conclusion, a school as an organization, its' teachers, and its' leadership, is operated by moral (or immoral) decisions happening within the individuals. Much like the field of medicine, "it seems nearly impossible to imagine the field of medicine without a profound moral commitment to relief from pain and suffering and the preservation of life. If the moral ends of medicine were stripped away, the value and uses of what remains would be most difficult to ascertain . . . like medicine, teaching becomes nearly incomprehensible when disconnected from its fundamental moral purposes . . . what is the value of knowledge if there are no moral commitments" (Fenstermacher, 1990, p. 132)? Just like a hospital that is designed for the sole purpose to exercise a moral commitment to the relief of pain, the school as an entity in itself is "a commitment to the intrinsic worth of academic learning, . . . [and] knowledge is of value because of its capacity to illuminate and enrich human experiences and because of its effect on character" (Strike, 1999, p. 58) The overall vision of the MindUp program addresses the capacity of schools to illuminate and enrich human experiences by promoting an

optimistic classroom [that] is characterized by inquisitive young minds ready to learn in an environment that promotes academic success, growth of respect and personal regard as children learn to acknowledge the unique qualities of others, attentively listen to their concerns, and avoid arbitrary or negative reactions, a rise in positive social exchanges among students and adult colleagues, mutual support for individual effort, renewed partnerships with parents and families to promote children's learning and growth, reduced teacher stress and vulnerability naturally associated with the challenges of the teaching profession, [and] facility to experiment with new approaches to academic content and classroom management. (The Hawn Foundation, The Optimistic Classroom, para.3).

PART 4 Oppositional Paradigms

Having now looked at the moral factors of education and the MindUp program, if the Hawn Foundation hopes to implement MindUp on a larger scale within North America, it is also important to examine how antagonistic paradigms about this new and research-substantiated program can pose a problem for MindUp's current and/or future endeavors.

Paradigms

Before I elaborate about the potential rebuttals to MindUp in schools, an epistemological understanding of human paradigms is necessary to properly contextualize the different perspectives and issues MindUp is likely to face or has already faced. To begin with, a paradigm is “the mental image you have in your mind of the way things are out there. (Covey, 2012). Consequently, any idea, experience, concern, or revulsion people identify with about MindUp “give[s] personal meanings to each situation experienced, and people interpret the same event in different ways” (Aoki, 2005, p. 103). In other words, if anyone can identify with any of the subsequent arguments to be later presented in this paper about adapting mindful practices in schools, those personal beliefs will govern all the judgments made about the MindUp program. Personal beliefs are not an ultimate truth, but a personal truth (Ruiz, 1997) that is relative and may be re-defined through different life experiences. However, “phenomenological life space [still] maintains its irreducible areas of privacy and uniqueness, so much so that even though students may look at the same moral dilemmas, they don’t always see the same dilemmas” (Nash, 1991, p. 169). Or to put it another way, Ruiz and Nash both arrive at the belief that “the world does exist independently of our beliefs, but the truth about the world does not; truth for each of us is a function of how we see and describe the world” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 9). In referring specifically to MindUp in schools, the likelihood of encountering people who believe differently about mindfulness is inevitable, and their potentially negative beliefs about MindUp will not change overnight.

An example of when change for the greater good was unsuccessful was told by Allison and Schumacher when Superintendent Smith “decided to learn more about the content of sleep research” (Allison & Schumacher, 2011, p. 11). One thing he had discovered is that a study done

by Owen, Belon and Moss in 2010 showed that if there is “a delay of school start time by 30 minutes (in this case from 8:00am to 8:30 am), the percentage of students getting less than seven hours of sleep decreased by an astonishing 79.4% and those reporting at least 8 hours of sleep increased from 16.4% to 54.7% (Allison & Schumacher, 2011, p. 12). After his thorough investigation of the research done on sleep and student performance, he felt that he possessed “the skills of [a] leader to keep the distributed group of leaders focused on system development and personal learning to create change momentum . . . [and] his “3 years of working in learning communities [had] prepared him to change [school start times]” (Allison & Schumacher, 2011, p. 13). The research was evident, yet “resistance to and fear of change [was] a huge [factor] in [this] process . . . [because] the intent to move a large organization from knowledge to practice, clear on the surface, is fraught with political and psychological hurdles” (Allison & Schumacher, 2011, p. 14). For example, Smith’s biggest challenge was the leader of a parent group named Curley who “disrupted meetings, threatened the school board, and destroyed any chance for constructive dialogue about the benefits on learning that a later start time would bring” (Allison & Schumacher, 2011, p. 17) because he was not happy with the idea that “outdoor athletic practices . . . would be cut by 30 to 45 minutes due to darkness” (Allison and Schumacher, 2011, p. 16-17). In the end, “organizational fear overcame democratic dialogue and [the] small group of agitators overwhelmed rational thought and thus, research was ignored” (Allison & Schumacher, 2011, p. 19) and the plan never went through. The point of the story is to reiterate the fact that if people are not ready to change their paradigms (Curley seeing more benefit in athletic practice than a sleep schedule), then the credibly documented research supporting the MindUp program may not even be considered in democratic discourse.

Ideology

The future success of MindUp not only depends on reaffirming research results, but also on the capability of its' representatives to counteract the following paradigms that could inhibit progress, therefore this section will briefly examine thoughtful arguments that academia should investigate in future papers on the MindUp program. To begin with, adopting MindUp into schools could draw some attention to the probability that “the theory behind these efforts is that teaching children about problems and their solutions for a couple of hours a week will prevent them from engaging in destructive activities” (Cuban, 1993, p. 182). Cuban points out that attempts by schools in the past to have students quit smoking, not engage in drugs, take proper precaution when it comes to safe sex, and proper dieting have failed on a grand scale, and the same could be hypothesized for students who engage in MindUp activities during K-8, but later become absorbed into predominate and unfavourable thinking habits in North American culture. Daniel Vokey also shares an autobiographical experience comparable to the claims made by Cuban. Vokey spent some time in his life working at an Outward Bound School with kids “at risk”, and the school he worked for proclaimed that:

by improving the self-confidence of the program participants and giving them tools to manage conflict within a group, the experience would help them avoid jail and stay in school. However, even when participants did complete the course successfully, the changes in behavior achieved within the carefully structured environment were difficult to sustain when the students returned to their lives in the city . . . while such programs can have important positive outcomes for the individuals involved, they are no substitute for addressing the social and economic structures that mean some children are handicapped by their social locations. (Vokey, n.d, p. 14).

In writing about moral and character education, Greene notes that

the risks are great, as are the uncertainties. We are no longer in a situation in which we can provide character-training with the assurance that it will make our children virtuous and just. We can no longer use systems of rewards and punishments and feel confident they will make youngsters comply. We recognize the futility of teaching rules or preaching pieties or presenting conceptions of the good. We can no longer set ourselves up as founts of wisdom, exemplars of righteousness, and expect to have positive effects (Greene, 1978, p. 47).

What Cuban, Vokey, and Greene have noted is that the proclamations of extant curriculums that are designed to help students deal with their personal issues cannot guarantee any inculcated long-term effects on the participants involved. This arguably is because “significant progress towards the well-being of self-and-other [also] requires political and cultural transformation, as well as personal development . . . political and cultural transformation is necessary because of the more and less subtle ways in which individual and collective suffering is perpetuated by the structures and ideologies of contemporary social institutions. (Vokey, n.d, p. 3-4). In other words, the collective societal structure that children and pre-adolescents are being raised in also needs to be conducive for integrating long-lasting mindful competencies. A meta-analysis of 213 school – based intervention programs conducted by Durlak noted that only 33 (15%) of the studies included follow-up data at least 6 months after the intervention ended. Unfortunately the small number of follow-up assessments revealed that the gains made in the areas of increased prosocial behaviors, reduced conduct and internalizing problems, and improved academic performance on achievement tests and grades were reduced six months after the intervention (Durlak et al., 2011). Durlak even recognizes that “more follow-up investigations are needed to confirm the durability of [a programs] impact” (Durlak et al., 2011). This is not to undermine the small achievements made by those students six months after the intervention, but to note that the gains made by the students were reduced upon completion of the school-based intervention program. The connection I am trying to make here is that the gains made by students through intervention programs like MindUp can be lost if the city/town they return to after school is not supportive of mindful living. Indeed, the sustainability of gains made by students in schools are also impacted by ecological features of the environments outside of schools (Durlak et al., 2011). The MindUp program “might have some genuine benefits to practitioners, [but] efforts to

introduce them into public educational institutions should not function as substitutes” (Vokey, n.d, p. 14) for critical understandings of society outside of the classroom.

Vokey also makes the claim that “institutions have reward systems that distribute the external goods of wealth, power, and prestige on a competitive basis. Given the limited nature of external goods, it is a significant challenge to create institutional structures and cultures in which the pursuit of goods internal to practices is not overshadowed and compromised by competition for institutional rewards” (Vokey, n.d, p. 5). This assertion points to the difficulty MindUp faces in offering practices beneficial for intrapersonal growth in an education system that both rewards and “honor[s] independence and competition” (Shaydac, 2010). Therefore it seems appropriate to question if the MindUp program can counteract the fast-paced, overly caffeinated, self-absorbed North American culture that is psychologically addicted to thinking, television, and the media. A noteworthy proposal in resolving the aforementioned issues concerning MindUp’s ideology would be consecutive 4-5 year longitudinal studies on students (after a student’s completion of the K-8 MindUp curriculum) to test any long-term effects the MindUp program has on consciousness and wellbeing. I would also recommend that a research study be conducted in which you have two groups of students undergo a four year MindUp intervention program. Succinctly put, one group of students will only receive the training and support inside the school (the control group), whilst the other students will receive support from both the school and volunteer parents and community members outside of school. The hypothesis is that the control group will make significantly fewer gains if they only receive support inside the school, and they will not be able to maintain those gains as effectively as those who also receive support from home and the community.

Addressing the Sacred and an Ethical Consideration

Secondly, it is also appropriate to address some of the concerns that much of the theory presented in this paper is accepted in Buddhist practices, which can be viewed as a philosophy of the mind, or an organized religion, depending on who you speak to. My purpose is not to debate whether Buddhism is or is not a religion, but to acknowledge the possibility of having aggressive parents like Curley say that MindUp is an imposition of Buddhist practices into a secularist pluralistic society, and how the ideas being presented in MindUp could appear to be “heavy-handed or highly ideological, [which] is often considered indoctrination” (Fenstermacher, 1990, p. 134). Other than independent schools that are commonly grounded in theological philosophies, a majority of schools in North America are advocates for secular learning environments in our pluralist society. Siegel acknowledges this dilemma by recognizing “the simple exercise of watching the breath. The mind gets distracted, you refocus on the breath, it is in almost every major wisdom tradition in the world (ancient and modern), but we don’t do it in schools because we call it religion. But instead, it is actually a brain hygiene practice that does something very specific to keep the brain working well” (Hawn & Siegel, 2010). Therefore, if one were to successfully adapt the theories and remedies to the untrained wandering mind into a secular learning environment for children, it is critically important to articulate mindfulness objectively and remove the sacred from the lesson plans because educational institutions are not “well suited to carry the sacred. Indeed . . . distortion is a great risk when the sacred gets vested in an institutional context or framework” (Palmer, 1999, p. 30).

Finally, it is also worth acknowledging that “the possibility that contemplative disciplines will be taken up in ways that serve existing priorities and leave the educational status quo intact” (Vokey, n.d, p. 13-14). In other words, future studies need to be done on the MindUp program to

determine whether the MindUp program is an attempt to manage human behavior for the benefit of controlling kids better in the classroom, or if it nurtures human behavior. Furthermore Professor Gerald Fallon asks “why should I care about the MindUp program if the end result is a control mechanism for students to accept the natural order of things” (G. Fallon, Personal Communication, October 15, 2012), which is an important question to consider if education is viewed as a means for future generations to challenge the status quo, rather than as a means of producing apathetic automatons “programmed” to abide by it.

Taking into consideration the aforesaid paradigms is just as (if not more) important to address in future research if MindUp can hope to appease critical scholars in educational studies, and aggressive parents who have the potential to destroy this wonderful opportunity for students.

PART 5 – Conclusion

Change

This paper has presented results from the research conducted on the MindUp program, described the nature of mindfulness and discursive thinking, questioned humanity’s dependence on words and logic, addressed the wisdom embedded in the words “know thyself”, explained how MindUp’s objectives and processes coincide with the moral obligations of schools, teachers, and school leaders, and how ideological, sacral, and ethical paradigms pose future challenges for MindUp to successfully expand beyond the Vancouver and Coquitlam schools. Since the MindUp program is a curriculum that fundamentally attempts to incorporate small changes into a highly regulated school system to help children with their social, emotional, and mindful competencies, the concluding section of this paper will briefly address the concept of change.

“We gotta do much more than believe, if we really wanna change things”

– Dave Matthews Band.

Change is slow, gradual, and sometimes painful. If adapting mindful practices into a school system were to happen suddenly overnight, it is likely to be met with “aggression [that] can often destroy relationships, and school systems are relationships” (Allison & Schumacher, 2011, p. 17). It is also important to consider that “it is only when [people] become aware of their fundamental background beliefs and ideals that they will have any genuine choice about their decisions” (Nash, 1991, p. 171) to help change the nature of their relationships with the school and the school faculty. In referring specifically to the story about Curley (who happened to be a football player in his high school year), he was unaware that his background beliefs about athletics was questionably a psychological hurdle that he was not willing to address and/or overcome. He was not aware that what he believed about football practice arguably had detrimental damage to the community Smith was fighting to improve. If MindUp hopes to change the minds of people like Curley, it is important to briefly address the concept of change, and look at a few examples of how change historically has come about.

For starters, if one were to first question why change had not come to Smith’s community, what Smith could have done differently, and whether Smith approached changing the school hours in a manner not conducive to the change he hoped for,

you do have to look at history and ask yourself: where have things changed and how have they changed? What you see is a building up overtime of a consciousness, to the point where that consciousness has grasped a large number of people, and where they act upon that consciousness. If you look at our past, there’s example after example of how attitudes have shifted and changed . . . it starts with consciousness, it absolutely starts with consciousness and our definitions of ourselves . . . you have to change your mind, you have to change your perceptions. You change your perceptions, the world changes. What people need to know in order to recognize their own power is everyday acts, and small acts, can build up over time into a great movement (Shadyac, 2010).

Or to put it another way in the context of Smith's story, if there is any hope in changing a school system that is highly regulated by bureaucrats who may not see the value or long-term benefits of the proposed change, what is first required is a widespread shift in consciousness in which people act and make decisions from a new paradigm. If a newly proposed plan of action within a school or school system supports the collectives' new way of thinking, then change potentially can be slowly integrated. Unfortunately for Smith, it could be argued that change did not come to his community because he attempted to bring about change too quickly and too aggressively. Perhaps the communal attitude was not supportive of this new research, nor were they ready to challenge Curley's robust and commanding demeanor.

In specific reference to mindfulness and the attitude of a community, Kabat-Zinn notes that

the attitude in which you undertake the practice of paying attention and being present is crucial. It is the soil in which you will be cultivating your ability to calm your mind and to relax your body, to concentrate and to see more clearly. If the attitudinal soil is depleted, that is, if your energy and commitment to practice are low, it will be hard to develop calmness and relaxation with any consistency (Kabat Zinn, 1990, p. 31).

Kabat Zinn observes that changing ones' attitude about mindfulness arguably begins within an individual first, and Shaydac has pointed out that if the individual's new attitude is properly cultivated, small acts of mindful awareness can build up over time into something bigger than themselves. This is not to say that changing ones' attitude and perceptions is easy, in fact, "it is extremely hard to break a mind-made habit [that] we've been accustomed to [for] many years" (Regier, 2010, para. 16). However, it is in the interest of this concluding section of the paper that cultivating an attitude conducive towards adopting mindful practices in schools is entirely possible.

Once a community has collectively united under a new paradigm for change, the next step is the action he/she takes to support their redefined concept. The action is arguably "the real

test . . . [once] you have the knowledge and understanding, what are you going to do with it?

There is no value in knowing, the value is in doing” (Kurnarsky, 2007), a claim supported by the late American historian Howard Zinn who shared his own personal story about growing up in the southern US states before the signing of the civil rights act in 1964. He said he “saw the south change. How did it change? It was not one heroic act that did it. There were acts that multiplied from tiny acts; almost unnoticeable acts that were then seized upon by others and emulated by others which built and built and built until the south was convulsed by change” (Shadyac, 2010). In other words, Zinn believes that it was the small actions taken by the common folk that led to the signing of civil rights, which was only possible because of the widespread shift in consciousness towards African Americans. The quote at the beginning of this section of the paper also points out that belief is not enough; perhaps it is first a belief, flowed by small ongoing actions conducive to that belief that eventually changes the world.

In conclusion, Palmer’s map of the four stages of social change is relevant to MindUp, and this section of the paper in particular. The four stages are as follows:

Stage 1. Isolated individuals make an inward decision to live “divided no more” finding a center for their lives outside of institutions.

Stage 2. These individuals begin to discover one another and form communities of congruence that offer mutual support and opportunities to develop a shared vision.

Stage 3. These communities start going public, learning to convert their private concerns into the public issues they are and receiving vital critiques in the process.

Stage 4. A system of alternative rewards emerges to sustain the movement’s vision and to put pressure for change on the standard institutional reward system. (Palmer, 1998, p. 166).

Amalgamating Palmer’s principles of stage 1 and the history of the MindUp program reveals that the Hawn Foundation gives voice to isolated students and teachers who have felt (or feel) that the inwardness of being is relevant in a K-8 education experience. In relation to stage 2, The Hawn Foundation has formed a community of advocates for mindfulness in schools to support their shared vision of teaching students to be more mindful of their stress, and to be mindful of any

symptoms of anxiety and mindlessness. In stage 3, I have pointed out that the community supporting the Hawn Foundation has gone public with their concerns that a student's lack of social, emotional, and mindful competencies has negative consequences on a student's overall academic performance, behavior, and health. Moreover, this paper itself is a supportive critique for the ongoing struggle to have mindful practices as part of a school curriculum throughout schools in North America. In stage 4, note that MindUp does not use external rewards to sustain its' cause, or impose change on a massive scale. MindUp uses Zinn's philosophy of doing tiny acts that could potentially allow for an omnipresent shift in consciousness in regards to integrating mindfulness in schools. MindUp advocates for tiny acts of mindfulness, which seems like an appropriate medium at the present time in attempting to bring the MindUp curriculum into more schools across North America.

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