

YOUTH AS MINDFULNESS TRAINERS: EDUCATORS' VIEWS

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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March 2018

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project explored educators' views of a mindfulness program that was delivered to elementary school students by high school students. This youth-led approach to delivering mental health literacy was evaluated as part of a pilot project that intended to connect both older and younger students and pass down mindfulness education. The method, the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique, was selected and involved conducting in-person interviews with each of the participants. The participants consisted of six educators, who offered diverse perspectives by their first-hand knowledge and experience of the program or familiarity with the program's development. Participants included the elementary school and high school teachers, the elementary school principal and community agency staff. The findings of this study showed a consensus whereby educators viewed the program favourably and believed it to be valuable to their students and their larger community. The youth-led approach was shown to demonstrate the youth's capacity to act as positive role models and lead the mindfulness training. The feasibility of the program was supported with reference to key partnerships and its possible application to additional community settings. An enthusiasm and keen interest to continue and expand the program were also captured in the results. The educators' views of this program, the Youth-led Mindfulness Program (YLMP), were investigated to answer the following research question: What are educators' views about what helps and hinders school-based mental health literacy programs that are delivered by youth as mindfulness trainers?

Keywords: School-based mental health literacy; mindfulness program; youth-led model; prevention; role-modelling; strengthening communities

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the community of Chilliwack. I want to thank the network of community members who have partnered together and worked tirelessly to create this program. I am grateful for being granted the opportunity to work alongside these groups to conduct this research. To the educators who participated in this study, thank you for generously giving your time to this project and thoughtfully sharing your views. I also want to thank my supervisors, Dr. Marvin McDonald and Dr. Robert Lees. Your support throughout this process was integral to its success. You have been an inspiration and I am so honoured to have worked with you. To Christine Slavik, thank you for your contribution as an external examiner and willingness to support the community by sharing your expertise. To my research assistants, I want to acknowledge your hard work and dedication. To my family, thank you for your care encouragement. And finally, I want to thank God for giving me the ability and passion to do this work.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The present research project evaluated a Youth-led Mindfulness Program (YLMP) by exploring educators' perspectives in Chilliwack, BC using qualitative methods of inquiry. The scope and boundaries of this research draw upon three central constructs: *mental health literacy*, *mindfulness programs*, and *a youth-led approach*. This chapter will provide an introduction to the research topic, conceptual model and definitions of key constructs.

Strengthening Communities

Youth-led mindfulness programs have become a pertinent topic to explore as part of a recent movement toward implementing programs of this kind in the school district of Chilliwack, BC. As part of the Human Service Career Enrichment Program (HSCeP), plans to implement a youth-led mindfulness program began to materialize in hopes to strengthen the community. The Youth-led Mindfulness program (YLMP) became a reality, as a result of different community members coming together to make their community a better place. The current research project was timely in that this particular aspect of the HSCeP was a pilot project that had not been researched before and could be useful in providing vital information for future programming. More information about the HSCeP will be covered next to provide greater context for the present research topic.

The Human Services Career Enrichment Program (HSCeP) is a multi-level mentoring program. The design of the program allows students to grow in their knowledge, establish meaningful relationships, impact the lives of others and be transformed by being a mentor (Chilliwack School District, 2017). The program aims to provide support to Chilliwack's most vulnerable children, while developing the next generation of natural helpers (Russell, 2016). High school students enter the HSCeP program in grade 10, in which they are teamed up with a

university mentor. Then, upon entering grade 11, these students are provided the opportunity to become peer helpers to elementary school students. Voluntary Saturday sessions are built into the program to help prepare the grade 10 students in becoming peer helpers. Mindfulness has been one of the topics that have been successfully covered in these sessions, by inviting a mindfulness expert to deliver the workshops. The principal investigator of the present study had the privilege of attending one of these workshops, whereby the mindfulness instruction was well-received by the high school students, who were seen to possess a genuine enthusiasm to learn and share the material. The HSCeP program emphasizes supportive relationships by encouraging high school students to deepen their involvement in their school and community. One of the ways in which high school students can do this is by becoming mindfulness trainers and then actively engaging with younger students in this capacity. The HSCeP is still in its infancy, as it has yet to graduate the first cohort of HSCeP students. The part of the program that is of interest to the present study is the involvement of the youth who entered grade 11 in September of 2016 and took on the role as mindfulness trainers to local elementary students. The elementary school participation is of interest to this research project also, since inner-city elementary schools in this community have voiced interest in acquiring the kind of support that the HSCeP aims to provide. The peer-helper relationship between high school students and elementary school students is worthy of investigation, as the HSCeP strives to facilitate interactions that will be helpful to those at each age level. The Youth-led Mindfulness Program (YLMP) is the segment of the HSCeP that the present research project explored. This was accomplished by gathering the educators' perspectives of the YLMP, which was delivered to grade 2 elementary school students by grade 11 high school students. Although this study did not include the perspectives of the students involved, these perspectives were indirectly shared

through the perspectives of the educators. It is within this community context that the current research project emerged, to further support the work of strengthening this community.

Youth-led Health Promotion

The conceptual model that guided this research study is drawn from the youth-led health promotion movement that focuses on the strengths that youths possess. This positive outlook on youth's potential and contributions to society is emphasized within this movement, which has gained momentum in recent years. Researchers have discovered that youth-led health promotion has positively influenced youth's health-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Youth-led health promotion has also shown to have positive influences that include assisting peers in managing their mental health issues (Bulanda, Bruhn, Byro-Johnson, & Zentmyer, 2014). The possibilities of youth-led mental health promotion impacting the next generation's experience of mental health has drawn the principal investigator of this project to this model. The youth-led health promotion movement is based on the premise that when youths are provided with appropriate tools and resources, they have the potential to create lasting change for themselves and their communities (Bulanda et al., 2014). This model forms the basis for understanding the YLMP, which is the focus of this research study.

Key constructs. The key constructs of this study are *mental health literacy*, *mindfulness programs*, and *a youth-led approach*. Jorm (2012) coined the term mental health literacy and defines it as “knowledge linked to the possibility of action to benefit one's own mental health and the mental health of others” (p. 1). This definition is relevant to this research project because originally, one of the objectives of the YLMP was to provide knowledge about mindfulness practices to students at both the high school and elementary school level. The knowledge portion of this definition is evident, especially as the high school students acted as

mindfulness trainers to the elementary school students. The definition of mental health literacy also calls for some kind of action, in light of the knowledge that mental health literacy offers. This part of the definition is relevant to the interests of this project in its demonstration of knowledge about mindfulness being passed on and practiced in a classroom setting. The YLMP aims to benefit all of the participants involved through teaching mindfulness to support the improvement of mental health. This definition of mental health literacy fits with this research project and will be referred to in subsequent sections of this thesis.

There are many definitions of mindfulness that researchers mention in the literature. For the present study, the definition provided by Kabat-Zin (2003) will guide the evaluation of the Youth-led Mindfulness Program (YLMP). Kabat-Zin (2003) defines mindfulness as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (p. 145). Mindfulness is a way of paying attention that is intentional, trained on the present moment, and maintained with a non-judgmental attitude (Kabat-Zin, 1994, as cited in Broderick & Metz, 2009). The present project focused its efforts on evaluating a program with a strong emphasis on teaching mindfulness to elementary students by high school students. Self-regulation is another useful construct to help describe the activities that were included in the mindfulness curriculum. In places that this construct was mentioned, the following definition of self-regulation will be useful. Self-regulation is defined as the ability to recognize and manage emotions adaptively which includes awareness of emotional experience, identification of specific emotions and their intensity, constructive emotional expression and distress tolerance (Cole, Martin, & Dennis, 2004). These definitions help to clarify the contents of the YLMP program, which will be necessary to understand the full evaluation.

It is also helpful to describe the construct of a youth-led approach. For this thesis project, the youth-led approach refers to the HSCeP multi-level mentoring program's implementation of youth acting as mentors or big buddies to elementary students. Youth were mentors in that they visited the elementary students on a weekly basis and provided mindfulness training. There are several terms that often overlap in the literature to convey this type of model, such as peer-educators, peer-led, and peer-mentoring. The term, peer-educator, was not applied as it refers to students delivering an educational program who are of similar, or slightly older, age than the students receiving the program (Mellanby, Rees, & Tripp, 2000). For the present study, the older students are referred to as youths and the term is applied interchangeably with mentor or big buddy to draw attention to the leadership role that the older students acquired. The term, youth-led is applied because it was youth who lead the mindfulness program. A significant age gap exists between mentor and mentee and so the term, youth-led approach, was more appropriate to use instead of referring to older and younger students as peers. Consequently, the YLMP reflects neither an adult-led nor student-to-student peer education approach, but rather a youth-led approach. Denison et al. (2012) apply the term youth-led model in their study to describe young adults mentoring students in grades eight and nine. For the present study, grade 11 students acted as mentors to elementary school students in grade two, and therefore it was fitting to apply the construct, youth-led approach, to the YLMP.

The present research project was conducted to more deeply understand the topic of strengthening communities by exploring the pilot project, that is, the YLMP. The topic is particularly relevant to this specific community setting in which the HSCeP is already active and making good progress. Research on this topic is useful for providing information that can inform future programming related to this project and other related projects. It is important to examine

the ways that a youth-led approach can build stronger communities. Understanding how youth and school children can become stronger through this kind of training that focuses on mindfulness is worthy of investigating in more depth. With this purpose in mind, a qualitative method of inquiry was selected, the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique, to collect educators' views about the program. Educators are influential, especially in that their expert perspectives matter when it comes to the implementation of school-based programs. In order for these programs to flourish, they must have the support of educators and benefit from their professional insights. The educators' views were central to this project; therefore, efforts to gather their diverse perspectives were made in order to fully understand the delivery of such an innovative program. The present research project was conducted in hopes of building the community in collaboration with others who share these interests. Thus the following research question was asked: What are educators' views about what helps and hinders school-based mental health literacy programs that are delivered by youth as mindfulness trainers?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A critical review of the literature that bears on this research project will be provided in this chapter. The major constructs that will be covered include: *mental health literacy*, *mindfulness programs* and a *youth-led approach*. These constructs will help to clarify the basis for conducting the present study and the rationale for addressing the gaps in the literature.

Mental Health Literacy

Mental health literacy (MHL) is defined as, “knowledge and beliefs about mental health disorders which aid their recognition, management and prevention” (Jorm et al., 2006, p. 1). Jorm (2012) describes MHL as not simply a matter of having knowledge, but rather knowledge linked to the possibility of action to benefit one’s own mental health or that of others (p. 1). The components of MHL include (a) knowledge of how to prevent mental health disorders, (b) recognition of when a disorder is developing, (c) knowledge of help-seeking options and treatment available, (d) knowledge of effective self-help strategies for milder problems, and (e) first aid skills to support others who are developing a mental disorder or in a mental health crisis (Jorm, 2012). These components are relevant to review, as they draw attention to the role that MHL can play in strengthening the community.

Research on mental health literacy (MHL) has revealed that individuals often delay seeking treatment, which is largely due to the lack of recognition of mental health problems. This shortage of public recognition has destructive consequences, as mental health problems go undiagnosed. Kutcher, Wei, and Morgan (2015) write, “If left unrecognized and untreated, mental disorders can lead to substantial negative outcomes in physical and mental health, academic and vocational achievement, interpersonal relationships, and other important life domains” (p. 580). In examining data from 28 developed and developing countries, the World

Health Organization's World Health Initiative found that the delay to receive professional help ranged from 1 to 14 years for mood disorders, 2 to 30 years for anxiety disorders and 6 to 18 years for substance use disorders (Jorm, 2012, p. 2). On average, a delay of 8.2 years was found when individuals sought treatment for anxiety or mood disorders, taking 6.9 years to recognize that a disorder was present and 1.3 years between recognition and help-seeking (Jorm, 2012). In addition, the longer the duration of untreated illness, the poorer the outcomes of treatment (Jorm, 2012). The failure to recognize these concerns sooner and the delay in seeking treatment presents a major issue that could be addressed by providing better forms of MHL.

The age that individuals develop mental health problems influences the ways in which they can seek help. The age of onset occurring in adolescence and early adulthood contributes to the delayed recognition of these concerns (Jorm, 2012). Individuals often begin to experience symptoms at a time when their knowledge and experience of mental health problems is limited and underdeveloped. In the United States, the median age of the onset for anxiety disorders is as early as 11 years old (Jorm, 2012, p. 2). The lack of knowledge about mental health concerns can be addressed through providing MHL, especially for those at earlier stages of development. Providing appropriate education and resources to young people is an important undertaking that should be considered, as it has the potential to cut down the duration of untreated illness. In a systematic review of the barriers and facilitators of mental health help-seeking in young people, poor mental health literacy was reported as one of the most important barriers (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010). A significant part of the problem is that young people lack the knowledge and understanding about their own and others' mental health needs. Only 25% to 35% of youths who meet full criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis will be recognized as having a problem and received treatment for it (Nemeroff et al., 2008). Supportive adults and older peers

can influence young people to seek help for their problems (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010), which can be facilitated through MHL opportunities that produce a stronger social support system. The delay in recognizing mental health concerns is a problem that many children and adolescents experience. Early recognition of mental disorders may lead to earlier diagnosis and more appropriate treatment, which can be addressed through implementing better mental health literacy programs. The stigma around mental health problems is an issue that tends to persist, which also impacts young people's decision to seek help. Stigma will be addressed next to further highlight the value of providing MHL to children and adolescents.

Mental health stigma has been named one of the risk factors that keeps adolescents from seeking help when faced with mental health problems. Corrigan (2004) asserts that the consequences of stigma include a reduced likelihood of treatment seeking and participation in ongoing treatment for one's mental health problem. Stigma is a problem that emerges early on in young people. Adler and Wahl (1998) conducted a study on children's beliefs about individuals with mental illness and found that children hold more negative attitudes about adults with mental disorders in comparison to their attitudes about adults who are physically disabled or nondisabled. Stigmatizing views tend to develop in childhood and thus it would be worthwhile to provide children with appropriate mental health information. Many school-based interventions aim to reduce stigma by providing MHL. Young people would benefit from these kinds of resources and therefore programs that reduce stigma and help those that are struggling in the area of mental health are strongly encouraged. We now turn our attention to the research on school-based MHL.

Mental health literacy can be provided to young people through school-based interventions. Interventions that are based in educational settings have increased mental health

literacy, along with improved attitudes to treatment and willingness to seek help from a psychiatrist or counsellor (Esters, Cooker, & Ittenbach, 1998; Jorm, 2012; Pinto-Foltz, Logsdon, & Myers, 2011). Jorm (2012) writes, “Schools ... are well placed as settings for improving mental health literacy because of the high-risk age groups they serve and their educational mission” (p. 9). Schools also provide the benefits of being a part of a community, whereby supportive adults or older peers can help recognize potential mental health problems and act as a conduit to assist students in accessing help. Researchers Gulliver, Griffiths and Christensen (2010) assert that social support aids the help-seeking process, which further supports the delivery of mental health literacy in settings that make up young people’s social network. Schools offer many benefits to students, which includes an appropriate setting for them to learn and grow. Integrating school-based mental health literacy programs appears to facilitate the objectives that schools are already interested in, while fulfilling a need that exist in their communities.

A systematic review of the effectiveness of MHL programs for youths aged 12 to 25 was conducted by researchers Wei, Hayden, Kutcher, Zygmunt, and McGrath (2013) to provide an overview of the literature on these types of programs. Knowledge acquisition, stigmatizing attitudes and help-seeking outcomes were of interest to these researchers and consequently, studies that reported these outcomes were included in the review. Researchers, Wei, Hayden, Kutcher, Zygmunt, and McGrath (2013) concluded their findings by stating, “Research into school-based mental health literacy is still in its infancy and there is insufficient evidence to claim for positive impact of school mental health literacy programs on knowledge improvement, attitudinal change or help-seeking behaviour” (p. 109). Even though most of the studies in the review reported positive outcomes, the researchers claimed that issues with the methodologies

challenged the assumption that the mental health literacy interventions were effective. Further research is needed to determine effectiveness and appropriate methods should be applied to acquire these results. For these reasons, additional research in this area is necessary.

Another study was conducted by researchers to consider the impact of MHL within the school system using the curriculum resource, *Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide*, also referred to as *The Guide* (Kutcher et al., 2015). The curriculum was a web-based MHL resource designed for junior high and secondary schools and was certified by Curriculum Services Canada. The study aimed to replicate a previous study to obtain significant findings in a different population. The results corroborated earlier research that indicated the program's simple and effective approach to improving MHL in young people, that is, an embedded classroom resource delivered by usual classroom teachers in usual school settings (Kutcher et al., 2015, p. 580). This integration of school-based curriculum also addresses both teacher and student MHL, which is also important because teacher's knowledge and attitudes were shown to significantly improve after a single teacher's training day (Kutcher & Wei, 2013, as cited in Kutcher et al., 2015). Although the study consists of survey data lacking control groups, the article illustrates the significant improvement in Canadian secondary school students' knowledge and attitudes about mental health.

More recently, the effectiveness of a school-based MHL intervention in the city of Ottawa was evaluated. The study was described as the first RCT to demonstrate MHL effectiveness of an integrated, manualized, mental health educational resource for high students on knowledge and stigma (Milin et al., 2016). Twenty-four high schools and 534 students participated, as the curriculum was integrated into the grade 11 and 12 *Healthy Living* courses. The results showed that increases in knowledge significantly predicted increases in positive

attitudes toward mental health (Milin et al., 2016). In addition, teachers' perspectives of the curriculum were also obtained, which supported the classroom delivery of the curriculum. The majority of teachers reported positive overall experiences with the curriculum, with 78.2% of teachers rating the curriculum as very good or excellent and 78.3% of the teachers reporting feeling more comfortable talking about mental health with students (Milin et al., 2016). The application of programs of this nature appears to positively affect the MHL of both teachers and students, as knowledge and beliefs about mental health problems progress.

A school-based pragmatic cluster randomized controlled trial was also recently conducted to investigate adolescent mental health literacy and stigma and the impact of contact (Chisholm et al., 2016). The study was conducted in the UK school system and specifically investigated students, aged 12 to 13. The contact condition consisted of an interactive session with a young person who had experience with mental illness. The results showed significant improvements in mental health literacy for the education-alone condition, along with additional outcomes such as reduced stigma of mental illness, increased emotional well-being, resilience and help-seeking attitudes (Chisholm et al., 2016). This study is important because it further supports the use of mental health education for adolescents, especially as there is less research on programs directed toward young children and early adolescents.

School settings have been identified as an optimal environment in which mental health problems can be identified (Nemeroff et al., 2008). The school is positioned to screen and assess large numbers of children, as professionals work with them on a daily basis. Educational settings can be used to address the current risk of students and guide students toward appropriate resources. As mentioned, delayed recognition of mental health problems adds to the deficit of help-seeking behaviours. In the spirit of empowering communities to take action to improve

mental health, a strong push for mental health literacy has been shown to increase positive outcomes in the lives of children and adolescents. Mental health literacy that targets mindfulness instruction has shown to produce noteworthy outcomes, which will be described in more detail in the next section.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness-based programs are becoming more popular within educational settings (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014). As research accumulates on this relevant topic, there seems to be a growing number of supporters of mindfulness-based programs within the realm of counselling psychology. Zenner and her colleagues (2014) completed a systematic review of such programs and found that “[a]ll in all, mindfulness-based interventions in children and youth hold promise” (p. 2). Mindfulness practices in the classroom have shown to impart a variety of benefits. Shapiro and her colleagues (2015) reviewed the empirical evidence of contemplative practices, also a form of mindfulness, in childhood education and assert that these practices are implemented in the classroom to foster the development of key regulation skills required for academic achievement and emotional well being. If mindfulness-based programs are found to be a key ingredient in helping elementary school students experience success at school, it is expected that new ways of delivering mindfulness-based programs become more of an interest to educators and other key stakeholders in our communities.

Research studies on different types of mindfulness-based programs for children have been conducted. Semple and his colleagues (2010) investigated a manualized psychotherapy group program for children aged 9 to 13, referred to as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT-C). The results of his study revealed that children who completed the program showed fewer attention problems and that those improvements were maintained at the follow-up

(Semple, Lee, Rosa, & Miller, 2010). Furthermore, for children who reported clinically elevated levels of anxiety at pre-test, significant reductions in anxiety symptoms and behaviour problems resulted. With these kind of results, a growing interest in applying mindfulness practices to classroom settings has emerged. Studies such as this suggest that implementing mindfulness-based programs in schools can have a positive impact on the students that participate in them.

Mindful awareness practices (MAP) have also been taught to second- and third-grade students in school settings. Flook and her fellow researchers (2010) conducted a randomized control study on MAP to assess children's executive functions and reported that children in the MAP group who were less regulated, and showed greater improvements in executive functions compared with children in the control group. The curriculum included three standard sequences of activities that included a sitting meditation, games and a body scan or meditation. Children's executive functions were assessed before and after the program using teachers and parent questionnaires, however, qualitative data would have provided additional data that standardized instruments may have overlooked. The qualitative nature of the present study and its support for delivering effective mindfulness education to children and youth build on the work that is presented in Flook et al.'s research. It is possible that the effectiveness of mindfulness programs go beyond the development of executive functions in elementary students, which the present study explored.

Another program that has produced noteworthy results was a mindfulness program designed to help first, second- and third-grade students learn to focus and pay attention in school. The 24-week training included exercises for breathwork, bodyscans, movement and sensorimotor awareness. Napoli, Krech, and Holley (2005) conducted research on the mindfulness program to evaluate whether student participation affected measures of attention. Researchers found that the

results showed a statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups. An increase in selective attention and a reduction of test anxiety were found. Teacher's ratings of students' behaviours reflected students' improved performance (Napoli et al., 2005). The researchers did not gather qualitative data on the teacher's responses, which could have complemented the completed assessments. The present research study investigated educators' perspectives, which is a missing component of this study. School-based mindfulness programs appear to benefit elementary school students and thus further research that uncovers how to implement these programs well is necessary.

White (2012) conducted research on reducing stress in school-aged girls through mindful yoga. The mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program, developed by Kabat-Zinn, was adapted and delivered as an intervention for girls in grades four and five and produced noteworthy results. Those in the intervention group were more likely to report perceived stress and greater frequency of coping. In addition to these results, researchers also found that the amount of yoga practice predicted a higher level of reported perceived stress. An interpretation of these findings points out that the increase in reported stress may actually demonstrate participant's acquisition of mindfulness skills. The main limitation of this study is the homogenous sample, which consisted of primarily Caucasian, school-aged girls. A more diverse sample would have been helpful in understanding the findings to inform the application of mindfulness programming. Mindfulness programs for children warrant further investigation. A qualitative component that explores the experience and process of children learning mindfulness practices would have provided richer data, along with the inclusion of parent or teacher observations rather than simply relying on self-report questionnaires. The present study explored

educators' perspectives of a program that included a mindful yoga component. More diverse samples should be examined, which the present study provides.

A school-based mindfulness and yoga intervention delivered to fourth and fifth graders showed promise in reducing problematic involuntary stress reactions including rumination, intrusive thoughts and emotional arousal (Mendelson et al., 2010). The use of mindfulness-based approaches to assist disadvantaged children and youth who experience chronic stress tends to be supported by researchers. Mendelson and her fellow researchers (2010) concluded that their study, the first RCT on a school-based mindfulness and yoga intervention for urban youth, provides support for mindfulness-based practices effectively enhancing youth's self-regulatory capacities and reducing persistent worrying thoughts. By applying both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry, researchers asserted that the intervention is feasible and attractive to students, teachers and administrators. The findings presented in this study inform the development and delivery of mindfulness-based interventions in school settings, which is pertinent to the present study in its interest in mindfulness education. Feasibility continues to be a vital element of a successful delivery. Mendelson et al. (2010) indicate that these programs are possible and therefore for the present study, efforts to examine an innovative delivery model were pursued that could also be viable and attractive to both students and educators.

A pilot trial of the mindfulness curriculum, *Learning to BREATHE*, was conducted to research the development of emotion regulation skills in adolescents (Broderick & Metz, 2009). The program consisted of six lessons that addressed the acronym, BREATHE. As part of the students' health curriculum, the participants participated in sessions 32 to 43 minutes in length, over a period of approximately five weeks. The participants completed a number of instruments at pre-test and post-test. The study also included a qualitative process evaluation at post-test for

treatment group participants. The conclusions of the study included participants' reports of decreased negative affect and increased feelings of calmness, relaxation, and self-acceptance (Broderick & Metz, 2009). Furthermore, improvements in emotion regulation and decreases in tiredness and aches and pains were significant in the treatment group. The qualitative feedback pointed out the participant's high degree of program satisfaction. Additional research on the *Learning to BREATHE* curriculum has also been conducted to investigate the program in more detail and its effectiveness on adolescent emotion regulation capacities. Building on previous studies of its kind, the researchers discovered statistically larger gains in emotion regulation skills for those in the treatment group (Metz et al., 2013). The *Learning to BREATHE* curriculum informs readers of the potential feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness of mindfulness-based programs that are delivered to youth. This study is relevant to the purposes of the present study because the article stresses the positive impact that teaching mindfulness has on adolescents in regular school settings, along with indicating the feasibility of such programs.

School-based mindfulness programs have also shown to impact adolescent well-being. Researchers investigated a short-term mindfulness-training program, based on the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program developed by Kabat-Zin, using a quasi-randomized controlled trial. Pre-test and post-test measures on mindfulness, resilience and psychological well-being were obtained using standard scales initially developed for adults. The results of the study showed a significant positive association between mindful practice outside the classroom and improvements in psychological well-being and mindfulness (Huppert & Johnson, 2010). Additional outcomes measures at follow-up were acquired using questionnaires, which showed that students enjoyed the program. According to Huppert and Johnson (2010), a short-term mindfulness intervention is well accepted by adolescents and enhancing well-being is related to

how much one practices. This study helps to support the implementation of school-based mindfulness programs for youth, while highlight students' approval of such activities. The adolescent's experience and engagement process in these types of programs was of particular interest to the present study, as adolescents acted as the lead facilitators. It was important to more fully understand a mode of delivery that incorporates youth, which continues to be a missing piece in the literature.

Researchers have also investigated the effects of a mindfulness-based education program on pre- and early adolescents' well-being and social and emotional competence (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). The program, implemented in 12 elementary schools in Western Canada, was delivered by trained classroom teachers who expressed a willingness to participate in the study. The researchers used a quasi-experimental control group pre-test to post-test design to examine the students' functioning in four domains: optimism, self-concept, positive affect, and social-emotional functioning in school.

The results of the study revealed that students in the intervention group experienced significant improvements in social and emotional competence, as rated by their teacher (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Furthermore, researchers also concluded that students showed increases in optimism and self-concept, although more positive benefits were found for preadolescents than for early adolescents. This information is relevant to the present study research because it presents current research on Canadian students' experience of a mindfulness-based education program and its effect on well-being. Again, this study has missing components that the present study was able to investigate, that is, an innovative approach to delivering mindfulness-based education. The article mentions the teachers' perspectives; however, this

thesis will uncover a depth of understanding about their expert insights that have not be revealed in previous research projects.

One more school-based mindfulness program that is important to mention is the Meditación Fluir program delivered to secondary school students in Almería, Spain (Franco, Mañas, Cangas, & Gallego, 2011). The program was offered at schools as a free extracurricular workshop on meditation and relaxation; meditative techniques are known to be used to develop mindful attention (Semple, Lee, Rosa, & Miller, 2010). Researchers sought to examine whether the Meditación Fluir program would be effective in improving academic performance and self-concept, and reducing levels of anxiety. Academic performance was evaluated based on the students' grades, self-concept was measured using a 36-item self-concept questionnaire and state and trait anxiety was measured using the Spanish version of the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). The results of the study showed significant improvements in academic performance, an increase in self-concept dimensions and a significant decrease in anxiety states and traits (Franco, Mañas, Cangas, & Gallego, 2011). The study is relevant to my research because it explored the application of a mindfulness-based program in the context of the school and its impact on students. Studies such as this provide further support for teaching mindfulness to young people and also invite researchers to discover fresh and innovative means of delivery. The next section of this literature review will present what we know about youth-led approaches to delivering such programs.

A Youth-led Approach

The aforementioned researchers have revealed to us that mindfulness practices are associated with many positive outcomes for children and youth within educational settings. In light of these findings, innovative ways of delivering such programs have emerged as a way to

help combat mental health problems. A youth-led approach is one strategy that has been employed to deliver mental health literacy and other health promotion activities. Researchers have conducted studies on youth-led health promotion, which focuses on youth's strengths and their positive influence on their peers. Youth-led health promotion is based on the premise that "when youths are provided with the appropriate tools and resources, they have the potential to create lasting change for themselves and their communities" (Delgada & Staples, 2008, as cited in Bulanda et. al, 2014, p. 74). This notion inspires a hope for school-based MHL programs that invite youth to deliver MHL to their peers and create a momentum of positive peer pressure in their schools and additional spheres of influence. The youth-led approach is of particular interest to the present study. An overview of youth-led programs that have had a positive influence on youth's health-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours will be described in the following section.

Researchers have investigated youth-led health promotion of HIV prevention and indicated a positive influence on youth. A review of 24 evaluated peer-led programs in low-income countries, with an HIV/AIDS risk reduction component, was conducted through a comprehensive search of peer reviewed AIDS-related literature and publication lists of major organizations. Overall, programs demonstrated success in effecting positive change in knowledge and condom use and demonstrated some success in changing community attitudes and norms (Maticka-Tyndale & Barnett, 2010). The peer-led approach is based on the assumption that peers influence each other and that norms change when group members lead the change. Some limitations that researchers noted in the review of HIV prevention literature was that programs must be implemented well. Programs demonstrated effectiveness in producing positive changes when program requirements were met. A potential limitation is that youth may

prefer information from adults because they are a trusted source for information, however young adults or older adolescents with more schooling may be acceptable because they believe that they know more than their peers. Another potential limitation of peer led programs of this nature is the limited sense of confidentiality. Participants such as this may feel uncomfortable discussing intimate matters and concerns with peer educators because of their established relationship with them. These findings are important because they inform the implementation of peer-led programs in describing both strengths and limitations.

Schools in Zambia have implemented a youth-led model using volunteer peer educators (VPEs). A non-randomized quasi-experimental design was used to evaluate the model. Thirteen schools were given the intervention, referred to as the School HIV/AIDS Education Program (SHEP). Thirteen comparison schools were matched on school location, student population size, and male to female student ratio. Weekly 40 minute classroom lessons were taught to eighth and ninth grade students by VPEs, who lived and worked at the school for two full terms of the academic year. In this cultural context, it was more acceptable for students to learn about sensitive topics from trained older youth than from teachers. Since VPEs are older than students, between 18 to 25 years old, but younger than teachers, the youth-led approach was preferable for creating an open dialogue in school settings. Researchers Denison et al. (2012) evaluated program effects on students' HIV and reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and behaviours and obtained promising results. Researchers concluded that the youth-led model was associated with increased HIV and reproductive health knowledge, self-efficacy and lowered levels of stigma and sexual risk-taking behaviours (Denison et al., 2012). The youth-led model appears to have had positive impact on the students and their school community thus, the effectiveness of future youth-led programming should be considered a possibility for other community contexts.

Peer-led interventions have also been employed in schools to reduce smoking in youth. Audrey, Holliday, and Campbell (2006) conducted a study that used a peer education approach based on the “diffusion of innovation theory,” (p. 321) which attempts to explain how new ideas and practices spread within and between communities. As part of a health promotion approach, youth were trained as peer supporters to diffuse health-promotion messages amongst their peers. Peer supporters were nominated by their peers in order that participants were recruited from a wide range of friendship groups. The results revealed that at the 1-year follow-up, the rate of risk for these youths was 18.2% lower in intervention schools when compared to control schools, particularly for students who were occasional or experimental smokers at baseline. Qualitative data indicated that a majority of peer supporters adopted a pragmatic approach by focusing their attention on friends and peers whom they felt could be persuaded not to take up smoking. The results showed that peer educators were active in their role as peer educators, which supported the notion that peer educators engage in tasks that they have been asked to undertake and will continue in their role to completion. Attrition rates were low with 87% of those being trained completing their task through to the end. There is evidence that this intervention model can be used to reduce smoking levels. Informal peer supporters can be effective in diffusing health promotion messages, which could be adapted to inform students of other health related topics (Audrey et al., 2006).

A youth-led approach has also been applied to research endeavours that seek a way for young people to advocate for themselves and their communities. Youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) has been conducted by youth, as part of the Youth in Focus (YIF) Health Justice Initiative, in northern California (Sánchez, Lomeli-Loibl, & Nelson, 2009). The initiative envisions “a world where the voices of under-represented youth...are engaged in all aspects of

health policy that affect their lives” (Sánchez et al., 2009, p. 6). With this in mind, projects have been supported that employ YPAR with LGBTQ youth. The projects support LGBTQ youth as they discuss their mental health needs and seek support from service providers. With the partnership of other agencies, the youth are equipped to initiate their research and work alongside other youth to investigate and advocate for health justice and social change. Projects of this nature have shown to produce worthwhile results. The Health Justice Initiative has supported over 30 YPAR projects since 2005 on issues such as nutrition, physical activity, access to health care, environmental justice, sexual health, reproductive justice, and mental health. A youth-led approach has been transformative by way of agencies working together to effectively reach marginalized youth and address critical mental health needs. This program is important to consider because it exemplifies a youth-led approach that has had a considerable impact on under-represented youth, while presenting an effective strategy for future programs that concern young people and their communities.

School-based MHL can be provided by inviting youth to deliver MHL programs to their younger peers. Bulanda and his team of researchers (2014) conducted a study that evaluated a youth-led approach that addressed mental health stigma. The program, referred to as S. P. E. A. K., consisted of seven high school students who were trained and then acted as peer health educators. The high school students led educational workshops for at-risk middle school students in five after-school programs. The students planned and implemented all of the activities, which included presentations that addressed common mental health disorders among adolescents, the nature of stigma and appropriate help seeking. Personal experiences of mental illness were shared and two public service announcements were incorporated into the program. Knowledge about mental illness and social distance were both measured at pre-and posttest.

Statistically significant changes in both knowledge and social distance scales resulted, which suggested that brief interventions with youths around the topic of mental health awareness can produce salutary results (Bulanda et al., 2014). No comparison or control groups were included and thus it is important that additional research is conducted to understand the scope of these conclusions. Further research should examine whether youth presenters have a more meaningful effect than adult presenters and the most helpful aspects of the intervention. Despite the aforementioned data, current research regarding youth-led mental health promotion is limited and there is a need for research that specifically addresses a youth-led approach for MHL programs. Researchers Chandra and Minkovitz (2007) write, “Given the reality that mental health disorders are a leading cause of disability in adulthood and that stigma has been cited as a key reason for unmet need, addressing these negative views early in adolescence could help to prevent identification and treatment delays in later life” (p. 772). Bulanda et al.'s (2014) research supports the notion that a youth-led approach to the delivery of MHL can be effective and warrants further investigation, thus the present study explored this process in greater depth.

Peer-mentoring has been used to address mental health issues in young adults. Transition Resources and Community Supports (TRACS) is a program in Massachusetts that serves young adults, ages 16 to 25, with mental health or co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. Peer-mentoring is a strategy where young adult peer-mentors are hired and incorporated into the team at TRACS to support other young adults who come into the program. Peer-mentors work one to two hours a week with mentees, for a six-month period, connecting them with sustainable resources in order that progress is maintained. The peer-mentoring relationship has been shown to be an effective means of facilitating recovery in young adults. A program evaluation was completed that evaluated the progress of eight young adults in the

program. Positive feedback from young adults was observed, as the percentage of goals achieved by those in the peer-mentoring program were obtained over a nine-month period. Throughout the process, mentors were permitted and encouraged to appropriately share about their own experiences of mental illness. This openness between mentors and mentees is an integral part of the program, as it serves to support lasting changes and independence. Butman (2009) describes the program in this way: “TRACS strives to facilitate the reconstruction of hope, purpose and meaning in the lives of the young adults served” (p. 28). Peer-mentoring has been employed to achieve these principles and has shown to be helpful for young adults struggling with mental health issues. This article provides further evidence that a peer-led or youth-led approach can be used to help young people with mental health issues. The peer-mentoring relationship has shown to produce promising results; therefore, additional research is needed to see how peer-mentoring can be applied to younger populations. The program, which the present study explored, created an opportunity for this kind of connection that can occur between youth as mentors and their younger peers.

FRIENDS for Life is an evidenced-based anxiety-prevention program for school-aged children and youth that has shown to be effective when delivered to whole classes of children as a universal intervention with effects maintained at 3-year follow-up (Barrett & Turner, 2001; Skryabina et al., 2016). The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) released a report on a pilot project that has added to the body of work on youth-led MHL. The project explored the implications and impact of the training phase of the FRIENDS for Life program on grade ten students and their university mentors, who were prepared to deliver the FRIENDS for Life program (Felix, 2016). The data reflected the youth’s voices, which included themes of stigma, social determinants, competency and valued-added outcomes. The report mentioned

that, in the past, classroom teachers have been the ones trained to deliver the program to their students. Since MCFD launched the FRIENDS program in 2003, over 8000 teachers in all 60 school districts have been trained and showed support for the program's delivery (Felix, 2016). The role of teachers has increased help-seeking, as teachers seek help on behalf of their students once mental health challenges appear. Felix's (2016) study is important because it not only reveals the perspectives of the youth who plan to deliver this anxiety prevention program, but also investigates the youth-led approach in its initial stages. The movement toward applying a youth-led approach instead of the traditional adult-led approach is noteworthy, as the present study sought to understand how a youth-led program can be successfully delivered.

Another study conducted a review of published studies on peer-led and adult-led deliveries of school-based health education programs to investigate the effect of the peer-led approach. The study mentions the rationale behind the peer-led approach in its reference to Bandura's social learning theory, which explains social influences on human behaviour (Bandura, 1976, as cited in Mellanby, Rees, & Tripp, 2000). The peer influence may be stronger than that of adults, as information is more easily shared between people of a similar age. The study included a systematic search through electronic databases, which included studies that provided comparisons of adult-led and peer-led delivery of similar health education programs during the normal school timetable. The term 'peer educators' in this review referred to students delivering an educational curriculum who are of similar, or slightly older age than the students receiving the program (Mellanby et al., 2000). Thirteen experimental study comparisons were reviewed, which indicated that peer-led interventions were at least as, or more effective than adult-led interventions (Mellanby et al., 2000). One limitation of this study is that the programs that were reviewed do not include adult-led or peer-led interventions delivered over several

years; consequently, it is unclear whether the results can be maintained. Another limitation is questions regarding whether or not the studies compared equivalent procedures. It is important to note the methodology of the comparison groups because it was the deliverer of the program that was of interest to researchers, rather than the method, which would have been difficult to differentiate when educators vary in teaching style. This study evaluated health education interventions to compare the effects of peers and adults delivering similar material within single studies. These factors make this review an important source that informs the peer-led approach to health education. A youth-led approach was employed in the program that is the focus of the present study, which makes Mellanby et al.'s (2000) study a valuable source that highlights the benefits that this approach can have on children and youth in academic settings.

In light of the current research that has been reviewed in this chapter, the innovative youth-led approach appears to have great value in its application to school-based mental health literacy programs. The approach has evolved naturally to meet the needs of students and their surrounding communities, which has been illustrated by the numerous studies that indicate success in delivering these kinds of programs and initiatives. The youth-led approach has emerged as one way to combat mental health problems in hopes of strengthening the community. The purpose of the research project was to deeply understand the implementation of a mindfulness program that employs the youth-led approach, referred to as the Youth-led Mindfulness Program (YLMP). It is vitally important to gather educators' perspectives, as they possess esteemed insights that not only reflect their expertise, but also impact the fruition of future programming. A diversity of educator perspectives was acquired for the present study to answer the research question: What are educators' views about what helps and hinders school-based mental health literacy programs that are delivered by youth as mindfulness trainers?

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The methodology chosen for this research project was one that would permit the researcher to uncover the most pertinent aspects of the Youth-led Mindfulness Program (YLMP). To accomplish this, the study utilized a design that was exploratory by nature in order to build a holistic picture of the educators' expert insights. The method made it possible to understand the process of effective program delivery in elementary school classrooms. To fully grasp the diverse perspectives of educators, aspects of the program that supported its success and those that stood as a barrier were collected by the principal researcher using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT). The method involved the careful completion of credibility checks and meeting ethical requirements. The underlying paradigm of this study was the post-positivist paradigm for scientific investigation. The ECIT method has roots in the positivist tradition, as Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was developed during a time when positivism was the dominant paradigm for most research inquiries and used as a scientific tool to uncover existing realities and truths (Chell, 1998, as cited in Butterfield et al., 2005). In an age where qualitative methods are more readily accepted and endorsed, the CIT design has become an investigative tool that can be adapted to investigate a range of different research problems. Flanagan (1954) initially asserted that CIT should be thought of as a flexible framework that consists of a set of principles that are modified to meet the specific situation at hand (as cited in Butterfield et al., 2005). This framework is an attractive feature of the design because it offers clear directions for inquiry, along with a measure of flexibility that was suitable for gathering the participants' judgements about the YLMP. The details of this research methodology are described in this chapter to demonstrate the study's rigour and trustworthiness in the findings.

Enhanced Critical Incident Technique

This research project used Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) to fully understand the diverse perspectives that educators had about the youth-led mindfulness program (YLMP). Critical Incident Technique (CIT) can be used to explore what helps and hinders in a particular experience or activity (Butterfield et al., 2009). For the present study, the principal researcher was most interested in the aspects of the program that facilitated a successful implementation, as well as those aspects that stood as a barrier. A key feature of CIT is the attention to participants' perspectives (Butterfield et al., 2009), as they are the experts in some domain of human activity. The educators' perspectives were well-informed and gave direct access into the subjective experience of what brings about an effective delivery of mindfulness lessons in school classrooms. ECIT is an enhancement of Flanagan's (1954) original Critical Incident Technique (CIT), including additions of wish list questions in the procedures. The wish list items were a crucial part of this study's design because they aided participants in emphasizing the most important parts of program implementation for future improvement. Wish list items were presented to participants as anything that was not present at the time of the program, but that would have been helpful to have available for delivering the mindfulness lessons. CIT is exploratory by nature and the YLMP was an activity about which there was limited understanding. It was also appropriate to use the ECIT to more deeply understand the events and situations that promote and detract from the program's success, which the educators were adept in providing. These features of ECIT were appealing and appropriate for the design of the study.

While historically CIT has been used in quantitative research traditions, the method has evolved to fit appropriately within qualitative research traditions. Denzin and Lincoln (1994)

write, “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense or interpret a phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (as cited in Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005, p. 482). CIT focuses on building a holistic picture of the subjective perspectives of participants. This is achieved using qualitative methods that include researching the natural setting, the researcher acting as the key instrument of data collection, collecting data through interviewing, using an inductive data analysis, and focusing on the participants’ perspectives (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 482). The decision to use ECIT was also made because it is especially useful in the field of counselling psychology. This study focused on discovering the educators’ expert insights into what supported and impeded the delivery of this school-based mental health literacy program on mindfulness. CIT is an excellent strategy for gaining access to educators’ expert insights into the degrees of success for the ways that youth delivered lessons on mindfulness to second-grade students. This CIT approach offers a good fit with the research question because it amply amply pulls together expert judgements of educators to convey the process of effective program delivery in elementary schools.

Research team. The principal researcher was Jerlyn Chan, a student in the Master’s program in Counselling Psychology program at Trinity Western University. Born and raised in the Vancouver Lower Mainland, Jerlyn has demonstrated a passion for helping people in her community. Her work as an intern clinician in various counselling settings informed her work on the present study. She has been grateful to work with people of different age groups in both one-on-one and group counselling settings and was pleased to investigate a program that seeks to support young people. Jerlyn possesses a heart for helping the next generation of young people to achieve academic success and an overall sense of well-being. She hoped to understand this innovative program more deeply and complete a study that would be useful to her community.

The research team included Dr. Robert Lees, a Registered Psychologist working in the child and family development field and professor at Trinity Western University. Dr. Lees has been fundamental in the design and implementation of the HSCeP and has a wealth of experience and knowledge about counselling psychology and the community in which the present study takes place. The research team also included Dr. Marvin McDonald, a Registered Psychologist, and faculty member in the Counselling Psychology department at Trinity Western University. Dr. McDonald teaches counselling courses and demonstrates supportive supervision to his students. His expertise in community psychology was valuable to this research project. Laurie Donaldson was also an integral member of the research team. Her work as the associative director for the Counselling Psychology program at TWU and active involvement in the HSCeP also provided additional support. Nathan Bartz, a graduate student, also joined the research team, as he simultaneously conducted research in a related aspect of the HSCeP and offered important insights into the present study. Additional counselling psychology graduate students were also recruited as research assistants. Their dedicated work and commitment to the present study was greatly appreciated by the principal researcher and was noteworthy for contributions to the successful completion of the project.

Participants

Participants were recruited by invitation. Since the HSCeP has received increasing recognition in the Chilliwack community, educators who wished to participate were recruited. Communication between key community members and the principal researcher helped to facilitate connections with each of the participants either through email or face-to-face introductions. From there, educators who wished to participate were invited to respond back to the principal researcher to set up a time to discuss the project.

Participants included educators who experienced the program first-hand or who were familiar with the program's development. The educators worked in an inner-city context, in which there resides a significant Aboriginal community. Six educators participated in the present study, which included elementary school and high school teachers, Big Brothers and Big Sisters (BBBS) staff, and the elementary school principal. The diversity arising from recruiting different types of educators was intentional in order that participants could offer complementary perspectives of the program. The variety of educators served to strengthen the design. The educators had already permitted their students to engage with YLMP and afterwards agreed to participate in the present study.

Data Collection

Data was collected by the principal researcher, in the form of in-person interviews with each of the participants. Butterfield et al. (2009) assert that the first interview is the most important because it allows the participant to tell his or her story and feel heard and understood. The interview was the vehicle from which information about the program was elicited and so interviews were conducted with care using appropriate skills such as basic empathy and advanced listening skills. These practices further supported the participants, as they generously shared their perspectives with the principal investigator. Conducting interviews in this manner provided a safe and respectful context in which rapport was built and accurate information was acquired. Each interview was conducted by first reviewing the informed consent (see Appendix A) and then answering any additional questions that participants had about the research study. An interview guide was followed to help deepen insight into the experiences of educators (see Appendix D). Follow-up questions were asked in the form of probing and clarifying questions, in order to gather necessary details that were relevant to the research question. Each interview

followed the same protocol (see Appendix C) by exploring the same content area and level of detail. The data collection procedure for the present study followed the recommendation that interviews should continue until exhaustiveness in the data occurs (Flanagan, 1954).

Exhaustiveness or redundancy is considered a sign that the domain of the activity being studied has been adequately covered (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 487). A sufficient number of participants were interviewed to meet this criterion. Interviews were conducted until new categories stopped emerging from the data. Scheduled interviews were conducted even after exhaustiveness was established, which is typical of the ECIT design. The diverse outlooks of participants were acquired using this procedure.

Data Analysis

Analysing the data is often considered to be the most important and difficult step in the ECIT process because of the sheer number of critical incidents that can emerge from the data and the challenge of classifying them. ECIT protocol was followed for this research project, which is outlined by Flanagan (1954) and Butterfield et al. (2005). A summary of each of the following steps in the protocol will be provided below:

1. Determine the frame of reference
2. Formulate the categories
3. Determine the level of specificity or generality to be used in reporting the data

The first step, determining the frame of reference, entails deciding on the use that is to be made of the data. For the present study, the frame of reference was namely understanding the educators' views of the YLMP. It was essential that the purpose for analysing the data was well-defined and the research question remained central to the analysis.

The second step, formulating the categories, required grouping similar incidents by reviewing each transcript and identifying critical incidents (CI) and wish-list items (WL). Extractions of the items were completed systematically, starting with the first interview. The first interview was chosen randomly, and then the same analysis process was followed for subsequent interviews. The principal researcher coded the transcribed interviews by making note of any items that appeared to be helping or hindering CIs or WL items. All CIs and WL items were tracked using a working table for each interview. Once the CIs and WLs were extracted from all interviews, the CIs and WL items were categorized. All CIs and WL items were examined to discern the patterns, themes and similarities or differences between the items. The diversity of participants informed the decision for all the interviews to be analysed. The process of placing incidents into categories, examining the categories to see if they make sense, and deciding whether there is significant overlap among categories into smaller ones continued until all CIs and WL items from all interview had been placed and the category scheme appeared to be complete. This process was followed to ensure the diverse perspectives were adequately understood. Category titles and descriptions were drafted and prepared for the completion of the credibility checks.

The third step of the analytical process is to determine the level of specificity or generality to be used in reporting the data. The categories developed during data analysis clarified details of the ways the YLMP implementation unfolded in the elementary school. The kinds of categories shown in the results demonstrate the boundaries that were established. An example of this step is the decision to focus attention on the delivery of the YLMP, which showed up in all categories, such as, “Meaningful Connections.” For this category, the specifics entailed a description that highlighted the major influence that mentorship played in the program.

These kinds of decisions were frequently made with the support of the research team to fulfill this step of the analysis sufficiently.

Credibility Checks

In keeping with the ECIT method, nine credibility checks were completed (Butterfield et al., 2005, pp. 486-488). The applicability of the results of this project depends upon the strength of the data gathered and the viability of the data analysis. The following nine credibility checks helped to insure confidence in transferability of the findings.

(1) *Extracting the critical incidents using an independent coder:* To increase the credibility of the incident extraction process, an individual trained in the ECIT methodology was asked to independently extract approximately 25% of critical incidents from the transcripts. Critical incidents were extracted from a range of different transcripts with varying degrees of complexity. The purpose of this credibility check was to calculate the level of agreement between what the principal researcher thinks is a critical incident and what the coder thinks is a critical incident. This step was completed through a collaborative process where the critical incidents were examined and discussed. The agreement rate between the independent coder's extractions and the original analysis was calculated. The agreement rate was 92%.

(2) *Cross-checking by participants:* A second interview was conducted with each of the participants to confirm the accuracy of the categories and to ensure that their views were adequately represented by the categories. Participants were asked if there was anything they wanted to add, delete or change in any of the categories. Four out of the six participants provided generous feedback, which provided insight and direction for finalizing the categories.

(3) *Having an independent judge place incidents into categories:* An independent judge trained in ECIT placed approximately 25% of the critical incidents into tentative versions of the

categories. The agreement rate between the principal researcher's placement of incidents into the categories and the independent judge's placement of incidents was also calculated. The agreement rate was 95%.

(4) *Tracking the point at which exhaustiveness is reached:* The principal investigator tracked the emergence of new categories in successive interviews. The redundancy pattern for new categories was established by the fifth interview.

(5) *Eliciting expert opinions:* The list of tentative category descriptions was submitted to an expert to draw an expert opinion about the categories. An experienced educator with a wealth of knowledge about the school district and familiarity with the community context offered her expertise to inform the results of this study. Her years of experience as an elementary school principal legitimized her valuable insights for the analysis process. Feedback on the categories was reviewed and then incorporated into the category descriptions to enhance the credibility of the findings.

(6) *Calculating participation rates against the 25% criterion:* By dividing the number of participants who cited incidents within specific categories with the total number of participants, the principal investigator identified categories that were important for inclusion in the findings. This showed that participants shared an understanding of what was happening in the YLMP.

(7) *Checking theoretical agreement by stating the study's underlying assumptions and by comparing them to the relevant literature:* This credibility check was accomplished through an in-depth scrutiny of the categories and making decisions about the findings that are informed by what is present or missing in the literature. This credibility check was completed by the principal investigator and the research team and is summarized in the discussion of theoretical validity in the final chapter.

(8) *Video recording interviews to ensure participants' stories are accurately captured:*

Each interview was recorded and transcribed by either the principal researcher or a hired transcriptionist. The transcriptionist signed a nondisclosure agreement for confidentiality purposes. Video recording and transcription helped to establish descriptive validity.

(9) *Asking an expert in the ECIT research method to listen to every third or fourth interview to ensure the ECIT method is being followed:* This credibility check was performed throughout the project with the thesis supervisor to establish interview fidelity.

The above credibility and trustworthiness checks were completed to ensure that the quality of the ECIT method was upheld.

Ethical considerations. The ECIT credibility checks organized key strategies for enhancing research rigor and applicability. In addition, the principal investigator implemented procedures for maintaining ethical conduct of the project. Information was recorded and stored with care to ensure that confidentiality was upheld. Laptop devices were used to video-record interviews. Video recordings of interviews were kept on encrypted files and stored in a safe and secure location at all times. During the data collection stage of this project, participants' names were kept anonymous with each of the participant's responses coded individually with an assigned number. Each interview was transcribed by either the principal researcher or a hired transcriptionist. Transcriptionists were held to the same confidentiality standards as the research team by signing a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix G). Moreover, the research project was reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board (see Appendix F).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Programs that facilitate meaningful connections between youth and elementary students are believed to be an experience that benefits students. The inception of the Youth-Led Mindfulness Program (YLMP) demonstrated that there is support for the program by educators. Six interviews were conducted with educators who had first-hand experience with the program or were familiar with the program's development. The educators' views were important to understand because they knew about what happened and the recommendations that are needed to successfully develop the YLMP for the future. The educators offered different perspectives of the program to contribute to the overall picture. Enthusiasm for what the YLMP accomplished was captured in each of the interviews, along with an interest to continue the program.

The results were crystal clear that the YLMP has many benefits that are worth pursuing. Educators were happy to share their ideas and expressed the helping and hindering incidents and wish list items without difficulty. The diversity of educators provided a greater depth of understanding about the program and strategically informed the categories. By analyzing the interviews, 214 critical incidents were produced. Of these incidents, 150 were helping incidents, 19 were hindering incidents and 45 were wish list items. From these incidents, categories were formed that reflected the prominent themes and ideas that participants had expressed in their interviews. Each incident was carefully examined and then placed into the appropriate category. The analysis resulted in the formation of six helping, six hindering and ten wish list categories. Each category was given a title and a category description. The descriptions were produced by drawing from the incidents that took place and incorporating the words and phrases that participants used. Typical of the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), the categories are organized into helping, hindering and wish list categories and are listed below (see Table 1).

Table 1

Overview of Categories

| Helping Categories | Hindering Categories | Wish List Categories |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Meaningful Connections Between Older and Younger Students (33; 6/6; 22%) | | 10. Follow-up Actions (2; 2/6; 4%) |
| 2. Educators' Contributions Can Enhance the Program Delivery (34; 5/6; 23%) | | |
| 3. The Integration of Mindfulness Education and Activities (23; 6/6; 15%) | | |
| 4. Youth Led Skillfully and Responsibly (25; 5/6; 17%) | | 9. Prioritize Planning Sessions (3; 3/6; 7%) |
| 5. Impacts on the Youth (20; 5/6; 13%) | | |
| 6. Practical Considerations (15; 6/6; 10%) | 1. Administrative Setbacks (7; 3/6; 37%) | 1. Administrative Tasks (3; 1/6; 1/6; 7%) |
| | 2. Program Support (3; 2/6; 16%) | 2. Program Support (5, 2/6; 11%) |
| | 3. Scheduling (2; 2/6; 11%) | 3. Scheduling (2, 2/6; 4%) |
| | 4. Funding and Resources (2; 2/6; 11%) | 4. Funding and Resources (3, 2/6; 7%) |
| | 5. Transportation (2; 2/6; 11%) | 5. Transportation (3; 2/6; 7%) |
| | 6. Classroom Management (3; 2/6; 16%) | 6. Classroom Management (3; 2/6; 7%) |

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

| Helping Categories | Hindering Categories | Wish List Categories |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | | 7. Keep a Record (2; 2/6; 4%) |
| | | 8. Expand the Program (19; 6/6; 42%) |
| Total Helping Incidents: 150 | Total Hindering Incidents: 19 | Total Wish List Items: 45 |

Note. For each cell, participation counts are listed as follows. (# = Number of critical incidents; #/# = Number of participants out of 6 reporting an incident in that category; % = Percentage of incidents for the column)

Helping Categories of the Youth-led Mindfulness Program

1. Meaningful Connections Between Older and Younger Students (6/6 Participant Endorsement)

The youth and elementary students formed meaningful connections with each other. Each week, students in both grade levels were really happy to see each other and spoke about looking forward to their next session together. They willfully engaged in regular conversations and a high level of trust was established. The elementary students bragged about having the high school students come to their class to other students in their school. The connections were meaningful to the youths, as they could personally relate to the elementary students' experience. The youth took on a mentorship role. The youth brought a level of legitimacy to the program, as they naturally held the attention of the elementary students and could connect in ways that were different from the classroom teacher. The youth also served as positive role models to the elementary students. They modeled mindfulness practices, as well as, respect, love, and kindness. The students were sad to see the program end, which also reflected the meaningful connections that were formed.

The neat thing about the program was the connection the secondary students made with our elementary students and vice versa. The last couple of lessons that they had were extremely powerful. There was a lot of emotion. The kids were sad that it ended and that tells me that there was a lot of success with that mentorship big buddy aspect of it. –Participant 5

Just by the design of how old the students are, being closer in age, they just have this ability to connect on a different level than adults do. –Participant 1

2. Educators' Contributions Can Enhance the Program Delivery (5/6 Participant Endorsement)

The educators contributed to the program by providing support to the students involved. The elementary teacher contributed by acting as a mentor to the youth, especially in the beginning to help them adjust to their role as group facilitators. The teacher demonstrated support by encouraging, validating and appreciating the youth. The teacher was present for the duration of the program and was an active member of the group. The teacher also contributed by stepping in to deal with behaviour management issues. The Big Brother Big Sisters (BBBS) staff also contributed by helping the youth develop the program curriculum. BBBS staff were present for all planning sessions, utilized their background knowledge and experience with mindfulness, and dealt with the administrative details. The BBBS staff also contributed by taking the youth to the elementary school each week. Additional support was demonstrated by the educational assistants (EAs), counsellors, the principal and other teachers in the elementary school.

Every week the secondary students would comment on how appreciated they felt and how the teacher was really helpful. They made that very clear throughout. And the principal, it was his support and his encouragement...the kind of encouragement they were getting from the principal and teacher was, 'You guys are doing great job.' –Participant 1

I know that the two BBBS staff members put in a lot of time and effort with the secondary students. They provided the materials for them to use. It was nice to see that they supported the grade elevens. –Participant 4

3. The Integration of Mindfulness Education and Activities (6/6 Participant Endorsement)

Elementary students integrated mindfulness practices. They learned how to use mindfulness activities and personally connected with the content. This included a student with an EA, who was able to participate with the class. Elementary students learned about emotions and practiced being mindful of them. Students who normally have difficulties dealing with emotions applied what they learned to other classes with less structure. Students remembered what they learned and continued to ask for the mindfulness activities after the program was completed. The program equipped elementary students to cope with internal and external distractions. Mindful practices were also integrated into the daily instruction and culture of the class, which continued after the program was delivered. The program became a tool that the teacher referred back to when students needed help calming down. Educators advanced their own knowledge and implementation of mindfulness curriculum. The youth partaking in mindfulness activities also helped them to settle into their role as group facilitators.

I do find them helpful in my class – the mindfulness activities that these grade elevens planned, spent time on and did with us. We still go back to them because our kids ask for it.

–Participant 4

There was one young boy who was having some difficulties in gym class and [the teacher] was able to remind him of an activity that had been done, in the mindfulness program, and it helped him to settle down and to become re-engaged in gym time. –Participant 2

4. Youth Led Skillfully and Responsibly (5/6 Participant Endorsement)

Youth presented themselves as committed to their role, as group facilitators. They attended every session and dedicated themselves to the planning process. They created a curriculum from scratch that was appropriate and engaging for the elementary students. The youth were well-prepared and equipped to deliver the material, and understood the value and purpose of mindfulness education. Their ideas grew, as the program progressed, and these ideas were found to be informative to the educators around them. The youth took on various facilitation roles, which depended on their growing comfort levels. They delivered strong and effective sessions, while also supporting each other throughout the process. The youth interacted with the classroom teacher with respect, and an openness to feedback.

There is not one session that any of the secondary students missed. They made every single session and they were so committed that they were here every Wednesday afternoon for two hours after school to plan their sessions. They never missed a session or a planning session the entire time they were working on this. So, I would say that's dedication and commitment.

–Participant 1

The high school students were well-prepared. They were equipped. They knew what they were doing. They came prepared. Their delivery of the content for their sessions were strong and effective. –Participant 5

5. Impacts on the Youth (5/6 Participant Endorsement)

The youth experienced personal growth through the process of facilitating the group. Over time, the youth grew in confidence, character and leadership ability. They build their own success by doing something that they initially thought they couldn't. Their nervousness about facilitating lessened, as their excitement increased. They felt a big sense of accomplishment after delivering the program, as they were seen shining, standing tall, and laughing with each other. Youth came out of their shell and exercised their own voice. Youth also developed empathy for elementary students, which informed the work that they did. The youth also experienced academic growth by their involvement as group facilitators and by the support given to them through the Human Services Enrichment Program. As part of their high school curriculum, the youth engaged in real-time dialogue and relevant course material designed to get them on a path to pursue a career in the human services profession and work as committed agents of change.

Seeing those grade elevens flourish and blossom and grow from the experience of being teachers in a classroom and facilitating this was incredible. They went from being really nervous and fearful of this experience to, by the end ... They were like, 'Oh, we can do this' and 'We can do that' and they got really passionate and excited about going every week into that classroom and being able to teach those young people. –Participant 1

If they're in my class, they're changing the life of an elementary school child and they're learning all about life. They are going to be a better human being and a better member of society. –Participant 3

6. Practical Considerations (6/6 Participant Endorsement)

Several practical considerations were pertinent to the program's implementation. Details such as the layout of the classroom and quiet environment were described as helpful. The program's consistency in that it was set for a duration of time and with the same group facilitators reflected the program as not just a one-off. The age of the elementary students was also an important consideration, as grade 2/3 students were considered to be the perfect age to learn the material. The program was also considered to be a good fit with the curriculum that students already engage with at both the high school and elementary school level. The partnership between stakeholders in the community also contributed to the success of the program. The connections between different schools, community members and agencies brought together different perspectives to achieve the same purpose. Face-to-face meetings between stakeholders helped to clarify objectives and plan the implementation process.

The program is taking into consideration many different outside agencies and organizations. There's Big Brothers and Sisters, there's psychology teachers, there's counsellors, there's also the University of the Fraser Valley ... So, the program takes into consideration these different perspectives, things that they have to offer, and brings them together. And I think that's what other programs and schools are lacking. –Participant 6

The important thing for us is that it wasn't a one-off where people would come in, teach, and then it would just stop. –Participant 5

Hindering Categories of the Youth-led Mindfulness Program

1. Administrative Setbacks (3/6 Participant Endorsement)

Administrative setbacks hindered the program's implementation. These setbacks included delays in responding to inquiries and completing necessary paperwork, such as for completing the police checks. A lack of attendance to key meetings added to the delay in providing important feedback in a timely manner. The structure of the school system made it difficult for the program to be approved and implemented as originally planned. The program was not prioritized by some administrators and so these setbacks occurred. In addition, the normal process of planning and organizing a new program and getting everyone on the same page posed as a hindrance.

Some of the challenges that did happen were more in the planning and organization part of it. But that's just a part of the process when you have different organizations and groups working together. It was a challenge to some extent, so far as getting everybody on the same page at the organization and planning level. –Participant 5

We ran into things that didn't get done. We ran into police check issues with people who are administering. Some of that we should have known ahead of time. The issue there was not enough people at the table. –Participant 3

2. Program Support (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

A lack of understanding, in regards to the purpose of the program, hindered the program's complete implementation. Support for the program, beyond the schools in the district, was needed to implement it in its entirety. Miscommunication about the program's content to parents hindered its implementation that included misperceptions about mindfulness practices. The lack of clarity about what the program was actually about stood as a barrier.

I think people come in and they don't understand or necessarily look at what the program's really about and they kind of block it off in a way. –Participant 6

3. Scheduling (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

Scheduling the day and time of the program was a hindrance to the program's implementation. Coordinating the timetables of both the high school and elementary school was difficult, as their bell schedules were different. The rigidity of certain blocks also made scheduling a hindrance.

One of the main challenges we had was probably the timetabling of the secondary students with the elementary school because our timetables, our bells, our schedules are different. ...These will always be the challenges, whenever we have two different schools trying to match up and work together. –Participant 5

4. Funding and Resources (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

The limited funding and resources effected the way the program was implemented. The education system, as an under-funded entity, played a part in the program not having the funding and resources that it needed. For example, the funding for transportation became an hindrance to the program's implementation.

I think the biggest challenge in the implementation would be...I guess I would say overall support. I think getting the funding and resources that we need to really make the program what we wanted it to be. It really needs resources for that. –Participant 6

5. Transportation (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

The youth's transportation to the elementary school and back to their high school was difficult to arrange. There were many concerns about obtaining permission to take the youth off of high school property.

It was very difficult navigating the high school's admin to get the teens to be able to go out to do this [program] ... that was difficult, but we figured it out. And, through a lot of correspondence and trial-and-error, it worked out. Now, we have a better idea for next time. But that bureaucracy side of things was very, very difficult. –Participant 2

6. Classroom Management (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

The youth delivering the program were not prepared to deal with classroom management concerns. This included not having prior knowledge of the classroom teacher's classroom management strategies. The youth were also not prepared to support students with EAs and those who experience sensory challenges. During certain activities, there wasn't enough space between students, which could have been managed more carefully. At the beginning of the program, the one hour session was too long for the elementary students and so adjustments to the program curriculum had to be made.

Knowing how to engage with a [elementary] student seemed to be the biggest issue. All the kids wanted to sit beside [the youth]. Well, there's only six spots and there's eighteen kids in the class. So, there were only six that can sit beside the youth but they all wanted that spot. So, giving [the youth] some skills. I wouldn't have known that that would have been the kind of reaction until we were in that situation. So, I couldn't even, you know, kind of say, 'Hey, these are some strategies you might want to use, this is something you might want to expect.'

—Participant 1

The lesson was too long without any breaks for the kids. I mean, grade twos can maybe sit ten minutes—twelve is stretching it ... [The youth] implemented the yoga stretch breaks, which was really nice for the rest of it. They fixed that really quickly.

—Participant 4

Wish List Categories for the Youth-led Mindfulness Program

1. Administrative Tasks (1/6 Participant Endorsement)

Completing administrative tasks in advance was recommended. This included completing all the necessary paperwork that would be needed to launch the program. In addition, it was also recommended that a series of meetings be conducted, at the end of the school year, to make concrete plans to launch the program the following year. Tasks such as these, by administrators, would help to facilitate the follow-through to implement the program.

Let's have a series of meetings at the end of the school year, June, during our sort of exam period whereby we lay the groundwork for next year. Let's have all the paperwork done for all the students and let's expect that [the students] will be doing [the program] on a regular basis throughout the school year.

—Participant 3

Give us somebody who takes it off the edge of the desk and puts it right square in the middle of the desk, and let's give this thing a shot. Let's give it a chance. Let's give it a chance to give us some feedback on how it works. There's no doubt that it's going to be positive.

—Participant 3

2. Program Support (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

Program support would involve conducting an appropriate product launch for the program. The people involved would need to understand the value of the program, as a whole, and promote it as such. This means that the number of sessions are set and the program is promoted as a package. A one-year commitment to delivering the program would also be supported, along with making modifications to deliver it again the following year. Promotion of the whole program is recommended to gain additional support.

If it's going to roll out like it did, it needed to roll out in the way we originally discussed it; like, bigger, more students, three schools, and let's go at it. Let's commit to float the new product. I'll just speak in those terms. Let's agree to float the new product to put the promo and advertisings

support behind it that it needs for an appropriate product launch. Let's take it out there and let's commit to do it for a full year. Then, let's go back and look at the stats. What did it accomplish? Let's check it out. What worked, what didn't work, let's debrief. Let's modify what we need to modify and then let's roll it out exactly the same way with the modifications for the second year.
 –Participant 3

3. Scheduling (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

Restructuring the high school course schedule was recommended. For example, a linear class schedule would create more flexibility for coordinating the students' timetables.

If the students were in a linear year, that would be a wish... We'd know that from September to June, the whole group of human services career program students would be in that block and we would be able to just draw students out of that block to go into whatever [elementary] schools we wanted. So, we started with one school, but what if we want to do this [program] in five or six schools on this side of town and have five or six [university] facilitators taking these groups out so that these youth have an opportunity to actually facilitate? ... So, there are some logistics that would be like a wish – that we could remove that logistical piece to make it more successful.
 –Participant 1

4. Funding and Resources (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

Additional supplies were recommended. It will be important for the youth to have access to supplies and gather additional supplies, as needed. Funding for these kinds of resources are necessary, especially as the program expands. Funding was also recommended for continuing the program and to support program growth.

Even just access to supplies and stuff. I mean we've been really lucky in that we secured a little bit of money in order to do some of the little things that we did. But, depending on how big this [program] gets or how many classes we're doing at once, these will be things that we might need more of. So, funding is always, always an issue. You know, being able to continue to provide the support to make the program grow. –Participant 1

5. Transportation (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

A solid transportation plan was recommended. Consistent transportation for high school students is needed for getting them to the elementary school. Coordinating a bus was recommended to resolve this issue. It is recommended that taking the high school students to the elementary school would be much smoother next time and that funding would be made available to support this.

My other wish would be to make sure that the planning of taking the teens to the grade schools like, that whole school to school bureaucracy and all that stuff, was a much smoother thing to achieve. –Participant 2

6. Classroom Management (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

It was recommended that the youth incorporate classroom management strategies into their planning process and facilitation. The youth could ask the classroom teacher about the class beforehand, to help them become more aware of the specific needs of the students that they plan to work with. In addition, youth could also ask the classroom teacher about the classroom management strategies that are already in use and then prepare to incorporate them into their sessions as needed. It was also recommended that the classroom be managed more carefully to make sure there is enough space between students during certain activities.

So just some basic classroom management strategies –And what that could look like is just a matter of reaching out to the teacher and saying, ‘What are some of the basic classroom strategies that you’ve used in your class? We’re going to be coming in and I just want to prepare the young people with the skills that they might need for this.’ So, for example, if [the teacher] uses language such as, ‘powerful listening skills,’ then, making sure the youth know about that. –Participant 1

7. Keep a Record (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

It was recommended that keeping a record of what happened during the program would be valuable information to have. For example, someone could keep a record of how students felt at the beginning and ending of each session. Moreover, having the option to go back and measure the outcomes of the program was mentioned as a recommendation for the future.

Overtime, there was more sharing at the beginning of being happy or content or being calm or whatever word [the grade twos] wanted to use. Then, there was a dip in that trend, but it was right around Christmas time and then it went back up. And everything ended on a happy note... So, one thing I wish is that I would have actually kept a record of that, but, I mean, it’s our first time through so maybe someone else will do that next time. –Participant 2

8. Expand the Program (6/6 Participant Endorsement)

Expanding the program was recommended. It would be ideal to have the program in every high school in the district and then match every elementary school accordingly. Replicating the program throughout the province and internationally were also mentioned as possible directions for this program. Recommendations for program growth were also directed at increasing opportunities for more teachers to engage with mindfulness education. Educators would like to see the program continue and impact multiple levels of the community. Expanding the program was also described as involving university mentors, who could take on the current role that BBBS staff assumed. By BBBS staff supporting university mentors, program growth could be made possible. It was also recommended that this program become an embedded program that could be picked up by other agencies in the future.

I think I would really love to see the program go a little further. In Chilliwack, we have three high schools and it's only in one of them. So, it would be really nice to see it go to all three high schools and then it would fit with all of the elementary schools. But I don't think that's something that's not available, I just think that that's something that we haven't progressed to yet. –Participant 6

That's the only way to make it grow – Supporting [university] mentors who would be supporting the youth, who would be supporting the grade twos. That's our dream – That this would become another program that we deliver and that we're known for in the schools – A youth-led mindfulness based group program...This is a whole other realm. [Youth] actually leading groups and delivering a group program to younger students. That really excites me...It's expanding our reach. You know, as one person, you can only do so much. But when you start reaching others, who can reach others, then you're really increasing your impact on the community. –Participant 1

If we could just implement this program in every school for all the kiddos – I think it was awesome. This was an amazing experience. I think that it's such a great initiative and I'm so proud and happy to be part of it. –Participant 2

9. Prioritize Planning Sessions (3/6 Participant Endorsement)

It was important that youth have planning sessions. It was recommended that these planning sessions are not reduced. Additional recommendations for planning sessions included dedicating more time to practicing the activities, such as role-playing with each other. Planning sessions could also be used to create a unit plan, that could be distributed to educators before the sessions start in order to show them the full direction of the program.

Their time to plan was a huge. It was so much needed. So, moving forward, I would wish that we would continue to have that time to plan each session. –Participant 2

10. Follow-up Actions (2/6 Participant Endorsement)

Follow-up actions for after the sessions were completed were recommended. First, add check-in sessions where the youth can come to visit the elementary students once a month for the remainder of the school year. This is recommended to continue the connections that were made between the students. Second, create a resource for educators that could be provided to the elementary school after the program has ended. The resource could include information such as, an overview of the learning objectives, additional activities, and talking points around mindful education for educators.

It would've been nice to have a little bit of a check-in because [the youth] came in for their ten weeks. It would've been nice to have them come in once a month to have a little conversation – Not to lead in any activities but for the grade elevens just to come back and check in with the grade twos after the program and just to have that continuation for that school year... The grade elevens get to keep their connections that they've made with them and vice versa. Because [the

grade twos] still ask about them sometimes like, “Oh when are we going to see the grade elevens again?” –Participant 4

Summary of Results

The participant's perspectives demonstrated that it is important that the YLMP is delivered and developed further. All of the interviews revealed that educators had a lot to say about the successes of the YLMP. Educators showed enthusiasm for continuing the program and articulated the benefits that they believed their students experienced both during and after the program was completed. For the most part, educators had more difficulty expressing unhelpful aspects of the program. There was unanimous agreement that this program is worth implementing and that the practical barriers should be addressed. The diverse perspectives of the educators offered different angles from which to view the program and also provided a clear picture of what happened and the recommendations for moving forward. A common theme throughout all the interviews emerged, that is, the meaningful connections that were formed between the youth and elementary students.

The meaningful connections were highlighted as the most valuable aspect of the program. All participants emphasized that the formation of meaningful connections pointed to the success of the program, with the second most incidents recounted in this category (see Table 1). The meaningful connections between the two age groups were described as incidents that some educators had predicted, while others reported as a pleasant surprise. The meaningful connections category included incidents of youth and elementary students interacting in ways that were viewed positively by educators. The connections were meaningful in that educators believed the program to be more than simply providing mental health literacy and more about facilitating a reciprocal helping relationship between students. Incidents of mentorship, positive role modeling, and mutual engagement were consistently reiterated by educators, to indicate the significance of the connections.

The meaningful connections theme was reflected in the other categories, which further reinforced the notion that this is a valuable result of the YLMP. The elementary students' integration of mindfulness education and activities, described in category number three, appeared to be supported by the special connection that the students had formed with each other. Many of the younger students looked up to the older students with trust and admiration and so their eager participation followed. This kind of connection helped to boost the legitimacy of mindfulness practices and inspire the elementary students to continue using them at school. Another category that reflected the theme of meaningful connections between the two age groups was the educators' contributions to the program. Category number two includes incidents where educators supported the youth in order for them to act as facilitators and build the connections. Support was provided by Big Brothers and Big Sisters (BBBS) staff, who were active in the planning process and present for all program sessions. Additionally, the elementary classroom teacher also provided support, as she acted as a resource to the youth and permitted them to visit her class. The educators' contributions to the YLMP helped to establish the connections between youth and elementary school students. The theme of meaningful connections was also reflected in category number five, which addresses the youths' personal growth. Educators commented on how the youths adjusted to their role as facilitators, while also forming a special connection with the younger students. The mentoring relationship between older and younger students seemed to inspire the older students to challenge themselves and achieve their personal goals. Practical considerations were also pertinent to the formation of these connections. The program was described as not just being a one-off, as it occurred weekly for set period of time and with a consistent group of youth facilitators. These program characteristics supported the development of relationships and bolstered the learning process. The theme of meaningful

connections is woven throughout the categories and reveals the importance that educators place on the events that took place in the YLMP.

An important feature of the YLMP was the partnership and collaboration within the community. It was necessary for the elementary school, high school and community agency to work together to make the YLMP happen. All of their efforts were integral to the successes that were reported by the educators. The partnership between stakeholders was echoed in category number six, which described the practical considerations that aided the program's implementation. These considerations included the stakeholders' participation in meetings to clarify objectives and coordinate roles. Moreover, the categories that consisted of the incidents that hindered the program's accomplishments also pointed to this aspect of the program. A desire to have additional program support and a reorganization of priorities pointed to some educators' request for more collaboration. These educators believed that this would be needed in order to effectively plan and organize the YLMP for the future. Scheduling and transportation, hindering categories number three and five respectively, revealed how partnership and collaboration are vitally important features of the program. Educators reiterated that it would be crucial that stakeholders work together to allow the high school students to get to the elementary school and also establish a schedule that serves students in both age groups. Similarly, the wish items also reflected these requests and further reinforced the need for partnership and collaboration between community entities.

The educators were in accord about praising the YLMP and its capacity to help high school students and elementary students connect in a meaningful way. The helping and hindering categories clearly revealed different angles from which diverse educators viewed the YLMP. Additionally, the wish list items offered recommendations that educators perceived as

important for the development of this program. The results showed that educators viewed the YLMP positively and as producing favourable outcomes in their schools and the larger community.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The present study showed that educators view the Youth-led Mindfulness Program (YLMP) favourably and wish to see the program continue and expand. The educators offered diverse perspectives, as their connection with the program varied. It was very clear that these participants believed the program to be valuable to their students and the larger community. It was important to target the perspective of educators because they have the first-hand knowledge and experience that pertain to the YLMP. It was also necessary to uncover their perspectives because educators hold the keys to the implementation process. This means that the educators' views matter when it comes to the adoption and fruition of future programming. For these reasons, it was vital that the educators' views were investigated and clearly understood.

Comparing Youth-led and Professional-led Approaches

The YLMP is innovative in its strategy to employ youth as group facilitators. Traditionally, mindfulness groups have been led by professionals, such as mental health clinicians, counsellors and educators. As the title of the program implies, the YLMP endorsed youth to lead the program and act as group facilitators. This approach is quite different than the conventional way of providing mindfulness education. There have been countless studies on the impact of mindfulness groups that are led by professionals. When professionals implement programs of this kind, positive outcomes tend to occur. Much of the literature focuses on the benefits of teaching mindfulness to students. Reduced attention problems, anxiety symptoms and behavioural problems have been mentioned as some of the major benefits to students. Additionally, researchers have also found that students experience significant improvements in academic performance, self-concept and an overall sense of well-being. Mindfulness groups, when facilitated by professionals, have a positive impact on students who participate in them.

Although the present study was not focused on investigating specific outcomes of teaching mindfulness, the YLMP most definitely reflected similarities of boasting the positive impact of teaching mindfulness.

Programs that aim to provide mindfulness training to students have been praised for their consistent appeal to both students and educators. As was mentioned in the review of the literature, qualitative feedback on past mindfulness programs have pointed to students' high degree of program satisfaction and enjoyment. Furthermore, teachers and administrators have expressed their own support for school-based mindfulness and yoga interventions with educators remarking on their feasible and attractive nature. While professional-led mindfulness programs have accomplished these notable outcomes, the YLMP offered students additional benefits that were missing from the conventional approach.

The Youth-led Approach

Positive role modeling demonstrated. The YLMP is special in that it provides students, at both the elementary and high school level, with an opportunity to form a meaningful connection with each other. These established connections point to the powerful impact that role modeling has on both older and younger students. The older students demonstrated positive role modeling by their actions throughout their commitment to the program and younger students clearly looked up to the older students with admiration. Similar to the conventional professional-led mindfulness groups, the YLMP appeals to both educators and students. The main distinction about this program is that meaningful connections were emphasized as the most valuable aspect of the program. Educators' remarks about the YLMP undoubtedly support the notion that the connections that formed were distinctive to this program and is worth pursuing.

I wasn't expecting that part of the mindfulness program – The connections they would form. I only really thought 'Oh, they'll give us exercises for us to practice throughout

the week' ... I didn't know that the connection would be stronger than what they were teaching us. –Participant 4

If we can make meaningful relationships and connections with the secondary students by coming into our school here, it allows the transition for our kids down the road to be a little bit easier. So, whenever we have opportunities where we can meet up with secondary students, it is important to us. –Participant 5

The opportunity to have older students interact with younger students, by leading the mindfulness training, is the most attractive part of the YLMP. The program was also appealing to the students involved. The students anticipated their weekly sessions and it was clear that strong connections had formed. In light of the research on peer mentor relationships, we know that the simple presence of a mentor is very powerful, especially when the mentor is relatable and can serve as a positive role model. The mentoring relationship appeals to students who engage as either a mentor or mentee. The YLMP clearly demonstrated that younger and older students attach a deep sense of meaning to their relationship, as was apparent in the way that they engaged with each other throughout the program. The younger students established a high level of trust with the older students and they were both really happy to see each other. This feeling of excitement grew as the sessions progressed. The bond between students of these two age groups were most observable during the last session when both older and younger students were noticeably sad that the program was finishing and engaged in heartfelt goodbyes. The role modeling that took place was something special that occurred in this format that made a positive impact on both age groups. It was quite clear that this program was attractive to students and that the meaningful connections that they formed supported their positive perceptions.

The program also appealed to educators, as they perceived these connections as an important event in the lives of their students. The elementary students experienced the high school students leading them in activities and modeling character traits that educators believed to

provoke the younger students to set higher standards for themselves. The elementary students' integration of mindfulness practices was also smiled upon by educators. Educators commented on the benefit of having the younger students receive the mindfulness education from the older students. The high school students acted as positive role models and helped the elementary students to learn how to engage in mindful activities both in and out of their classroom. The meaningful connections that were built between both elementary and high school students helped students in both age groups to integrate the mindfulness education and encouraged the legitimacy of mindful practices. The younger students integrated mindfulness practices, which educators expressed as a successful part of the program. Any opportunity to provide young students with positive role models was conveyed as something that educators would not pass up and was also described as an unmet need in the lives of most their students. The meaningful connections that the YLMP provided and integration of mindfulness education appealed to the educators. The main difference between this youth-led approach and conventional professional-led programs is that educators were steadfast in their view that the meaningful connections was the most important part of the program. The positive role modeling was something special that the youth-led approach provided, which has been passed over and unclear in the current literature on mindfulness programs.

Youth as mindfulness trainers. Youth have many gifts that they offer their communities when they get involved with programs like the YLMP. The high school students' work in this program was impressive. This was an important part of the results of this study, as youth were seen to skillfully and responsibly lead the program. These findings are important because it supports the notion that youth are capable of acting as leaders in this capacity. One educator described her perspective in this way:

The program surpassed all of the expectations that I could have possibly had. I've always been a very passionate believer in young people's capacity to do some really amazing things and deliver a lot of things and they surpassed my expectations. This group of young people, they were so committed and they were so devoted to delivering a really quality program. Watching them build those relationships, build those connections, and connect with the teacher in that classroom, they just really really made this experience way more than I ever anticipated. –Participant 2

This suggests that youth can be entrusted with this kind of leadership role. Some of the specific tasks that youth were able to carry out for the YLMP included developing the curriculum, planning each of the sessions and delivering all of the sessions for the program. The way that the youth conducted themselves also impressed many of the educators. The youth were consistently commended for their preparedness, dedication, openness and respectful demeanor. The classroom teacher felt comfortable handing over the reins of her class to the youths and letting them take over as the lead teachers. The high school students were also perceived as knowledgeable about mindfulness education. Educators believed the youth to understand the material that they delivered. The high school students demonstrated their understanding of the value and purpose of mindfulness education. To many of the educators, the sessions were believed to be strong and effective. Students who take on this role as mindfulness trainers to elementary students are typically students who show a genuine interest in helping their community. The way that certain youth are drawn to programs of this kind points to these students' motivation and desire to be successful in this role. Although the sessions were geared toward the elementary students, many of the educators commented on their own positive experience of participating in the YLMP sessions. Educators not only responded with feeling good from doing the mindfulness activities with the class but also talked about their own advancement of knowledge about mindfulness education, as a component of teaching. The classroom teacher spoke about the activities in the program being useful to her own work as an

educator and having applied them after the program ended. The educators' positive experience of participating in the sessions further indicated the strength of the sessions that the youth facilitated. The high school students were seen as capable, not only by the educators' observations of the youth operating as facilitators but also by educators' recollection of their own participation in the YLMP.

Educators expressed agreement about youth having a natural ability to connect with the younger students. Youth were viewed as having a unique capacity to build relationships that were dissimilar to adults. The youth were able to make meaningful connections, largely due to their age. Educators believed that a powerful part of the program that helped make it successful was the simple fact that the youth were at a particular stage of development that elementary students happen to be drawn to. One educator described the youths' age as an asset in this way:

Youth have an ability to connect with younger kids quite a bit quicker than adults do. I think adults certainly have that capacity to build those connections but it happens a lot faster. Youth have a lot of credibility. They're like rock stars to little kids.

—Participant 1

Age was a characteristic of the youth that educators thought was helpful to the formation of connections between high school and elementary students. This quality was viewed a powerful feature of the YLMP that could be useful to the community. Educators believe that individuals at this age can take on this kind of leadership role and can be effective, largely due to the fact that they can easily build these strong connections. Youth naturally keep the attention of younger students, as they are looked up to and admired. This kind of admiration was noticed at the elementary school in one particular incident where, during recess, an elementary student was seen bragging about having the big buddies visit the class, to other students who did not receive the YLMP. It was clear that the youths were held in high regard, especially for this particular student. The youths also further legitimized the mindfulness education by simply being

themselves. Elementary students were genuinely interested in what the youth had to say and were eager to participate in the activities with them. The youth's natural ability to connect with the elementary students helped students to integrate the mindfulness education because youth leading the sessions made the content relevant. Many of the educators expressed that youth are an untapped resource to their community, especially as they have a lot to offer those that are younger than themselves. The age of the youth, along with this natural tendency for younger students to gravitate toward them was thought to be a resource in regards to providing mentorship. Educators expressed that the youth provide a different kind of mentorship that teachers simply do not provide. Elementary students view their teacher in a certain way that is different to their perception of youth. Youth are able to achieve a result that adults may not, perhaps because youth are less intimidating. The high school students were suited for this role, especially since many of them could relate to the younger students. The youth were described as coming from similar backgrounds and experiences, which may have also helped them to connect to the younger students. The youth were seen as a good fit for their position and were able to fill their role successfully. The YLMP was viewed as facilitating a perfect match where both ages benefited from connecting with each other. The high school students were useful to the elementary students, as they acted as positive role models. They were viewed as meeting a need in their community and providing something meaningful to the younger students. This happened because they were an ideal age to form these connections and could easily relate to the elementary students' lives. The youth are like rock stars in the eyes of younger students, as they are naturally looked up to and admired. Teenagers being themselves in this capacity is valuable. Educators believe that youths in this role are effective, especially in teaching programs that focus on mindfulness training.

Program Feasibility

The youth-led approach as a viable option. The YLMP employed an approach that is fully feasible and can be replicated in additional community settings. The notion that programs of this kind can be successfully implemented is reflected in what we know about school-based mindfulness programs that employ the conventional professional-led approach (e.g., Mendelson et al., 2010). Although both approaches are viable, the distinctive benefits of the youth-led approach merit a deeper understanding of its feasibility for implementation purposes. The youth-led approach can certainly be applied to other community settings in addition to the one that it is currently being delivered. It is a mechanism that works and one that many stakeholders could imagine happening in their own communities. The details about its delivery are important to note to demonstrate how the YLMP and other programs like it can be implemented in the future. Even though there were issues that pertain to the nature of this format, the different stakeholders successfully worked together and overcame the obstacles that emerged.

Collaboration was absolutely necessary for the YLMP to be delivered. Many educators believed this to be a successful part of the program and were satisfied with its reasonably smooth delivery the first time around. The key stakeholders in the YLMP included the high school, elementary school, and community agency. The hard work and dedication of these groups were integral to the early development and delivery of the YLMP. Coordinating the timetables of the high school and elementary school was a major issue that came up during the course of the planning stage. Confirming a schedule that both schools could commit to was necessary. For the YLMP, it was vital to have this issue dealt with in order to ensure high school and elementary school students could meet with each other on a weekly basis. The consistent efforts from stakeholders to collaborate and work out these details proved to be worthwhile. A schedule

was finalized and the program rolled out as planned. Coordinating a suitable schedule is often an important step to ensure that a community program takes place. The implementation process comes with these kinds of difficulties. Professional-led programs also deal with issues that pertain to coordinating the program with the school schedule (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014). If students are to participate in programs that are youth-led, it is imperative that the stakeholders understand that flexibility within the schedule is required. Resolving issues with the different timetables between schools should not deter programming. Many other programs have dealt with similar issues and have been able to work together to make sure students are presented with these kinds of opportunities (Mellanby, Rees, & Tripp, 2000). The nature of the YLMP program is feasible and scheduling issues can be resolved.

Successful partnerships. Partnering with key community stakeholders is essential to ensure the feasibility of programs that wish to employ a youth-led approach. The YLMP was feasible with the help of one key community agency, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, in Chilliwack. This partnership further supports the notion that collaboration between stakeholders within the community is essential. The agency staff members worked closely with the high school students by acting as, in the staff members' own words, the 'token adults' to assist the youth in their role as group facilitators. The community agency staff assisted the youth by sitting in on weekly planning sessions and providing support in the form of encouragement, program ideas and access to materials. The community agency was also in charge of taking care of the administrative details, of which the youth were not a part of. One of the most important contributions of these staff members was their role in bringing the high school students to the elementary school. Transportation for the high school students to get to and from the elementary school was initially an issue during the early planning stages of the YLMP. The partnership

with this agency resolved this problem so that older students could visit the younger students. Partnering with stakeholders has been an important feature of other youth-led programs (e.g. Sánchez, Lomelí-Loibl, & Nelson, 2009). The joining together of different groups shows how efforts to work together produce commendable program results. The training that high school students received should not be overlooked. Providing support to the youth should be continued, which was also available by offering Saturday workshops facilitated by a mindfulness expert from the University of the Fraser Valley. Community agencies or other organizations can be used to support youths who lead the program and equip them to be successful in their roles. The partnership between stakeholders made the YLMP possible and was successfully coordinated. The way that the YLMP was delivered supports the notion that this program is feasible and can be applied to additional community settings.

Partnering with the HSCeP. The YLMP was also made possible with the support of the Human Services Career Enrichment Program (HSCeP). The HSCeP was active in supporting the YLMP throughout the implementation process. The HSCeP is established within the Chilliwack community and sets the stage for programs, like the YLMP, to be implemented. Since the HSCeP is already underway, high school students reap the benefit of being invited to engage with the HSCeP objectives and receive the academic support that is in place for them. The objectives of the HSCeP include building academic and social emotional intelligence in youth through mentorship opportunities. The HSCeP's involvement is important to keep in mind because it informs our understanding of the YLMP. The HSCeP is part of the backdrop of the community. Many high school students that reside in this community show interest in pursuing the HSCeP and decide to get involved. The high school students that participated in the YLMP had been accepted into the HSCeP, which was successfully running in their high school. The

youths, being a part of the human service cohort, also received credit for all of their work. The high school students that participated in the YLMP were enrolled in their Psychology 11 course, which was designed to assist them in their leadership roles. The course encourages students to connect their course curriculum with their experience in the elementary school by engaging in real-time dialogue with their peers about their learning. The HSCeP partnership not only helped the implementation process, but also enriched the high school students' experience in the YLMP. One educator described the high school students' progress due to the HSCeP in the following way.

By the time [high school students] graduate, I can see on so many different levels how this has benefitted them as human beings...the need is real and they are making a difference. The high schoolers are growing immensely. They're different people. They are more young adult, less kid, because they are thinking at a bigger level. –Participant 3

The HSCeP had a major influence on the success of the YLMP, especially by impacting the lives of the high school students that were involved. The HSCeP provides a useful structure from which programs like the YLMP can be implemented. The HSCeP has shown to fit with the current school curriculum and youth are believed to be excited about engaging in relevant and real-time content. The YLMP can be described as fitting under the HSCeP umbrella, as they partner together to help youths uncover their gifts and abilities that may pertain to the human services field.

The influence of the HSCeP is noteworthy also because of its support for community improvement. The YLMP is a mechanism that works and represents a process that is feasible. The YLMP's collaboration with the HSCeP reveals their common interest to build a better community. By having multiple levels of the community involved, such as students at the elementary and high school levels, a process where students can be successful at each step is put

into motion. The mentorship at various levels creates opportunities for these individuals to grow and positively impact the community system. The YLMP's promising results show us how implementing these kinds of programs have the potential to help build better communities. The work that the high school students accomplished through the YLMP show us that youth are a resource to our communities. Youths are capable of doing exceptional work and play an important role in bringing a positive change to the larger community. Educators described the youths' impact and potential ripple effect that they make by their involvement in programs like the YLMP:

We are graduating people who are really committed and agents of change to get out there and make a difference in society. –Participant 3

I think that [the program] elated them big time. And I think that by bringing that back into their schools, they are going to pass that onto their peers. It would have been helpful for the community and the high school. –Participant 2

The YLMP not only supports the vision to improve the larger community, but also provides a suitable mechanism that has produced worthy results. This program offers a hopeful outlook, as it values young people as agents of change. A ripple effect can start in the lives of students and have a lasting impact for their future. The process of partnering with stakeholders and working together to reach a common objective can be successful. The events that occurred during the process of organizing and implementing the YLMP supports the notion that the program is feasible. The details of the program that have been outlined in this section illustrate how programs like the YLMP are a viable option and can also be applied to additional community contexts.

Implications for the Field of Counselling Psychology

The present study is pertinent to the field of counselling psychology as it focuses on the mental health of young people today. Social-emotional development is important to counselling

psychologists and so programs that seek to cultivate this early on are of particular interest. Mindfulness is a widely accepted practice that has been adopted by the field of counselling psychology, evidenced by numerous interventions and therapies that are rooted in the practice. The youth-led mindfulness program (YLMP) offered something unique in its youth-led approach to teaching mindfulness, while aspiring to provide students with valuable content through positive role modeling. Counselling psychology is invested in the positive growth, well-being and mental health of individuals, groups, and the broader community, therefore, it was fitting that the present study explored a program that shared these interests.

The findings of this study are important to the field of counselling psychology because it informs our understanding of mindfulness groups that are led by youth. Mental health clinicians, counsellors and educators are encouraged to think about the youth-led approach, as a viable option that provides more than just mental health literacy. Mental health professionals are invited to think about mindfulness education in new ways and perhaps even challenge the conventional way of leading mindfulness groups. The present study is also pertinent for counselling psychologists because it points to their role in supporting the work that mindfulness programs seek to accomplish. Shifting the focus toward training and taking on other supportive roles for youth and those who work directly with youth is a possible implication for professionals. The mental health concerns of young people can be addressed through this group format, which has the capacity to reach a greater number of students. Healthier schools translate into healthier communities, which counselling psychologists can get on board with, as they are committed to enhancing and promoting mental health programs and initiatives.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The strengths of the study include the applicability and conceptual extension of the findings. The Chilliwack School District is representative of other educational settings throughout the province of British Columbia. The context of the program is one that is familiar to many educators and so connections can be made between the results of this program and what can be expected to occur in other settings. The positive role modeling that took place is a valuable concept that may be applied to future programs that are interested in utilizing a youth-led approach. This mechanism is designed in such a way that its application is possible even in places where the Human Services Career Enrichment Program (HSCeP) is not available. Confidence in the transferability of the findings is not only marked by the nature of the program but also the scientific rigour that was used for this study. The design helps to clarify that the findings are relevant to additional settings, especially with the careful completion of the credibility checks that are consistent with the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique.

Although the applicability of the findings is a strength, the present study is also subject to criticism concerning this notion. The narrow focus of the study may prompt questions about the transferability of the results to additional settings. The explorative design was utilized to understand the educator's views of the program and uncovering these perspectives took precedence over making general claims about its application to other contexts and populations. The diverse perspectives were collected in hopes to uncover valuable insights to be used by those in similar educational and community settings and the program's distinctiveness points to its heuristic value. The applicability of the findings remains likely, despite the study's narrow focus. The contextual features of the YLMP is typical of many educators' experience in educational settings and so the findings will be of interest to those in similar situations. The lack of information about the risk and protective factors inherent in this particular context stands as a

limitation of the study. Information on students' socioeconomic status and culture were absent from the study, which may have provided a deeper understanding of the findings.

Future Directions

The continuation of the YLMP has been in effect with the successful partnership with the HSCeP. An expansion of the program would allow more schools to get involved and increase its positive impact throughout this community and others. The opportunity for elementary students to interact with positive role models and high school students to be positive role models is made possible through encouraging the continuation and expansion of programs like the YLMP. The youth-led model has already experienced growth with the addition of university mentors, from the University of the Fraser Valley, to assist the high school students. It is possible that these university students will eventually take on the role that community agency staff played in the YLMP in order to increase the program's reach. This university partnership points to the direction that the YLMP is moving toward to build on its successes for the future.

Future research directions. Future research could be directed toward exploring specific outcomes of programs that are youth-led. Having more information about the program's effectiveness would be useful, especially as programs like this continue to develop. It would be interesting to know to what extent mindfulness practices were integrated and how this may have permeated other areas of the students' lives. Research on the broader impact in the schools would also be worthy of investigating. This kind of work would be useful for understanding how the mentorship process unfolds over time with the students at various age levels impacting the school system. It would also be advantageous to acquire both older and younger students' perspectives of their own participation in the program. Furthermore, research that focuses on the addition of university mentors would contribute to the findings of the present study.

Conclusion

The present study explored educators' diverse perspectives of the Youth-Led Mindfulness Program (YLMP). The educators' enthusiasm to share their expert insights were captured in this research project, which provided a great depth of understanding into an innovative delivery model for mindfulness education. The successes that were achieved through the YLMP have been heralded, along with anticipation for program continuation and growth. The applicability of a youth-led approach reflects the benefit of community partnerships and collaboration. It is possible that additional community settings also experience the value in implementing programs of this kind. The YLMP provided something unique that has been absent from the conventional approach to mindfulness programs in facilitating meaningful connections between elementary students and high school students. The program is praised for its effective program delivery in elementary school classrooms and impact on strengthening the surrounding community.

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Informed Consent Form

Trinity Western University
Youth as Mindfulness Trainers: Educators' Views

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Purpose and Benefits

You are invited to participate in this research study, which seeks to understand educators' views about what helps and hinders the implementation of a youth-led mindfulness program. Your personal experience and expertise is essential for deepening our understanding of the youth-led model and to also gain valuable insights to create better programs for the future.

For the purposes of this study, you must be an educator, whose students participated in the youth-led mindfulness program.

Procedures

You are being asked to participate in the following procedures.

1. Demographics Questionnaire

This short questionnaire will request basic background information such as your age, gender, experience as an educator, and experience with mindfulness activities. This procedure should require 5 minutes to complete.

2. Interview

This interview will consist of the principal investigator asking you some questions about what helped and hindered the implementation of the youth-led mindfulness program. The interview will be video recorded. This procedure should require between 30 and 60 minutes.

3. Follow up Interview

This interview will consist of the principal investigator reviewing the information gathered from your interview to see if the categories coming out the interview fit with your experience. This procedure should require 30 to 60 minutes and may be conducted over the phone or in-person.

Confidentiality

Your identity will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. You will be assigned a case number for written documents and digital files. The list that matches the code numbers with your name will be kept in a locked filing cabinet separate from the data. Any identifying information in the video recordings will be removed from the transcripts (typed records of the oral interviews). The only individuals who will

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have access to identifiable written or recorded data will be the principal investigator and the research team, who have also signed a confidentiality agreement for this study. All questionnaires, interview recordings and interview transcripts will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet. Access to non-identifying records will be restricted to individuals directly involved in the research study. Following the completion of the study, the recordings will be destroyed and only the anonymous transcripts with all identifiers removed will be kept. These anonymous transcripts will be numbered with correlating numbers to the demographic information but will not enable anyone to trace the interviews back to the participant. The anonymous data will be kept indefinitely. The data collected will be used for future research and education purposes.

Risk, Stress or Discomfort

Participants in this type of research may experience stress or discomfort related to the content of the interview. Although efforts have been made to ensure that the nature of the questionnaire and interviews will not be emotionally concerning to you, there is a possibility that a question may be difficult for you to answer. If at any time during the interviews you experience feelings that are uncomfortable, I would encourage you to talk to the interviewer about this. The researcher will not provide a counselling service in the case of discomfort, but upon request, referrals to counselling services will be made available to you. Your well-being is of utmost importance and so your questions and concerns are welcomed throughout your study involvement.

Contact

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you are welcome to contact the Principal Investigator, Jerlyn Chan at (604) 729 4488 or jerlyn.chan@mytwu.ca, Dr. Marvin McDonald at (604) 513-2034 or mcdonald@twu.ca, or Dr. Rob Lees at (604) 795-7979 or robert.lees@gov.bc.ca. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact Ms. Sue Funk in the Office of Research, Trinity Western University at 604-513-2142 or sue.funk@twu.ca.

You have the right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without jeopardy. If for any reason you choose to withdraw, you may do so by contacting the Principal Investigator, Jerlyn Chan. Her contact information is provided above.

Participant's Statement

Your signature below indicates that the research study has been explained to you, that you have been given adequate opportunity to ask questions, and that you understand that any future questions that you may have about the research will be answered by the Principal Investigator listed above.

Your signature below indicates that you voluntarily consent to participate in this study; you understand that you are free to refuse or withdraw participation at any time without consequence, you acknowledge that your responses will be put in anonymous form and kept for further use after the completion of this study that includes future research and educational purposes.

Signature of Participant

Print Name

Date

Principal Investigator

Print Name

Date

APPENDIX B

Background Information

Please fill out this form that asks for some background information about your role as an educator. Your responses will help me to understand your view of the youth-led mindfulness program.

1. What is your current role, as an educator?

- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Teacher Assistant
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Vice Principal
- ☐ BBBS Volunteer
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

2. What school do you currently work at? (If more than one, please list them below)

3. How many years have you worked as an educator?

4. How many years have you worked in your current role as an educator?

5. If applicable, which grades do you currently teach?

6. Please specify the age of your students who were involved in the mindfulness program:

7. Please indicate your own level of education:

- ☐ Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree
- ☐ Master of Education (M.Ed) degree
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

8. Are you familiar with any social-emotional development programs in your school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Feel free to make any comments about other programs:

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9. Have you incorporated mindfulness-related activities in the classroom?

☐ Yes (If yes, please describe what you have done)

☐ No

10. Age: (circle one)

18 to 24 years 25 to 34 years 35 to 44 years 45 to 54 years 55 to 64 years Age 65 or older

11. Gender: _____

12. Ethnicity: _____

13. For follow-up interview purposes, please provide your preferred contact information here:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

14. How would you like the follow-up interview to be conducted? (Please circle one)

☐ Phone

☐ In-person

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

- ☐ Informed consent
- ☐ Informed consent copy to participant

Date:
Participant #:
Interview Start Time:
Interview End Time:

Introduction to the Study

1. **Introduce Yourself:** Introduce who you are and your role as the principal researcher
2. **Purpose of the Study:** Explain to the participant that the purpose of the study is to investigate educators' views about the youth-led mindfulness program to evaluate its effectiveness. This evaluation will be done by gathering the educator's views on helpful incidents, hindering incidents, and wish list items. Explain to participants that they have been asked to be a part of the study because of their personal experience and expertise as an educator, which is essential for deepening our understanding of the youth-led model and to also gain valuable insights to create better programs in the future.
3. **Procedure:** Explain to the participant that there will be two interviews. The first interview is to get all the general results of what helped/hindered/wished for. A background information component will be incorporated into this interview. The second interview is to see if the categories formed from the results are true and if there is anything that the participant wants to add or remove.
4. **Potential Risks:** Explain to the participants that there is the possibility that he/she experiences stress or discomfort related to the content of the interview. Although efforts have been made to ensure that the nature of the questionnaire and interviews will not be emotionally concerning to you, there is a possibility that a question may be difficult for you to answer. If at any time during the interviews you experience feelings that are uncomfortable, I would encourage you to talk to the interviewer about this and care will be provided to allow you to return to a comfortable emotional state before continuing the interview. Upon request, referrals to counselling services may be made available to you to help you work through these feelings. Your well-being is of utmost important and so your questions and concerns are welcomed throughout your study involvement.
5. **Benefits:** Explain to participants that they will receive the benefit of getting their voices heard by decision makers, which could potentially help improve the future implementation of programs within their community. Their input may shape future implementation of the youth-led mindfulness program and so their involvement will make a difference in their own work as educators, as well as in the lives of their students.
6. **Confidentiality:** Explain to the participant that his/her identity will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. All information including written document and digital files will be safely stored in locked filing cabinets and password protected hard drives. The only individuals who will have access to identifiable written or recorded data will be the principal investigator and the research team, who have also signed a confidentiality agreement for this study. The anonymous data will be kept indefinitely. The data collected will be used for future research and education purposes.

Consent: Explain to the participant that taking part in the interview is completely voluntary. If they do not want to answer certain questions, they may choose not to. They are also permitted to stop the interview at any time without penalty.

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Contextual Component

1. As a way of getting started, would you like to tell me a little bit about your experience of the youth-led mindfulness program?
2. What was it that led you to have your students involved in the program?
3. What was your initial thoughts about the program before it was delivered?
4. How would you describe your overall experience of the program now that it has ended?

Helpful Events & Incidents

1. Can you tell me about an event or incident that you found to be helpful to the implementation of the youth-led program?
 - a. *Probe: What was significant or important about that incident/event?*
 - b. *Probe: Can you provide a specific example?*
 - c. *Probe: How was that event/incident helpful?*
 - d. *Probe: Was there a key moment or experience that stood out to you?*
 - e. *Probe: What led up to this incident?*
 - f. *Probe: What were the surrounding circumstances that affected this event or incident?*
 - g. *Probe: What was the outcome of this event or incident?*
 - h. *Probe: Can you think of other events/incidences?*

Unhelpful Events & Incidents

1. Can you tell me about an event or incident that you found to be unhelpful or hindered the implementation of the youth-led program?
 - a. *Probe: What was significant or important about that incident/event?*
 - b. *Probe: Can you provide a specific example?*
 - c. *Probe: How was that event/incident unhelpful or hindering?*
 - d. *Probe: Was there a key moment or experience that stood out to you?*
 - e. *Probe: What led up this incident?*
 - f. *Probe: What were the surrounding circumstances that affected this event or incident?*
 - g. *Probe: What was the outcome of this event or incident?*
 - h. *Probe: Can you think of other event/incidences?*

Wish List

Summarize what has been discussed up to this point and then transition to the next question that asks about wish list items.

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1. So far, we've talked about incidences that were helpful to the program, as well as incidences that hindered the youth-led mindfulness program. Is there anything that I am missing?
2. Next, I would like to ask you about what you wished was available that would have been helpful. So, what did you wish was available that would have helped bring success to the program?
 - a. *Probe: What do you mean by (wish list item)? – To clarify*
 - b. *Probe: What is it about (wish list item) that would have been helpful?*
 - c. *Probe: Can you give me an example of in what circumstances this might be helpful?*
 - d. *Probe: What else would have helped?*
 - e. *Probe: What else do you wish was addressed in the program to help the program?*

Closing Questions:

1. Based on your experience as an educator, what do you hope will happen in future when it comes to youth-led mindfulness programs being implemented in your community?
2. Is there anything else that you would like to add?
3. How was the interview process for you?

APPENDIX E

Participant Cross-Check Interview

Participant: # _____ Date: _____

Interview start time: _____ Interview end time: _____

Preamble: For this interview, I would like to ask you to check my interpretation of the data that was extracted from my first interview with you. The document outlines the tentative categories that will make up the final results of the study. There are three sets of categories: Helpful, Hindering and Wish List. The second interview is an opportunity for you to confirm that the categories make sense and to make sure your experience of the program is adequately represented. Please feel free address anything that you would like to add, delete, or amend.

I have a few questions for you about how the data has been interpreted.

1. Are the helping/hindering critical incidents and wish list items correct?
2. Is anything missing?
3. Do you have any additional comments?
4. Do the categories make sense to you?
5. Do the categories capture the meaning that the incident had for you?
6. Are there any incidents in the categories that do not appear to fit, from your perspective? If so, where do you think they should belong?

APPENDIX F



TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Research Ethics Board (REB)
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Principal Investigator: Jerlyn Chan

Department: CPSY

Supervisor (if student research): Marvin McDonald

Co-Investigators:

Title: Youth as Mindfulness Trainers: Educator Views

REB File No.: 16G19

Approval Date: January 23, 2017

Certificate Expiry Date: January 22, 2018

Certification

This is to certify that Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board (REB) has examined the research proposal and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans.



Elizabeth Kreiter
M.L.I.S.
REB Coordinator

for

Bill Badke
M.Th., M.L.S.
REB Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for one year and may be renewed.
The REB must be notified of *all* changes in protocol, procedures or consent forms.
A final project form must be submitted upon completion.

The required forms for the above are at:

www.twu.ca/research/research/research-ethics/approval-forms.html

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APPENDIX G

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement for Transcriptionist

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all video recordings and documentation received from Jerlyn Chan that is related to her master's research on *Youth as Mindfulness Trainers: Educators' Views*. Furthermore, I agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than Jerlyn Chan.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to Jerlyn Chan when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with Jerlyn Chan, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to Jerlyn Chan (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

Transcriptionist

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| _____ (Print Name) | _____ (Signature) | _____ (Date) |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|

Principal Researcher

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| _____ (Print Name) | _____ (Signature) | _____ (Date) |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Office of Research, Trinity Western University at 604-513-2142.