Mindfulness SIG report 29th April 2016

Our Guest
Thanks to those of you who spent some time with Barbara Marchi, who was visiting us from Bologna University to look into mindfulness and education and the SWAPv and SIG structures and for welcoming her at our last meeting. I know she very much valued her time with Nikki, both in an academic and in social sense, also with Lynda and she was I think able to observe an MBSR session with Lynda’s students. She also caught up with Catherine Johnson about her mindfulness research. She attended the Mindfulness masters intensive. Barbara has been connecting via email with Kerrilee Beaumont, our SIG ‘friend’ in Cairns around mindfulness in schools. I think all in all Barbara has had quite a range of experiences while she has been here including visiting a primary school that is endeavouring to bring an aspect of mindfulness to their work with children. Barbara has mentioned that one of the best parts of the trip for her has been the opportunity to share her singing bowls with people, such as in our lunchtime seminar, in the mindfulness masters intensive and with Kristin and Antonella and her students from Italian in Humanities. She has been very impressed with the way our university is so open to such experiences and discussion in a scholarly yet friendly atmosphere. Sixteen people will be attending a dinner at the Himalayan Kitchen to say goodbye to Barbara who leaves Australia tomorrow morning.

New research
Catherine Johnson has kindly shared her new publications Effectiveness of a school-based mindfulness program for trans-diagnostic prevention in young adolescents (Catherine Johnson, Christine Burke, Sally Brinkman, Tracey Wade. 16th March 2016) (see page 4 of this document) and Development and validation of a multi factor mindfulness scale in youth the comprehensive inventory of mindfulness experiences- adolescents (CHIME_A) (Catherine Johnson, Christine Burke, Sally Brinkman, PhD, Tracey Wade, PhD.) (see page 15 of this document).

New SIG Member
I would like to welcome a new member Dr Jessie Gunson who teaches Sociology in the Faculty of Health Sciences. She has wide ranging research interests and is particularly interested in beginning to explore the notion of ‘slow scholarship’ which I think is a wonderful turn of phrase! I think a couple of you may already know Jessie and I know she will be a wonderful addition to our group!

Intellectual hospitality – discussion and sharing
The notion of slow scholarship aligns rather beautifully with the expression ‘intellectual hospitality’ which my colleagues in Sociology- Grant Banfield, and Leadership- Bev Rogers and I have been discussing. We are going to be reading a book by the sociologist Zizek on subjectivity- ‘a ticklish subject’! And sharing our thoughts, the forum for which is not yet quite decided. This could be another lunchtime seminar perhaps. Zizek writes very interestingly on Buddhism, mindfulness and the self: http://bigthink.com/postcards-from-zizek/slavoj-zizek-on-buddhism-and-the-self and as a Western Marxist is calling for a return to soul in intellectual life.

Workshop at Flinders In the City
The workshop ‘From mindfulness to presence’ at Flinders in the City was well received with 30 attendees. A number of people said it really made them think about their assumptions about mindfulness and that it opened them up to new ways of thinking. It was wonderful to work with people from so many different disciplines and roles. Thanks so much to Kristin for helping with registration and general backup and support, it was very much appreciated, including those nice big glasses of spring water that appeared as if my magic by my side! Thanks also to Ally for being a ‘guinea pig’ in modelling the phenomenological elicitation interviewing technique with me in front of the group. I think she did extremely well! People seemed to really value the experience of elicitation
interviewing in pairs and were amazed at how differently different people could experience the same dome drum meditation.

I have had some follow up written feedback today about how valuable the sensing/awareness exercises were, and how useful the enneagram quiz was which considers the three centres (Gurdjieff Steiner) head, heart, body. One participant was quite struck by how she got all ‘heart’ results and she has become suddenly aware of how intensely she feels things and is tossed around by them. She has done lots of mindfulness before but is now wondering if she was just internalising that emotional intensity and using her mind/will to keep herself ‘together rather than consciously refining, harmonising and balancing it which is the aim of ‘conscious mindfulness’ of the three centres. I will attach the quiz and scoring instructions if you are interested (see page 67 of this document). It is from a book by Janet Levine on the enneagram for educators, and who has a website and a quiz for parents as well. I find it really creates a context for holistic inner exploration. I love this quote:


Thanks so much also to Ally for the photo of the mandala the group made.

(My mindfulness masters students also made a wonderful mandala in the dirt, outside room 2.07 in the Education Building- what a transformation! That intensive also went very well and a highlight for me was the in depth conversation about the notion of ‘self/no- self’ in relation to mindfulness with students from India, Singapore, Malaysia, Bhutan Italy, Lebanon as well as us locals making contributions from Hindu, Theravaden Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist, Christian and Muslim perspectives!)
Links to the work of a colleague working in philosophy and contemplative education at UNSW

Our other SIG ‘friend’ Dan Huston recently connected us with Dr Patricia Morgan, a researcher from UNSW who posted the message I have cut and pasted below that I have included for your interest. We have had a number of emails, mostly about first person and qualitative methodologies. She has been working in the area of contemplative education, and in her interdisciplinary PhD she engaged a combination of Phenomenology and Classical Yoga Philosophy to question what it was about experience of the contemplative state of consciousness that brought about the benefits attributed to it by neuroscience and psychology. She recently put together the following website www.thecontemplativeacademy.com. Her specific area of interest is working to understand first-person experience, particularly what she terms ‘feeling languages’ that people use to describe first-person experience gained through contemplative practice. She is currently writing a literature review on the adverse effects of contemplative practice for the role she has with a project called the ‘Heart of Health’ which is bringing meditation to nurses in some of the big hospitals in Sydney.

I am thinking that our next step could be a small conference for next year given our continuing, expanding interests, connections, links. The Flinders in the City site works very well and with onsite catering available and lots of good cafes handy as well. We could apply for some funding and see if we can bring over a guest speaker depending on availability. We can discuss this at our next meeting, in late June.

June events- talks

- Prideaux Research Centre, Friday 3rd June, 9-11: *Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold* (Yeats). *Exploring the role of ‘conscious mindfulness’ in developing a strong centre to support our work in the caring professions*. Many people attracted to the therapeutic professions may well be gifted in their capacity for empathy and compassion. However they need to exercise their care and compassion for the suffering of others from a place of being well grounded and centred in their own identity to safely and healthily navigate their complex roles. This session will report on recent phenomenological research with health and education including higher education teachers practitioners and students. Invited presentation by Leigh Burrows

- Mindfulness SIG seminar series Wednesday 8th June 12.2–1.30, Education Building, Room 5.34: *Mysticism in the Modern Age*– to be presented by Marja van Breda

- Mindfulness SIG meeting 30th June 9.30. Venue to be confirmed.