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The Impact of a Social Justice-Oriented Mindfulness Practice on the Self-Efficacy of an Early
Childhood Montessori Teacher

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in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Advisor _____

Date _____

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research was to explore how a social justice-oriented mindfulness practice would impact the self-efficacy of an early childhood educator. This self-study, with the researcher as the sole participant, took place over a six-week period while the researcher was working in a private Montessori school in the Northeastern United States in a classroom of 20 students aged 3-5. The intervention included breathwork; both walking and seated meditation paired with articles, essays, interviews, and poetry relevant to social justice; meditation; and mindfulness. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through reflective journaling, a record of feelings scale, an attitude scale, and a pre- and post-intervention survey. While the data did not reflect any substantial impact with regards to teacher self-efficacy, the study was transformative in many ways. The intervention resulted in a deeper understanding of social inequities and a heightened sense of self-reflection. A more focused and comprehensive selection of content relevant to equity in the educational setting would likely have allowed for a more guided learning experience. Additionally, community organized events and workshops relevant to this work could play a crucial role in encouraging the need and responsibility to take action in establishing more equitable schools.

Keywords: Montessori, social justice, equity, mindfulness, meditation

The educational system provides fertile ground for considering issues of social justice or, rather, societal inequities. An abundance of injustices exists within the system, both in public and private sectors; including segregation, lack of integration, accessibility and distribution of resources, and quality of school facilities. These barriers are further complicated by individual families who have the ability to place their children in top performing public and private schools, making decisions that primarily have their children's interest in mind, rather than that of the existing community (Hannah-Jones, 2017). While inequality within the school system is both structural and systemic, it is also the result of individual choices (Hannah-Jones, 2017). The multitude of inequities within the educational system has influenced me to consider how this societal structuring has impacted my own self-efficacy; a term used to describe a person's belief in their abilities to accomplish a given goal.

As an educator, improving my teacher self-efficacy was dependent upon my ability to examine social inequities and to continually set aside time to work on unpacking my individual biases. As a Montessorian, it was natural for me to consider the need for my own self-reflection and spiritual preparation as the initial process to addressing inequities and deepening my understanding of the work of social justice. Montessori (1995) argued that "the real preparation for education is a study of one's self. It includes the training of character; it is a preparation of the spirit" (p. 131). I chose mindfulness practice as a means for spiritual preparation and as a tool for exploring personal biases in order to deepen my work as a Montessori educator. A mindfulness practice that consisted of breathwork, seated and walking meditation, and that included social justice-oriented poetry, articles, and interviews as part of the research was used to

strengthen my teacher self-efficacy, explore our inherent interconnectedness, and to incite progress and action for change within the educational system.

This self-study was conducted at a Montessori preschool made up of a community of affluent families in a large metropolitan area. Individual classrooms consisted of 20 children in mixed-age groups ranging between 2.9 and 6-years-old. Although the school is racially diverse, there were no Black children enrolled at the time of the study. While the school is well-funded and offers financial aid, it is a school in many ways reserved for the economically privileged. Parents without access to additional childcare support would face challenges due to the lack of a full-day program. A school community with a high socioeconomic status should not be excluded from a study about social justice and the effect of social inequities within an institution. Rather, such an investigation is an opportunity to be vigilant about the potential consequences this structuring can have at the individual level, on teacher self-efficacy, and on the community at large. As the sole participant and researcher, I engaged in a daily meditation practice, and used readings, essays, and poetry to focus on social inequity and to unpack my own biases. This practice incorporated community-engaged mindfulness practices with the goal of using self-improvement as a means to be a more effective member of society and advocate of social justice. The research attempted to uncover how my teacher self-efficacy would be affected by a mindfulness practice that focused on and identified social inequities.

Theoretical Framework

To answer the research question of how a mindfulness practice focused on social inequities would impact an educator's self-efficacy, I used the theory of teacher education for

social justice. This theory includes four major premises. Firstly, as Cochran-Smith (2010) described, an approach to social justice in education is one that is not about methods, but rather, “a coherent and intellectual approach to the preparation of teachers that acknowledges the social and political context in which teaching, learning, schooling and ideas about justice have been located historically and the tensions among competing goals” (p. 3). Secondly, teaching and teacher education are seen as political and ideological processes because they include access to ideas, ideals, power, and opportunities in learning and life (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Additionally, teacher preparation is a crucial element in order to become an effective educator and to encourage educational change (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Finally, social justice teacher education does not exclude anyone; it is for all educators (Cochran-Smith, 2010). These four premises guided the research during the various stages of planning, research, and implementation in order to examine the effect of a social justice-oriented mindfulness practice on my teacher self-efficacy.

As educators, it is important to challenge our individual biases, and to continually practice self-reflection as a means to unpack the prejudices we carry. Cochran-Smith (2010) discussed reflection as an important element to incorporate in social justice teaching practices because it “involves how teachers think about their work and interpret what is going on in schools and classrooms” (p. 14-15). Magee (2019) argued that the incorporation of mindfulness practices is a way to enhance the work of social justice education and suggested that mindfulness requires collaboration and further questioning. Mindfulness practice requires developing “the capacity and the will to *rotate the center* of our communities, to pivot around the concerns of

differently situated people, ensuring that no one is left out and that the most acute suffering is addressed first” (Magee, 2019, p. 154-155, emphasis in original).

In order to address social inequities, one must have an understanding of the dynamics of privilege, such as how wealth and other factors have been unevenly distributed in society and resulted in the marginalization of certain groups of people. A theory of social justice teacher education provides a lens to deepen the understanding of these existing social constructions. Using this lens as a foundation will provide the opportunity to take action against such inequities, notably in an educational setting (Cochran-Smith, 2010).

Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) wrote, “recognition of disparities is coupled with the position that teachers can and should be both educators and advocates who are committed to the democratic ideal and to diminishing existing inequities in school and society by helping to redistribute educational opportunities” (p. 350). A theory of teacher education for social justice is a tool to understand social inequities at a deeper level and can encourage teachers to advocate for change to promote equity and improved conditions for all.

Review of Literature

Resisting uncomfortable conversations is commonplace in society and interferes with social evolution (Moore, 2019). Discussing the issue of social inequalities is a conversation that brings up discomfort, and as a result, we avoid engaging in such dialogue (Moore, 2019). However, without conversations and deep consideration about existing social structures, we prevent a cultural shift because we avoid self-reflection, accountability, and justice. (Moore, 2019). The necessity of self-reflection as a tool to achieve progress, take action, and build

community is touted by many scholars, writers, and activists (e.g., Berila, 2016, 2016; Magee, 2016, 2018, 2019; Moore, 2018, 2019; Powell, 2012). Moore (2018) wrote that we are “presented with the task of self-reflexive analysis and the crucial work of unlearning and undoing the things that might allow our visions of freedom...to actually substantiate the world we are seeking to resist” (p. 326). The literature reviewed discussed mindfulness and self-reflection as essential practices in the fight against social inequities and the promotion of social justice.

Mindfulness in the West

Many people in the United States understand mindfulness to be an independent practice, one that is used to advance personal well-being, increase satisfaction, and improve self-regulation (Magee, 2018). This is likely due to the reality that mindfulness was brought to the West mostly by privileged, white male students of Buddhism; interpreted through the formation of the white experience (Magee, 2016). In the United States, conceptions of self are distinctly isolated from our relationship within the community, which stem from ideals of individualism including, private property, market capitalism, and whiteness (Powell, 2012). Within these core beliefs come separateness and oppression, and Powell (2012) cautioned, “there is a need for an alternative vision, a beloved community where being connected to the other is seen as the foundation of a healthy self, not its destruction, and where the racial other is seen not as the infinite other, but rather as the other that is always and already a part of us” (p. XVIII-XIX). In the West with the individual as the focus, care and concern for the community has not been a central point of interest (Magee, 2019). However, this is contrary to the ancient practices and

traditions of mindfulness where a community-oriented approach was foundational (Magee, 2019).

Community-based mindfulness bridges the gap between individualism and interconnection by acknowledging the reality of existing interrelationships. Teachings of mindfulness including personal well-being, self-betterment, and productivity have not always focused on the individual; rather, we are witnessing the effect of modern interpretations, which have isolated the social and ethical qualities that have always been present in the fabric and ancient practice of meditation and mindfulness (Magee, 2018). While mindfulness in the West is largely thought of as a personal practice, meditation teacher, Sharon Salzberg, described the need for a more inclusive experience and expressed that we are creatures profoundly dependent and linked to one another (Salzberg, 2014). Salzberg (2014) cautioned that by dismissing this through the adoption of a culture that values self-reliance and individualism above all else, happiness and human connection are compromised. Magee (2018) discussed the term, “community-engaged mindfulness” as a means to bring attention back to the community aspect of mindfulness that has been lost in many mainstream practices in the West.

Community-engaged mindfulness

Mindfulness can be defined as a practice that allows for the ability to become more self-aware and used as a resource to cultivate compassion, clarity, self-awareness, balance, and embodiment (Berila, 2016). The term community-engaged mindfulness is described as an extension to mindfulness through involvement within the community by using mindfulness practices as tools for collective social justice work (Magee, 2016). This incorporation is

significant because it expands beyond a mainstream idea of mindfulness, and the narrow focus of self and the development of a personal awakening, towards participation in society with the intention of addressing social inequalities and oppression. Magee (2016) noted that community-engaged mindfulness simultaneously functions on a personal, interpersonal, and systemic level. The personal dimension allows for the opportunity to gain insight into one's own experience, including the impact of social suffering, the interpersonal dimension involves support and collaboration from others, and a deeper understanding of differences including cultural and racial divisions, and the systemic dimension involves working together towards riding inequalities at their root (Magee, 2016).

Teacher mindfulness and social justice

Mindfulness is a resource for creating more equitable schools by minimizing bias through tapping into emotions and the unconscious mind, therefore, increasing compassion and challenging a singular worldview (Aquilar, 2018). Combating biases and racism is not possible only at the conscious level, access to the unconscious mind is needed and can be achieved through mindfulness (Aquilar, 2018).

When considering how social justice practices should be carried out in an educational setting, preparation of the teacher, classroom curriculum, administrative presence, and parental influence all need to be considered as measures of effective implementation and the quality of the educational experience of the student (Banks & Maixner, 2016). Education should be thought of holistically by the community, with the whole child being represented, which includes acknowledging the child's culture and community (Banks & Maixner, 2016). Debs (2019)

discussed the ways in which various families chose schools based on whether or not the school was a “good fit” and argued that determining this compatibility was a socially constructed process. When an educator has an understanding of the concept of the “good fit”, they can determine what level of support families need when they arrive (Debs, 2019).

Mindfulness can be used as a way to increase the cultural competence of the individual and to unpack unconscious biases and challenge prejudices and stereotypes (Aguilar, 2018). Aguilar (2018) argued for the need to have more interactions with people from various backgrounds differing from one’s own (Aguilar, 2018). This may increase connection and stimulate an awareness of interconnection. Magee (2019) explained that mindfulness “is about helping one another learn new ways of building spaces for working with the conflicts that arise when we come together across lines of difference” (p. 152). Witnessing people take action against facing their own biases have been sources of inspiration for others to begin to look at their own personal biases (Magee, 2019). This personal aspect of community-engaged mindfulness, deepening the consideration for personal suffering and the suffering of others, leads to the development of the interpersonal and systemic dimensions of the practice.

Interplay between mindfulness and dismantling oppression

Personal and social transformation are the very nature of contemplative practices, such as mindfulness. When united with social justice activism, they can become catalysts for societal change. (Berila, 2016). In order to make progress in society and nurture more socially responsible communities, it is necessary to take a stand against accepting things as they are and be willing to step into the realm of discomfort and address inequalities (Berila, 2016). Societal

change will not occur if we remain complacent; advocating for equity, and intimately working with communities must take place. A shift towards acknowledging interconnectedness and working for the collective good is pertinent to achieving progress and is an idea that is shared by many dedicated to the work of social justice (Berila, 2016, 2016; Magee, 2018, 2019; Moore, 2018; Powell, 2012). Montessori discussed the importance of an individual's relational quality as well and wrote, "There is nothing in the world which plays no part in the universal economy, and if we are endowed with spiritual riches, with aesthetic feelings and a refined conscience, it is not for ourselves, but so that these gifts shall be used for the benefit of all, and take their place in the universal economy of the spiritual life" (Montessori, 1995, p. 140).

Viewpoint is influenced by the sense of reality and the biases, fears, and habits individuals carry (Aguilar, 2018). Mindfulness is a practice that enables us to shift deeply held perceptions and become better at the skill of critical thinking (Aguilar, 2018). Meditation is one example of a way to become more discerning and to deepen the consideration for humanity's shared collectivity, which is most effectively done through continued practice. Meditation is also a tool to investigate how we have been shaped by racial experience and works to move us beyond thinking and talking about race to sitting with how race and racism have formed us and the effect that has had on others as a result (Magee, 2019). Michelle McDonald, a mindfulness teacher, detailed the inquiry aspect of mindfulness into four different aspects: recognize, accept, investigate, and non-identity, which she called, RAIN (Magee, 2019). In regard to this inquiry process, Magee (2019) wrote, "it is through this practice of inquiring beneath the surface of our experience that we wake up, see more clearly, and develop insight into the true nature of things" (p. 103-104). Members of the LGBTQAI community may find support in the practice of

mindfulness because it can be an aid to extricating one's personal sense of experience from the false constructs that surround sexuality and gender, through the process of inquiry and by accessing a deeper layer of self (Berila, 2016). Mindfulness can provide an opportunity to challenge the status quo and has the potential to bring about healing for those who have been marginalized; however, its execution is an important consideration. A focus on community-engaged mindfulness and the acknowledgement of interconnectedness is a major factor in the unfolding of compassionate action (Magee, 2016).

Challenges and pitfalls of mindfulness

Much of the literature revealed ways in which mindfulness has been made separate from the principles of social justice and how infrequently mindfulness is used to explore the suffering of certain marginalized groups (e.g., Berila, 2016; Magee, 2016, 2018, 2019; Powell, 2012). Magee (2018) noted that the examination of mindfulness training centers, places of practice, and teacher inquiry would lay bare the lack of connection, importance, or even mention of social justice and its association with mindfulness. By exploring the emergence of mindfulness in the West, brought about by mostly white, upper class men who were followers of Buddhism, there is an opportunity for insight as to why this omission has been made and has resulted in the promotion of mindfulness as a tool to increase productivity and personal well-being (Magee, 2018). Magee (2018) stressed the importance of culture and context as necessary factors to consider when teaching mindfulness to marginalized groups of people. For example, when incorporating race and racism into a mindfulness practice, it is important to consider if the mainstream practice of mindfulness offers people of color the chance to contemplate what has made their experience unique and if there is an opportunity to explore the racial trauma carried

with them (Lyford, 2018). Other considerations include whether or not there is an opportunity to talk about race and if it is welcomed, if there is the chance to deepen understanding around identity and experience available, and if action is being taken to combat racism. (Magee, 2019). As a precaution to the potential pitfalls of mindfulness, Cannon (2016), explored the idea of incorporating a board of ethics and a national mindfulness association to ensure best practices are being met in the field of secular mindfulness, and as a way to address cultural competency and to make sure that critical founding principles, including interconnectedness, are not lost (Cannon, 2016).

Conclusion

The literature reviewed revealed the benefits of mindfulness through a teacher education for social justice lens. Not only can mindfulness be used as a tool for self-betterment, but most significantly, it is a practice where the value of the common good is placed above all else and is a way to foster community and relieve suffering (Magee, 2018). In an educational setting, schools can better serve their students and families by becoming more supportive, aware, and inclusive of the various needs of the community (Debs, 2019). However, it is essential to consider where mindfulness practices fall short and would require the implementation of a more expansive lens.

In order to take action and address inequities prevalent in society, and thus, the educational system, the literature points to the importance of a developing a self-reflective practice and incorporating an understanding of humanity's inherent interconnectedness as a means for progress (Berila, 2016, 2016; Magee, 2018, 2019; Powell, 2012). There is a need for

more research surrounding how Montessori educators can address social inequities through contemplative practices as there was limited research to be found following the impact of “community-engaged mindfulness” practices on educators. As a result, a self-study on the impact of a mindfulness practice centered around social inequities is needed.

Methodology

This self-study was conducted by using mindfulness practice as a tool to collect data on my self-efficacy as an educator. The purpose was to determine what effect a mindfulness practice, focused on social justice issues including equity, would have on my teacher self-efficacy. Social justice focused poetry, articles, and interviews were used to guide the practice of mindfulness which included breathwork, and both seated and walking meditation. The data tools in this study included: daily reflective journaling, a record of feelings before and after the mindfulness practice, a pre- and post-intervention survey, and an attitude scale.

The framework for this research was a self-study, making me the sole participant and researcher of this study. I was a recent graduate of an early childhood Montessori teacher training program and am of Hispanic identity. At the time of this action research study, I was working at a private Montessori school in a metropolitan area in the Northeastern United States. The classroom environment consisted of 20 children between the ages of 3-5-years-old. Out of the 20 students, six were children of color and 14 were white. However, due to the nature of this self-study, no data was collected on any of the children.

The execution of this study followed these steps: first, a pre-intervention survey was taken to begin the research process, next a mindfulness practice in the form of breathwork and

seated meditation took place each morning during the weekday for six weeks, and a record of feelings scale was taken each day directly before and after the mindfulness practice. Reflective journaling took place throughout the intervention upon returning home from school each evening, this was followed by filling out an attitude scale each night. At the culmination of the intervention, a post-intervention survey was completed.

A pre- and post-intervention survey were used to measure any shifts in the researcher's understanding of a mindfulness practice, with a social justice lens, and its potential as an effective and meaningful tool for greater self-efficacy. It consisted of eight questions which required the researcher to consider the role a social justice-oriented mindfulness practice could have on their performance in the workplace. This survey was taken a week before the researcher began collecting data and again at the end of the five-week study (See Appendix D).

A social justice-based mindfulness practice was the central tool used to incite change. The practice consisted of five to ten minutes of breathwork and seated meditation upon waking and took place on a daily basis during the school week, Monday through Friday, over the course of a six-week period. Walking meditation was practiced intermittently, when time allowed for it, during the walk to and from school and was used as a time to process the social justice-oriented content that was consumed that day. The amount of time dedicated to walking meditation was not measured. A record of feelings before and after the meditation practice was documented each day (see Appendix B). This record included a scale which went from 0 to 100, with 0 reflecting the meditation practice as having no impact on teacher self-efficacy as it related to issues of social justice, and 100 representing the practice making a significant impact.

The resources used as the framework for the meditation practice initially consisted of articles and interviews from podcasts on the topics of meditation, mindfulness, and social justice (see Appendix A). A week into the intervention process, poetry was introduced. This addition served to provide greater structure to the meditation practice by selecting poems that were topically relevant to social justice. Initially, poetry was chosen the day before or morning of the meditation practice. However, a reference list was compiled a few weeks into the study to easily and efficiently access poems (see Appendix A). Engagement with articles and interviews from podcasts happened on a daily basis during the hour-long commute to work on public transportation. Interviews were listened to in the mornings, after the meditation practice and during the researcher's commute to school, and articles were read at the end of the school day.

Reflective journaling took place in the evenings after each school day and consisted of several prompts to provide direction for the researcher (see Appendix E). At the start of the study, the prompts were found to be restrictive and, instead, journaling took place in an unstructured, open, and general manner for the remainder of the study.

An attitude scale was also used as a component to the research process. The scale consisted of four statements which intended to measure the researcher's feelings about the effectiveness of the intervention and was adapted from Albert Bandura's Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales (see Appendix C). The scale was filled out each weekday evening after completing the reflective journaling process. The options for the answers ranged from a strongly agree, to strongly disagree.

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to increase my teacher self-efficacy through heightened awareness of issues of social justice using meditation and mindfulness as the framework. While the data did not reveal significant growth on behalf of the educator, the study was highly meaningful, and a deeper understanding of the impact of social justice on teacher education evolved. Reflective journaling, a record of feelings before and after the meditation practice, a pre- and post-intervention survey, and a daily attitude scale were used to gather information on the impact of this study on my teacher self-efficacy.

Record of Feelings Scale

A record of feelings scale was taken daily before and after the mindfulness practice. The data collected from this was used to calculate the weekly average of my responses both before and after participation in the mindfulness practice. It is important to note that there was no change in my response during each individual day because the same number on the scale ended up being chosen both before and after the daily intervention, thus, differences only occurred on a week-by-week basis. Data from the first three weeks of the intervention reveal an upward trend in my degree of confidence which then dipped slightly during week four (see Figure 1). Only four days of data were collected during the fourth week of my intervention due to being sick. Additionally, I was preparing to travel for an out-of-state conference taking place the following week. Together, these two factors could have affected my confidence and motivation in the study due to fatigue and my attention potentially being elsewhere. Week five of the intervention received the highest degree of confidence rating with a weekly average of 70. However, I was only able to participate in collecting data for three out of the five days as a result of my school's observance of President's Day. The three days I participated in the study during week five were

followed by a professional development conference. Week six had the second highest weekly average with a rating of 66. Variables that required me to be out of the classroom or contributed to additional work requirements may have impacted my perceived self-efficacy.



Figure 1: Record of Feelings Before and After Mindfulness Practice Weekly average

Attitude Scale

An attitude scale was taken every day of the intervention over the course of the study. In order to analyze the data, I decided to tally my responses from each individual question over the course of the study. Each of the four questions from the scale included the option to mark a response ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. No “strongly disagree” responses were recorded. While the negative response, “disagree”, was consistently marked for the fourth question, the question was negative in nature, “A mindfulness practice grounded in social inequities is not impactful to my teacher self-efficacy.” Therefore, the negative response ended

up being a positive reflection. The option to mark “neutral” or “strongly disagree” as a response was never chosen, and question 4 was the only question with no variation in responses. Question 1, “I think that a mindfulness practice that focuses on social justice is a useful tool for improving my work as a teacher”, had the highest positive response, with my answer primarily being, “strongly agree,” while question 3, a more specific question, still consisted of a positive outlook, but had less of an enthusiastic response, with my answer primarily being, “agree.”

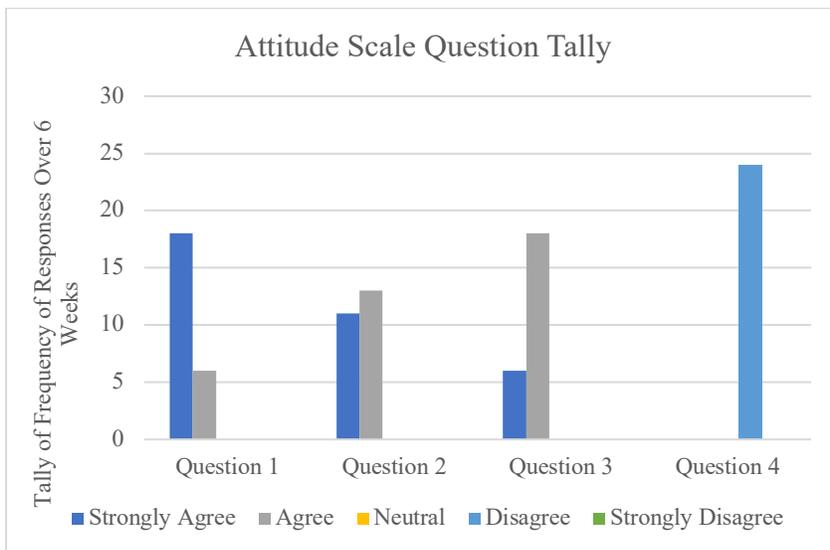


Figure 2: Attitude Scale Question Tally

Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey

Both a pre- and post-intervention survey were taken during this study. After analyzing and reflecting on the surveys at the culmination of the intervention process, a difference in tone stood out between the two. The pre-intervention survey response consisted of language that I labeled as more abstract, and the post intervention survey consisted of words that exemplified concrete ideas. I highlighted language from my responses and came up with five words that I

viewed as concrete and five words that expressed an abstract view. I then tallied the number of times these words showed up in the pre- and post-intervention survey.

In the pre-survey I indicated a significant amount of confidence in the potential for the study's effectiveness and expressed a desire to know how the research could be successful. I did not convey any conclusive statements about the potential for transformation and there was a significant level of uncertainty that was exhibited which was demonstrated by the repetition of the word "think." Upon completion of the study, I had more concrete ideas of what the next steps could be following this research. After the intervention my outlook was shaped by more concrete, action-oriented steps and, prior to the intervention, my mindset reflected more personal, abstract thoughts. My responses in the post intervention survey addressing the need for commitment and responsibility to take action are a reflection of this.

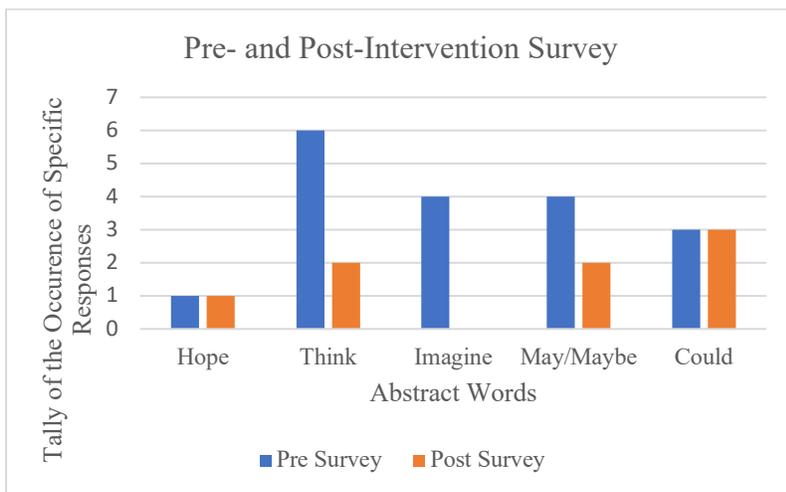


Figure 3: Abstract Word Usage in Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey

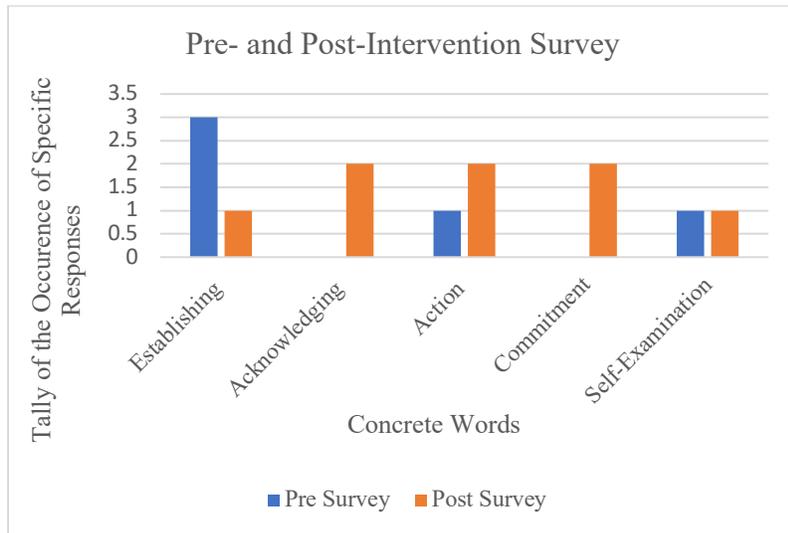


Figure 4: Concrete Word Usage in Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey

Reflective Journaling

Daily reflective journaling occurred each evening after returning home from work. A pattern emerged upon completion of the data collection process that included a series of self-prescribed questions during my time with the children while working in the classroom.

Throughout this study I became focused on my mannerisms while at school with particular focus on whether or not I was smiling enough throughout the day, the tone of my voice, the placement of my hands when speaking directly to the children, the acuteness of my listening skills, and how often I was practicing patience and kindness. Additionally, I often questioned the overall success of my work that day. The observation of this heightened sense of self-awareness was documented in the journaling process. In order to explore the emergence of this, I highlighted the number of times these questions appeared during the reflective journaling process. After labeling each question I counted the number of times they emerged.

Questions about my personal success were a common theme throughout this study. It was an issue I repeatedly reflected on both in the journaling process as well as in discussion with other individuals. My hand placement when speaking with children, especially during moments of redirection, was revealed to be a central point of focus. I was surprised that patience and deep listening skills were not documented more during reflective journaling since they were frequent reminders I gave myself throughout the intervention.

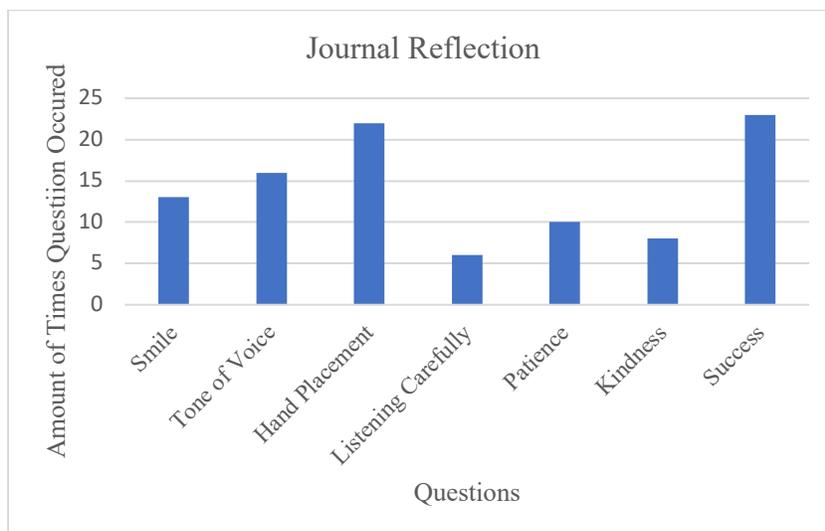


Figure 5: Occurrence of Questions Asked During Reflective Journaling

Action Plan

Review of Action Research

The purpose of my research was to increase my teacher-efficacy by expanding my awareness of social justice issues and inequities present in society through engagement in a daily social justice-oriented mindfulness practice. Through this research I reflected on the disparities present within my school setting, as well as in society at large, as a means to become a more

informed advocate for equitable change. In answer to my research question, “how will a mindfulness practice that examines social inequities impact my teacher self-efficacy”, I found this research to have a big impact on me, the sole researcher and participant in the study, both personally and professionally. Although this conclusion is not significantly reflected in my data, I have been transformed by the experience.

Significance of Findings

I began this study with the hope of deepening my understanding of how to shift schools to become loci of greater equity. It was my instinct that the first step in this process would be self-reflexive, so a mindfulness practice became the natural framework as this pursuit was already an interest of mine. From the beginning, I saw this research as a continuation of my lifelong learning as both a member of society and an educator. I did not have unrealistic expectations about the effect of the study and the individual change I would be able to make towards promoting progress in my school environment in such a short amount of time. My goals were to generate a greater awareness of justice, self-reflection, and my responsibility to take action. In many ways, the data reflects the reality that this would be a slow process since a substantial increase in my teacher self-efficacy was not achieved. While the attitude scales revealed that my optimism would be an effective tool in establishing some form of change, I am not sure the data was able to convey the depth of the impact of this study.

Impact of Research on Teaching Practices

Throughout this process, I became increasingly critical of my teaching practices and experienced a lowered sense of self-esteem. I frequently questioned if what I was doing was

good enough, or even impactful, and often felt that I was conducting the research incorrectly. However, I was simultaneously inspired by and learning from the content I was taking in and had a strong sense of diligence in the effort of this work. This aspect of the research became the most powerful part of the intervention for me. As the weeks progressed, I felt like I was able to witness my growth throughout the process, most notably in my heightened sense of self-awareness.

While I was constantly questioning my teaching practices, this discomfort served me and my students well by encouraging me to strive to continuously do better. Additionally, there were several unexpected consequences that I increasingly became aware of throughout the study. This included a close observation of the tone of my voice when speaking, the use of my hands when I was redirecting a child, and my mannerisms in general. All of these factors became a focus throughout this study. It became important to me to make sure I was speaking in a way that was welcoming to the children, that my hands were never touching my students bodies during moments of redirection, unless they were held out to be received as an offering, and I found that I encouraged myself to smile often. Throughout the mindfulness practice these were all interactions that I noticed could be improved upon and strengthened. If I failed to do these things, I would experience a sense of guilt, but made note to pay closer attention to adjusting these behaviors the following day. These discoveries were made during the reflective practices of the study and were side-effects that I could not have imagined would have become such a central point of interest throughout this process.

Future Action Research Investigation

While I found the reference materials to be highly valuable, in many ways they became the focus of this work rather than simply a tool for deepening my awareness of concepts in social justice. Additionally, while I appreciated that the material was not solely specific to the work of social justice in a school environment, I would have found it useful to have incorporated more resources on the topic of equity in the educational system. Perhaps my data would have been more substantially impacted if I would have included more references on creating equity in schools while interacting with life in the classroom on a daily basis. The incorporation of poetry during this practice was a profound experience for me and one that I would like to explore more. This would include coming up with ways to navigate social inequity through the use of poetry. The poems I read helped me to shift into my mindfulness practice with greater ease and did not take the same time commitment as listening to interviews and reading articles which made it very accessible.

Having a personal mindfulness practice worked well for my self-efficacy, but I think it would have been useful to have participated in a community activity that addressed social justice, equity, or cultural competence in one way or another as a means for inspiration, motivation, and community-building. This could have been in the form of attending a weekly or monthly workshop as a way to encourage greater action and responsibility on my behalf outside of simply practicing mindfulness and self-reflection. While the intervention resulted in a deeper understanding of social inequities and a heightened sense of self-reflection, as I move forward, I would like to work on my ability to navigate cultural competency so that I am prepared to have conversations with parents, children, and the community with as much grace as possible.

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Appendix A

Schedule of Engagement with Mindfulness and Social Justice Related Content

Date	Content	Source
1/23/20	Interview: The Spiritual Work of Black Lives Matter, Patrisse Cullors and Robert Ross	On Being
1/24/20	Interview: Opening to the Question of Belonging, john a. powell	On Being
1/27/20	Interview: Community Organizing as a Spiritual Practice, Rami Nashashibi and Lucas Johnson	On Being
1/28/20	Interview: Let's Talk About Whiteness, Eula Biss	On Being
1/29/20	Interview: How the Systemic Segregation of Schools Is Maintained By 'Individual Choices', Nikole Hannah-Jones	Fresh Air
1/30/20	Interview: Self-Reflection and Social Evolution, Darnell Moore	On Being
1/31/20	Interview: The World Is Our Field of Practice, angel Kyodo williams	On Being
2/3/20	Interview: Imagining a New America, Ta-Nehisi Coates Poem: Ghazal, After Ferguson by Yusef Komunyakaa	On Being Poetry Foundation
2/4/20	Interview: Yoga, Meditation in Action, Seane Corn Poem: Praise the Rain by Joy Harjo	On Being Poetry Foundation
2/5/20	Interview: What We Nurture, Sylvia Boorstein Poem: Toy Boat by Ocean Vuong	On Being Poetry Foundation
2/6/20	Book: Notes from No Man's Land: American Essays Poem: A Small Needful Fact by Ross Gay	Book by Eula Biss Poets.org
2/7/20	Book: Notes from No Man's Land: American Essays Poem: alternate names for black boys by Danez Smith	Book by Eula Biss Poetry Foundation

2/10/20	Book: Notes from No Man's Land: American Essays Poem: dear white America by Danez Smith	Book by Eula Biss Poetry Foundation
2/11/20	Interview, The Evolutionary Power of Children and Teenagers, Alison Gopnik Interview, How Trauma Lodges in the Body, Bessel van der Kolk Poem: The Devil's Workshop by Yusef Komunyakaa	On Being On Being Poetry Foundation
2/13/20	Interview: Happiness as Human Flourishing, Matthieu Richard Poem: The 17-Year-Old & the Gay Bar by Danez Smith	On Being Poetry Foundation
2/14/20	Interview: Being Peace in a World of Trauma, Thich Nhat Hanh, Cheri Maples, and Larry Ward Poem: ICE Agents Storm My Porch by Maria Melendez Kelson	On Being Poetry Foundation
2/19/20	Interview: The Conversational Nature of Reality, David Whyte Poem: Legacies by Nikki Giovanni	On Being Poetry Foundation
2/20/20	Interview: Science of Mindlessness and Mindfulness, Ellen Langer Poem: What You Missed That Day You Were Absent from Fourth Grade by Brad Aaron Modlin	On Being Poetry Unbound
2/21/20	Interview: How Can I Say This So We Can Stay In This Car Together, Claudia Rankine Poem: An Old Story by Tracy K. Smith	On Being Poetry Foundation
2/24/20	Interview: The War On Muslims with Mehdi Hasan Poem: On Listening to Your Teacher Take Attendance by Aimee Nezhukumatathil	The Ezra Klein Show Poetry Unbound

2/25/20	Interview: Love in Action, John Lewis	On Being
	Poem: Love, I'm Done with You by Ross Gay	Poetry Foundation
2/26/20	Interview: How to Be Spiritually Bold, Simone Campbell	On Being
	Poem: An American Sunrise by Joy Harjo	Poetry Foundation
2/27/20	Interview: Meeting Our Enemies and Our Suffering, Sharon Salzberg and Robert Thurman	On Being
	Poem: Exiles by Juan Felipe Herrera	Poetry Foundation
2/28/20	Interview: Is America Possible, Vincent Harding	On Being
	Poem: Borderbus by Juan Felipe Herrera	Poetry Foundation

Appendix B

Record of feelings before and after mindfulness practice

Today, I feel like my meditation practice is having a positive effect on my teacher self-efficacy as it relates to issues of social justice.

My degree of confidence is rated by recording a number from 0 to 100 using the scale below:

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Is not					Moderately					Making
making					making					a significant
an impact					an impact					impact

Prompt

-Today, how did my mindfulness practice impact my understanding of social inequities and my teacher self-efficacy, if at all?

Appendix C
Attitude Scale

1. I think that a mindfulness practice that focuses on social justice is a useful tool for improving my work as a teacher.

strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

2. I am growing as an individual and as an educator by practicing mindfulness through a social justice lens.

strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

3. I am increasing my awareness of the impact of social inequities and the result this can have in a school environment.

strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

4. A mindfulness practice grounded in social inequities is not impactful to my teacher self-efficacy.

strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

Adapted from Albert Bandura's Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales

Appendix D

Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey

1. What is mindfulness through a social justice lens?
2. Is this practice effective in promoting teacher self-efficacy?
3. Does this contribute to the integrity of your work?
4. With what frequency and duration should social justice mindfulness be practiced in order to be influential?
5. What support systems need to be in place, if any, in order to engage with this type of practice?
6. What effect could this have on your work professionally?
7. What impact could this have on your students, parents, or coworkers?
8. How could this practice further your connection with others or take away from it?

Appendix E
Reflective Journaling

Prompts

1. How will I deepen my ability to understand how differently racialized people experience the world in various contexts? How will I keep up this effort?
2. What comes up for me when I learn about a painful aspect of history? What can I do today to disrupt my habits and conditionings around what I've learned?
3. What impact of social inequity did I experience today?

Questions 1 and 2 come from *The Inner Work of Racial Justice*.

Magee, R. V. (2019). *The inner work of racial justice: Healing ourselves and transforming our communities through mindfulness*. New York: NY: TarcherPerigee Books.