Mindfulness is defined as non-judgmental awareness in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). It stems from ancient Theravada Buddhist philosophy and Indian yoga traditions of samaadhi as a means of gaining personal insight into the meaning of life, the true nature of existence and to achieve long-lasting happiness. There are two primary aspects to mindfulness: the first is attention to one's immediate experience and the second is an orientation to approaching life experiences with a sense of curiosity, acceptance and openness (Baer, 2003). Mindfulness is cultivated through meditative practices that focus on attention regulation (sustained attention to internal and external stimuli such as smells, sounds, feelings and emotions), bodily awareness and non-reactivity to inner experiences (allowing thoughts and emotions to come and go without being caught up with them) (Baer, 2003; Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). Mindfulness encompasses a variety of practices such as meditation, visualizing, focused thought, deep breathing, nature connectedness and artistic self-expression that are unified in their application of critical first-person attention, focus and intention to the present moment. Existing research demonstrates that mindfulness promotes well-being, stimulates positive emotions and lowers stress-related symptoms such as anxiety, pain, substance abuse and depression (Baer, 2003; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010).

When applied to educational settings, mindfulness practices can serve as a useful tool for adaptive coping for students to build academic buoyancy. In particular, first-year college students face
developmental and transitional challenges as emerging adults, such as learning to make and maintain new relationships, managing finances independently, prioritizing among various personal, social and academic demands and developing a personalized plan for career success in a new environment (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Maladaptive coping to psychosocial stressors posed by multiple demands on college students often leads to unhealthy consequences (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). Not surprisingly, a national health survey finds that most college students in the US feel overwhelmed, hopeless, anxious and depressed (American College Health Association, 2014). Several researchers have called for the integration and inclusion of mindfulness as a stress-reducing tool for college students for adaptive coping, academic buoyancy and resilience (Mrazek, Franklin, Phillips, Baird, & Schooler, 2013; Song & Muschert, 2014; Tan & Martin, 2012). For instance, Tan and Martin (2012) find that mindfulness increases resiliency and self-esteem among healthy adolescents. Other scholars have demonstrated the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions among non-clinical adolescent populations in alleviating psychological symptoms (for example, anxiety and depression) and improving general functioning (quality of life), and mindfulness awareness (see Zoogman, Goldberg, Hoyt, & Miller, 2014).

Mindfulness training has been adopted across a variety of disciplines such as neuroscience, psychology, medicine, nursing, management and business (Ball, Foust, & Rochester, 2014; Kearney et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2012). However, it is still a relatively new concept within the field of communication. Huston, Garland and Farb (2011) have examined mindfulness in classroom contexts using an experiment to study college students’ use of positive reappraisal and self-restraint in stressful communication situations. The present study takes a process-oriented approach that applies positive psychology and the broaden-and-build theory to understand the underlying mechanisms by which mindfulness communication leads to adaptive stress coping among youth in a first-year seminar setting. In this exploratory study, we combine qualitative journaling with an experimental design to tap into the nuances of transformative learning using rich subjective experiential methods.

**Psychosocial stress and adaptive coping among emerging adults**

Key developmental tasks for emerging adults in university settings include negotiating and establishing independence or autonomy in their personal, social and academic lives (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Many college students either move away from or spend less time with their family and friends from high school. At the same time, college students often need to establish new peer and sometimes romantic relationships while forming their identities as young adults by discovering their own interests and preferences. On top of these social–emotional developmental tasks, college students need to balance their social demands with their academic demands because college coursework is often significantly more rigorous than what students managed in high school. The confluence of personal, social and academic demands and pressures associated with transition to college often results in stress and anxiety for students (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). In fact, college students report high levels of stress that often negatively impact their academic performance and place them at risk for stress-related physical and mental health problems (DeBerard et al., 2004). Common adjustment problems associated with stress among college students include anxiety and depression along with maladaptive coping behaviours such as binge drinking and substance use (Rawson, Bloomer, & Kendall, 1994; Schulenberg & Maggs, 2002).

While all college students experience stress in their personal, social and academic lives, they vary in the levels and types of stress experienced as well as in how they respond to or cope with stress. Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, and Wadsworth (2001) view coping as requiring self-regulatory processes, and defined coping as ‘conscious volitional efforts to regulate emotion, cognition, behaviour, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful events or circumstances’ (p. 89). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) view coping as a process that could be categorized into two broad types of coping, problem-focused (e.g. task-oriented coping) and emotion-focused (e.g. emotional coping and avoidance coping). Within emotion-focused coping, we find two types of emotional behaviours: one
being active emotional (e.g. venting) and the other being avoidant emotional (e.g. denial). Research tends to suggest that problem-focused or task-oriented coping leads to adaptive outcomes, but emotion-focused (including avoidance) coping also leads to adaptive outcomes in certain circumstances, particularly when the person has little or no control over the stressor.

Furthermore, positive emotions have been found to have restorative functions with respect to physiological, psychological and social coping resources and can lead to a third type of coping called meaning-focused coping (Folkman, 2008; Fredrickson, 2004). Meaning-focused coping is a form of appraisal-based coping, and includes drawing on beliefs (e.g. religious, spiritual or philosophical), values and existential goals to motivate and sustain coping and to maintain or generate positive emotions and mental and physical well-being during a difficult time. In general, the use of multiple coping strategies and approaches tends to be more adaptive than relying on any single type of coping (Folkman, 2008; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Because coping involves self-regulation and conscious volitional efforts, individuals who are mindful and attuned to themselves and their environments are likely better able to make accurate appraisals and respond adaptively under stress than those who are unconscious and reactive.

**Mindfulness, academic buoyancy and everyday resilience**

Academic buoyancy is defined as students’ ability to cope with academic setbacks and challenges typically associated with ordinary life as a student such as test anxiety, management of competing priorities and academic performance (Martin, 2013; Martin & Marsh, 2008). It is similar to the concept of everyday resilience, which is the ability to deal with low-level negative stressors of everyday life rather than the capacity to respond positively to acute and traumatic life-changing crises. Building capacity for academic buoyancy positions students in a better place to cope with acute academic adversity. Mindfulness practices can help increase academic buoyancy and everyday resilience to stressors in academic contexts.

Stress reduction programmes often incorporate body scan, sitting meditation and yoga practice as techniques to cultivate mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Kemeny et al., 2012). Body scan is a technique of directing attention through the entire body from head to toes to become aware of the sensation or feeling in the body and to use breath awareness to relax particular body regions. Sitting meditation focuses on the use of attention and deep breathing to achieve a state of non-judgmental awareness and relaxation. Yoga practice consists of breathing exercises, stretches, poses and postures designed to strengthen, balance and relax the body. Collectively, these types of contemplative practices have been incorporated into stress-reduction programmes and psychosocial interventions with demonstrated psychological and health benefits, including reductions in anxiety (Kemeny et al., 2012).

Researchers have called for mindfulness practices to be integrated into schools to help students cultivate conscious and volitional forms of motivation and self-regulated learning (Roeser & Peck, 2009). In a series of studies with university undergraduate students, Weinstein, Brown, and Ryan (2009) found that mindfulness predicted adaptive stress appraisals which then predicted emotional well-being. Their results also suggest that the higher emotional well-being of more mindful individuals may be due to their appraising future stressors in non-threatening ways and their lesser use of avoidant coping strategies. In a different study with first-year university students, Palmer and Rodger (2009) found that students with low level of mindfulness perceived greater stress than those with moderate or high levels of mindfulness. In addition, mindfulness was positively associated with adaptive coping but negatively associated with maladaptive coping. While these studies suggest that individual differences in mindfulness are linked to stress appraisal, coping and health or well-being, mindfulness is something that can be learned and improved through training or intervention. In a meta-analysis, Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, and Walach (2004) found that stress reduction programmes based in contemplative techniques such as meditation and mindfulness were effective in helping a broad range of people to cope with their clinical and non-clinical problems.
**Positive emotions, broaden-and-build theory and flourishing**

Emotions such as joy, gratitude, compassion, and contentment can have long-term benefits in mitigating the negative psychological and physiological effects of everyday stress while enhancing creativity, increasing resilience and improving health. From a positive psychology perspective, flourishing has been defined as living ‘within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience’ (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; p. 678). According to the broaden-and-build theory proposed by Fredrickson (2001, 2004), positive emotions broaden thought-action repertoires that serve as personal resources. The ‘undo hypothesis' proposes that positive emotions such as joy and contentment can correct or repair the damaging effects of negative emotions such as fear and anger on both mind and body (Fredrickson, 2004). Similarly, positive emotions from a psychological relaxation perspective are further divided into relaxation (restfulness, sleepiness), positive energy (optimism, joy), awareness (flow, silence) and transcendence (wonder, awe) (Smith, 2007).

Meditation and other contemplative practices can enhance relaxation and positive emotions (Amutio et al., 2015; Kearney et al., 2014). For instance, Amutio and colleagues (2014) find that physicians exposed to mindfulness meditation report increase in relaxation, awareness and in positive energy dimensions such as optimism, confidence and inner strength. Positive affect is able to reduce perceptions of pain intensity, lessen physical distress and reduce physical and mental health risks in clinical and non-clinical settings (Amutio et al., 2015; Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). In this study, we explore the role of mindfulness in transforming negative emotional states to more positive ones to help deal more effectively with everyday stressors.

Using mindfulness techniques such as breathing exercises, guided meditation, progressive relaxation, journaling, visualization and self-awareness, students learn lifelong skills to take personal and social responsibility for their health, happiness and success while also being compassionate, empathetic and inclusive of others.

Increased positive emotions can lead to the creative urge to explore and take in new experiences (Fredrickson, 2001), which can be used in innovative ways to approach communication problems, research and theories. Reduced anxiety can help in public speaking, presentation skills and interpersonal communication contexts (Hunter, Westwick, & Haleta, 2014). Heightened listening skills are relevant in small group communication and in developing interviewing skills. Positive emotions such as pride, joy and elevation can lead to more self-awareness and connectedness, creating a greater appreciation for diversity, intersectional identities and ethical reasoning in intergroup communication contexts.

The goals of the present study were to explore the usefulness of a mindfulness communication course in increasing positive emotions and reducing everyday perceived stress for first-year college students. Specifically, our research questions were:

- RQ 1: How do first-year students describe and assess their experiences with mindfulness?
- RQ 2: Does mindfulness training help first-year students cope better with everyday stressors?

**Method**

Prior studies that have examined mindfulness in classroom contexts have typically used qualitative open-ended questions (Song & Muschert, 2014) or conducted lab-based experiments (Lueke & Gibson, 2014). For instance, Song and Muschert (2014) analyse data from single-sentence summaries in their introductory sociology course with 40 students that does not include a control group or pre-test measures. In contrast, Huston et al. (2011) use a purely quantitative approach using a pre-test and post-test experiment with a mindfulness condition with 20 students and a control condition of 24 students. To leverage on the benefits of both these approaches, the present study uses a mixed methods design that includes qualitative journaling and a quantitative experiment. The study was conducted in a large southern public university after obtaining IRB approval.
**Mindfulness course**

Unlike prior research that typically incorporated mindfulness or meditation practices in a single lab session (Hafenbrack, Kinias, & Barsade, 2014; Lueke & Gibson, 2014) or for 5–10 min for a few weeks of a semester (Huston et al., 2011; Song & Muschert, 2014), students in the present study participated in a 14-week semester-long one credit freshman seminar on mindful communication that incorporated mindfulness into all aspects of the course. Students engaged in critical thinking about mindfulness through three main areas: physical, mental and emotional/social well-being. Using various learning methods such as self-reflexivity, small group discussion, journaling and experiential activities, students recognized practiced habits and patterns that affected their lifelong learning and relationships. Students were provided various tools and resources to support their wellness and manage stress associated with academics and other aspects of college living. It was also emphasized that such skills would not only help inside the classroom, but also beyond it and throughout one's life, especially while undergoing transitions.

This one credit course was 14 weeks long, meeting once a week for 40 min. It was co-taught by two instructors: a scholar who specializes in mindful communication and positive media psychology, and, an expert on contemplative practices who runs her own wellness centre that offers short courses as well as consultations. Both instructors are seasoned teachers and have had a personal contemplation practice for over a decade. They took turns to teach the lessons and co-created the lesson plans and assignments based on existing curricula on mindfulness. Since there was no set curriculum for mindfulness communication for a freshman audience, they adapted exercises from published work on positive psychology, yoga and meditation to create a course packet. The first unit focused on physical well-being. In this unit, participants learned about communicating with one's body, listening to the body, mindful consumption, stress triggers, adaptive and maladaptive stress and physiological responses to stress. The mindful consumption of food as well as media in everyday contexts as a positive tool for personal growth and community transformation was also emphasized. In the second unit, the focus was on mental well-being. Here, topics were less about the physical body and more about the mind. It included topics such as flow theory, anxiety management, memory, concentration, contemplation and relaxation within communicative contexts. In the final unit, which focused on emotional and social well-being, the emphasis was on exploring mindfulness in interpersonal and intergroup communication contexts by focusing on civic engagement, positive human values, inspirational role models, other-focused emotions such as forgiveness and gratitude, mindful decision-making, leadership, meaningful relationships and community connections.

Every class period typically began with about 10 min of a mindfulness practice such as deep breathing, progressive relaxation, visualization or guided meditation. The instructors, who are experienced mindfulness practitioners, first spent a few minutes explaining the practice, demonstrating it and then guiding it. Following this session, the rest of the class period was spent on discussing the topic of the week, working on an in-class assignment with a partner and sharing feedback about previous week's homework. The last few minutes of class were devoted to discussing the assignments assigned for the following week. Participants were assessed on their in-class assignments, homework assignments, mid-term exam, final group presentation and class participation. The bulk of the learning took place through journaling, reflective writing and self-assessment forms handed out as homework assignments by the instructors. A field visit was organized to a wellness centre for a drop-in class on yoga and meditation for one week. The mid-term exam was a take-home essay. The final group project helped students to synthesize and integrate all the materials taught in the course.

**Qualitative journaling**

To better understand the nuances of the specific contexts and individual subjective experiences with the mindfulness practices, we used a qualitative journaling assignment. This exercise allowed for the researchers to learn about the particular stressors in the lives of the students, the positive and negative
emotions that they experienced and also the ways in which the practice helped cope with the stressors. For one week during the course, midway through the semester, students in the mindfulness course were asked to keep a detailed journal of their mindfulness practices. They were provided with three mindfulness podcasts: (1) sleep meditation, (2) quiet mind and (3) simple relaxation. These three podcasts were first introduced in the classroom and students had the opportunity to practice them with assistance from the instructors. For the home assignment, these podcasts were made available online and could be easily accessed through our course website, email or mobile devices at the convenience of the students.

Students were asked to write about their experiences relating to the mindfulness practice exercises every day for a one-week period four times during the semester. In order to get a sense of the transformative nature of mindfulness practices, students wrote about their mental/emotional state before and after the mindfulness practices. Specifically, they completed open-ended questions about when and where they practiced apart from their subjective assessment of their feelings and thoughts. The qualitative journal entries were then analysed using thematic analysis method (Boyatzis, 1998). Inductive codes were generated from the researcher’s reading of the journal entries and from the key principles of the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004) and the psychological relaxation perspective (Smith, 2007). These codes then served as labels for specific sub-sections of the qualitative findings. Whereas, the pre-test post-test experimental design administered at the beginning and end of the course focused on collecting overall long-term benefits of the mindfulness course, the qualitative journaling exercises helped to understand the nuances of mood changes and positive emotions evoked in the short-term based on mindfulness practice exercises.

**Experimental design**

A two-group pre-test post-test experimental design was used to assess the effectiveness of the mindfulness curriculum on students’ coping strategies. The treatment group consisted of students in the mindfulness communication freshman seminar. The control condition consisted of students enrolled in a standard introductory communication course taught by the same instructor. Both courses included regular class lectures, small group discussions, in-class exercises, homework and exams. The pre-test and post-test questionnaires, administered in both groups during the first and last weeks of the semester, helped control for within group differences.

Students in both the treatment and control groups were invited to participate voluntarily for extra credit and had the option of completing a two-page article critique where they wrote a theoretical and methodological critique of a journal article on communication as an alternative assignment. They were handed the paper-and-pencil printed questionnaires during class hours by a researcher other than their instructors and completed them at home at their convenience within a one-week period several times during the semester as homework. These journal entries were guided each week to be on the topics discussed in class. Specifically, they were on mindful eating, stress triggers, breathing practice experiences, meditation/contemplation experiences, flow theory, gratitude experiences and positive thinking. They were free to skip those questions that they were not willing or able to answer.

The total sample size was 53, with a response rate of 85.4% for the completed data. Of the 19 students in the mindfulness communication course, 18 completed both pre-test and post-test questionnaires. Of the 43 students in the control condition, 35 completed both pre-test and post-test questionnaires. Ten identified as women and 41 as men. There were no significant gender differences between the groups; $\chi^2 = 1.354; df = 1; p = n.s$. The average age was 19.80 years ($SD = 1.27$). Those in the freshman seminar for mindfulness communication course were significantly younger in age ($M = 18.12; SD = 0.332$) than those in the control condition ($M = 20.54; SD = .682$); $F(1, 54) = 192.56; p < 0.001$ that enrolled students at all levels. The race/ethnicity of the students was not measured.
Measures

The questionnaires were identical for pre-and post-intervention stages of the experimental design and included the following measures apart from demographic information:

Everyday stress

The 10-item ‘Perceived Stress Scale’ was used as a global indicator of participants’ self-reported perceived levels of everyday stress (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). The questions in this scale focused on feelings and thoughts of the participants in the previous month to indicate how often they felt or thought this way; \( M = 3.88; SD = 1.17; \) Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .88 \). The respondents picked from Likert-type answer options ranging from 1 – Never to 7 – Very Often. Some sample questions were, ‘In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?’ ‘In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?’ and ‘In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?’ (reverse-coded).

Resilience and coping

Resilience and stress coping was measured using the ‘Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS)’. This is a 20-item inventory is a shortened version of the original 48-item instrument and measures participants’ differing ways of coping with stressful situations in their lives (Endler & Parker, 1990). One item: ‘take some time off and get away from the situation’ was there in the shortened version of the scale but was excluded from our study as it was recommended that it not be used for samples consisting of young adults. The remaining items were further divided into three types of coping: avoidance coping, task-oriented coping and emotion-oriented coping. Avoidance coping includes items such as ‘buy myself something’ and ‘phone a friend’; \( M = 4.57; SD = 1.06; \) Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .69 \). Task-oriented coping includes items such as ‘focus on the problem and see how I can solve it’ and ‘determine a course of action and follow it’; \( M = 5.04; SD = .86; \) Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .80 \). Emotion-oriented coping includes items such as ‘I blame myself for being too emotional about the situation’ and ‘I focus on my general inadequacies’; \( M = 4.14; SD = 1.30; \) Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .82 \).

Findings

Qualitative journaling findings

All participants reported having tried all three types of mindfulness exercises (Sleep Meditation, Quiet Mind and Simple Relaxation) through the week at home, in the library or at the student centre either just after waking up, while taking breaks between classes on campus or just before going to bed. The journal entries were divided into those entered before the mindfulness practice and those entered at the end of the practice session. These qualitative journal entries provided insights on how their moods and emotional states were transformed in the short term by the mindfulness practices. Their responses are grouped by various themes that came up during our analyses.

Fatigued and restless

Students frequently used the words ‘tired’, ‘exhausted’ and ‘weary’ in their entries written before the mindfulness practice. Some of them had trouble falling asleep. Even though they were tired, they sometimes could not settle down. For instance, one participant reported: I feel ready and excited because I am tired and another that I feel tired. Many of them wrote about sleep-deprivation and difficulties in falling asleep: I was feeling a bit tired from the night before, I didn’t get enough sleep, … just tired from not sleeping well and trying to go to bed at a decent hour every day it was kinda hard to make myself sleep. Some journal entries were about difficulty in focusing their mind and paying attention. Examples of such notes included: Mind boggled; a little restless, my mind was wondering (sic) scatter-brained and I had a lot on my mind.
Anxious and stressed
Students also reported feeling anxious and stressed. For instance, test anxiety was often mentioned as a stressor, especially before tests and upon receiving grades. For example, a student mentioned: *It felt horrible because I had a test at 8 am the next day and I was freaking out*, while another wrote: *My mind was overwhelmed. I just found out one of my exam grades*. A third student commented: *I feel a little antsy*. Anxiety left some students in fear: *Stressed and dreading the next class*. Students used words like ‘uptight’ and ‘tense’ often in their journals to describe their state before the mindfulness practice.

Overwhelmed
A related theme to anxiety was that of feeling overwhelmed by all the things that the students needed to get done within a specific deadline. Most of them wrote about being overwhelmed by academic work, especially homework, but some also touched upon having to manage work–life balance. For instance, one student wrote down: *I felt really overwhelmed by everything I had to do* while another said, *Stressed b/cuz [sic] I had work to do if I wanted to enjoy my weekend.*

No change
Occasionally, students also reported feeling calm, peaceful and relaxed before the mindfulness practice. Others reported no change: *No outstanding feelings that I noticed, just normal*. Positive feelings such as happiness and good cheer were also mentioned although these were quite rare compared to the negative emotions expressed.

In analysing the emotions experienced after the mindfulness practices, it was evident that mindfulness helped undo the negative effects of unpleasant emotions such as anxiety to more positive pleasant emotions.

Relaxed
Many students noted feeling calm, composed and relaxed after experiencing the mindfulness practices. They expressed both physical and mental relaxation such as: *My body felt loose and relaxed in a good way*, *My mind was a little more relaxed and calm than minutes before and I felt at peace with my body, it's a really nice feeling*. Students used words like ‘tranquil’, ‘peaceful’ and ‘calm’ to describe their experiences.

Focused
Rather than having a scattered mind with many thoughts, many of the students noted that they were able to have sharper mental focus. For example, there were responses such as: *Good and there were no more things running through my mind, I felt better. I wasn't thinking about as many things all at once, and I could concentrate more and felt ready. I also felt like I didn't have thousands of things going on in my mind*.

Well-rested
One of the most common themes that emerged was that of feeling rested and being able to sleep better. These comments were especially mentioned by those practicing the ‘Sleep Guided Meditation’. Participants included such entries as *I fell asleep, so peaceful*, *I woke up with more energy and more rested, it put me right to sleep, I love this stuff*, *I fell asleep?! Relaxed, Pretty relaxed definitely [sic] helped me to sleep*. Many appeared to have fallen asleep without even being aware of it or often fell asleep more easily than before. Remarks such as *Right after I put my laptop away I fell asleep so fast! The meditation helped speed up the process of falling asleep and it relaxed me* illustrated how the practice aided in falling asleep. Other participants also spoke about having deeper and more restful sleep.

Aware and alive
Interestingly, some students reported being more ‘aware’ and ‘alive’ after the meditations. They used phrases such as *I felt more peaceful, but also more aware of my surroundings, I felt better, more alive and content from focusing on breathing … and … focus on the surroundings and live in the now*. 
Joyful
Pleasant emotions that were more energizing and also positively valenced were also reported. There were some students who felt quite happy and elated after the mindfulness practice. These experiences were described simply as follows: Emotional bliss, Awesome! I was relaxed and glad. One respondent also spoke about being able to take some time to consider how to live their life better, which fits in with the literature on flourishing: This helped me forget about my problems for a little bit so I could step back and analyse how to make my day better.

Optimistic
In contrast to feeling overwhelmed by the many tasks at hand before the mindfulness practice, several students reported feeling ready and set for the day’s work after mindfulness practices. Some examples include: I felt prepared for anything today! I felt that everything I had to do was not that much and more relaxed and much more capable of taking on the task … ready to start my homework for the day and more organized and relaxed as well as feeling more willing and capable of being able to accomplish the tasks ahead. Many students wrote about feeling motivated and energized to do their school work after the mindfulness practice. Even if they were not doing well academically, they reported greater optimism with comments such as … I realize that I can still pass with the bad grade and … ready to approach studying/test with best foot forward.

Grateful
Apart from the sense of personal transformation and subjective well-being experienced by the participants, there were also relational aspects of mindfulness communication that were reported. For instance, other-centred emotions such as kindness and gratitude were expressed. Says a student: I felt soft and like I could focus on being more kind today. Some of the responses related to feeling thankful and grateful after the mindfulness practice. For instance, students jotted down entries such as I was more grateful due to the video stating to focus on your surroundings and live in the now … and … confident in myself and thankful for being blessed to see another day.

No difference
At times, some of the journal entries mentioned that the student did not notice any difference. While this was rare, we wanted to make sure to include these instances into our findings. Some sample comments include: No change or the same impatient & rushed – Felt the same, maybe I didn’t focus enough and Thoughts about leaving stayed in my head throughout the meditation, so still sad.

Experimental results
A bivariate correlation analysis was conducted with all the variables of interest. Everyday stress was significantly positively correlated with emotional coping ($r = .77, p < .001$). Task-oriented coping was positively correlated with the two other forms of coping – avoidance coping ($r = .29, p < .05$) and emotional coping ($r = .49, p < .001$). Emotional coping was also positively correlated with avoidance coping ($r = .31, p < .05$).

A series of factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were conducted to answer the research questions. The main effects and interaction effects of the Type of Condition (mindfulness communication curriculum or standard communication course) and Time (pre-test or post-test) were examined on various dependent variables: everyday stress, resilience and coping.

The MANOVA tested for the effects of Condition (mindfulness or control) x Time (pre-test or post-test) on perceived everyday stress. It revealed a marginally significant interaction effect for Condition x Time such that for participants in treatment condition, post-test stress levels ($M = 3.77, SD = .28$) were lower than pre-test stress levels ($M = 3.87, SD = .28$), whereas for participants in the control condition, post-test stress levels ($M = 3.94, SD = .20$) was higher than pre-test stress levels ($M = 3.59, SD = .20$); Wilks’ $\Lambda = 0.95; F (1, 50) = 2.83; p < 0.10; \eta^2 = 0.05$. 
In testing the effects of Condition (mindfulness communication curriculum or standard communication course) \( \times \) Time (pre-test or post-test) on the three ways of coping with stress: task-oriented, emotional and avoidance coping styles, a main effect was observed for time (pre-test or post-test) measures for avoidance coping. Specifically, for participants in both the treatment and control conditions, the levels of avoidance coping in the post-test measure \( (M = 4.57, SD = 1.06) \) was significantly higher than pre-test stress levels \( (M = 4.19, SD = 1.04); \) Wilks’ \( \Lambda = 0.89; F (1, 50) = 6.42; p < 0.05; \eta^2 = 0.11. \)

**Discussion**

In this exploratory study, we wanted to understand the processes and mechanisms by which students experienced mindfulness practices and their positive effects from students’ own perspectives. The students’ self-reflections and self-evaluations illuminate the significance of mindfulness in communication, especially in enhancing the understanding about self and others. Beyond physical, psychological and spiritual well-being aspects of flourishing from a positive self-development perspective, the course also emphasized social connectedness and building a cooperative community by taking a shared responsibility for collective well-being. Given that the sample size was small and the results from the quantitative analyses were the modest, these preliminary findings have to be substantiated through additional research.

The qualitative journal entries suggested that students experienced benefits from daily meditation such as feeling less overwhelmed, sleeping better, staying focused and feeling happy or blissful. The emerging themes from the current analysis are consistent with prior research and applications of mindfulness (Amutio, Martinez-Taboada, Hermosilla, & Delgado, 2014; Grossman et al., 2004), giving the current data validity and indicates that across different settings, mindfulness training can achieve similar outcomes because of similar processes. Students repeatedly discussed how the mindfulness practice helped them relax, sleep better and be calmer about handling stressful situations such as upcoming exams, disappointing grades and work–life balance. These findings are reflected in the quantitative results as well. Further research is needed to follow this exploratory study to examine these relationships more thoroughly with a larger sample.

**Theoretical implications**

This study contributes to research on academic buoyancy by presenting mindfulness as a strategy that could be especially helpful for freshman college students. It is common for college students to experience setbacks in the routine course of everyday academic or school life, including when coursework and examinations become more rigorous (Martin & Marsh, 2009). Thus, is not uncommon for college students to report feeling ‘uptight’ and ‘tense’ from everyday academic challenges and pressures as well as from test anxiety. Putwain, Connors, Symes, and Douglas-Osborn (2012) found that academic buoyancy was inversely related to test anxiety. The practice of mindfulness may be one way that college students could learn to monitor and self-regulate their everyday levels of academic-related distress and anxiety and to build up their academic buoyancy. Academically buoyant students will be less likely to expect academic failure and will be able to respond positively and adaptively to challenges posed by evaluative performance events such as examinations including bouncing back from setbacks.

Study findings suggest that regular practice of mindfulness has self-regulatory benefits in terms of emotion regulation (e.g. feeling calm, composed and relaxed) and executive functions (e.g. sustained attention and mental alertness). Adolescent self-regulation has been conceptualized as resiliency factor in buffering youth and has been found to buffer adolescents from negative influences of peer deviance and antisocial behaviour in middle to late adolescence (Gardner, Dishion, & Connell, 2008). Thus, educational or intervention programmes that target teaching mindfulness may serve as one way to improve self-regulation among emerging adults.
Study findings suggest that mindfulness practices can have benefits in terms of sleep hygiene or quality of sleep. These findings are preliminary at this point and have to be examined in detail in the future. Adequate sleep is essential for good mental and physical health, and there is a bidirectional relationship between poor sleep and anxiety (Uhde, Cortese, & Venediapin, 2009). Sleep deprivation or short sleep for adolescents is defined as sleep time less than the average basal level of 9 h per night, although as many as one-fourth of adolescents report sleeping 6 h or less per night (Roberts & Duong, 2014). Disturbed sleep and sleep deprivation among adolescents are linked to deficits in functioning and social–emotional, psychological and physical well-being including depressive symptoms (Dewald-Kaufmann, Oort, & Meijer, 2014). Thus, the practice of mindfulness may be one way to improve sleep quality that also supports overall well-being in adolescents. More broadly, mindfulness can help students develop a sense of well-being and coherence that can deepen classroom learning.

Our study makes an important contribution by situating mindfulness within communication theory and pedagogy. Although mindfulness is an ancient Eastern practice in Buddhism and Indian yoga traditions, its more modern and secularized form has vast untapped potential for American universities. By including mindfulness education as part of secular instruction, especially in university settings, students can expand their personal repertoire of adaptive coping strategies in the classroom and beyond. The relevance of mindfulness is in its ability to integrate Western research cultures of evidence-based empirical social sciences with Eastern traditions that focus on intuition, inward focus and aesthetic principles. By incorporating non-traditional Eastern philosophical practices into the field of communication, it expands the scope of the field beyond Anglo-centric, Eurocentric theorizing.

Given the paucity of research on positive emotions and mindfulness, this study fills an important research gap. It adds to emerging interests in understanding how mindfulness can be used as a tool for modifying and maintaining positive experiences. Specifically, study findings have implications for the broaden-and-build theory as they suggest that mindfulness elicits positive emotions such as joy and optimism. Additionally, participants noted that positive emotions were able to quell negative emotions such as anxiety and restlessness. The extent to which positive emotions are able to mitigate the effects of negative emotional experiences, they also help broaden one’s repertoire of thoughts and actions. These thought-action repertoires enhance personal resources and abilities, which are known to increase creativity and flexibility, including resilience to negative situations (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). When faced with everyday challenges, these positive emotions can help bounce back quickly and provide the flexibility needed to adapt to the changing demands.

Practical implications

It is important for college students to increase their knowledge and skills in ways that they can take greater personal responsibility for their own health and wellness. By introducing them to mindfulness practices, students are more aware about the mind-body connection, which could also lead to more mindful health choices. These skills are helpful not only to cope with the everyday stressors of college life but are lifelong skills that will likely serve them during difficult transitions and crises all through life in various contexts such as the workplace, learning environments, family situations and social settings. Mindfulness courses should be given greater institutional support so that they are widely available, easily accessible and even mandatory for all incoming freshmen students.

Cultivating positive emotional experiences in everyday life and responding to negative life circumstances helps to buffer against both everyday stressors while building capacity to deal with major crises. Our study findings add to the existing research on the role of communication in reducing risk perceptions and increasing resiliency. It suggests that mindfulness can serve as a useful tool for improving psychological health, well-being and happiness. Mindfulness helps to boost positive emotions that help to correct negative emotions such as worry, regret, rumination and anxiety. These positive emotions can help build personal reserves in ways that lead to greater appreciation for life, more meaning in life, and contribute to forming a protective shield to cope with future adversity.
Limitations and directions for future research

Although the preliminary findings from this exploratory study on the role of mindfulness training on helping first-year college students cope with everyday stressors are encouraging, they have to be approached with caution, given the small sample size. Further research using larger numbers of first-year students should parse out the differences in outcomes based on age, rank in college and the effectiveness of the mindfulness curriculum. Given practical constraints, the current study used an experimental approach that did not randomize participants into treatment and control conditions. More research is needed to understand the processes and mechanisms through which mindfulness is effective in stress reduction. As a multidimensional process, mindfulness requires a holistic approach to measurement that includes both pre-test and post-test intervention comparisons as well as deeper reflective qualitative measures. Longitudinal data collected across several points of the training will help to better understand the effectiveness of mindfulness communication in the long-term and learn which specific aspects of the curriculum were most effective. In-depth interviews would enhance the richness of qualitative data.

In conclusion, we believe that mindfulness is worth further consideration as a valuable tool in helping emerging adults develop greater self-awareness, adaptive stress coping, everyday resilience and holistic well-being. While there is a growing body of research on mindfulness training, a need continues to study it through thoughtful, well-designed studies to serve as a guide to scholars and educators in the classroom and beyond.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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