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Conceptualizing Contemplative Practice as Pedagogy: Approaches to Mindful Inquiry in Higher Education

Melissa Hammerle
University of Vermont

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CONCEPTUALIZING CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE AS PEDAGOGY:
APPROACHES TO MINDFUL INQUIRY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation Presented

by

Melissa Hammerle

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education
Specializing in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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Dissertation Examination Committee:

Jill Mattuck Tarule, Ed.D., Advisor
Fiona Patterson, D.S.W., Chairperson
Judith A. Aiken, Ed.D.
Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin, Ph.D.
Cynthia J. Forehand, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College

Abstract

A compelling argument has been made which claims that institutions of higher education focus disproportionately on transmitting basic skills to their students at the expense of supporting issues of central importance to the development of emerging adults, including clarifying values and identity and defining individual purpose and meaning (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010). As a result, an increasing number of postsecondary teachers are considering how they can refashion education by using contemplative inquiry to deepen student learning and personal growth. This movement to reframe the teaching-learning paradigm has led to the development of teaching methods that seek to cultivate emotional, psychological and intellectual competencies including creativity, self-understanding, awareness and mental flexibility (Lief, 2007). Contemplative pedagogy, which can include mindfulness practices and contemplative or imaginative inquiry, provides such a framework for teaching and learning. Faculties at institutions of higher education across the U.S. are increasingly adapting this educational model for use in their classrooms.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand ways in which faculty members in higher education are developing mindfulness-based contemplative pedagogies and to identify critical variables that have informed how they have conceptualized and implemented this educational model. I employed a collective case study methodology to explore the experiences of faculty members who have embedded contemplative inquiry within the broader context of a traditional liberal arts curriculum. The study focused on why and how these instructors have developed contemplative teaching practices, their experiences integrating these practices into the classroom, and the potential outcomes they identified for themselves and their students. The findings suggest that, for these teachers, contemplative pedagogy provides a mechanism to deepen learning through a process of embodied inquiry in which both student and teacher are actively engaged. Through their teaching practices participants demonstrated a common goal: to foster in students qualities of mind that might help them engage more directly with learning as an experiential process of personal inquiry. This study informs the evolving landscape of contemplative education by exploring how teachers are developing and implementing contemplative models for learning in order to address issues of personal meaning and purpose in higher education.

Keywords: higher education, contemplative pedagogy, mindful teaching, contemplative education

Dedication

Thomas, Luke, Thea Ruo Ni

and

*Galway Kinnell and Philip Levine,
Two dear friends and mentors
who passed away while I was completing this study
and who taught me so much about writing, teaching, the inner life, and love.*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

During the last fifteen years a quiet pedagogical revolution has taken place in colleges across the United State. Often flying under the name “contemplative pedagogy,” it offers to its practitioners a wide range of educational methods that support the development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion and altruistic behavior. (Zajonc, 2013, p. 83)

Due to their inward focus, contemplative pedagogical methods can enrich and complement the disciplinary modes of inquiry already used in the liberal arts by enhancing the learner’s personal connection with the subject matter. In many areas of academic inquiry, contemplative practices have been found to enhance...creativity, open-mindedness, the ability to hold paradox, and compassionate civic engagement. (Burggraf and Grossenbacher, 2007, p. 1)

The incorporation of contemplative practices in Western curricula is still a relatively marginal phenomenon [because] we have not yet developed a rigorous conceptualization of contemplative practice as pedagogy. (Ergas, 2013, p. 4)

Higher education in the United States is at a crossroads. On the one hand, academic institutions are engaged in the education of a multicultural, secular constituency through mass education in an increasingly technological world. On the other hand, the pedagogical framework for learning in higher education remains (tacitly and otherwise) rooted in traditional and historical precedent and practice. What this means, in part, is that the concurrent epistemological framework upon which teaching pedagogies have developed, namely objectivism and post-positivism (Butin, 2010; Palmer, 2004; Palmer & Zajonc, 2010; Rendón, 2009), continue to shape most of the learning modalities, pedagogical practices, and the institutional landscape of higher education today (Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2006). Palmer and Zajonc (2010) referred to this epistemological premise as the *myth* of objectivism and have argued that by giving precedence to this epistemological framework for learning we have created divided institutions, where educators focus disproportionately on transmitting basic skills to their

students at the expense of supporting issues of central importance to the development of emerging adults, including issues of meaning, purpose and personal values. Harry Lewis (2006), the former dean of Harvard College, wrote that:

Harvard and our other great universities [have] lost sight of the essential purpose of undergraduate education...college or university is not just a place for the transmission of knowledge, but a forum for the exploration of life's mystery and meaning. (p. xv)

Within the context of a secular, pluralistic and highly individualistic as well as highly fragmented learning environment, colleges and universities have been unsure how to educate the whole student (Chickering et al., 2006).

In this complex landscape, postsecondary teachers increasingly question how they can refashion education by focusing on teaching and learning frameworks that address the emotional and psychological as well as the intellectual life of the student and the teacher. In recent decades education theorists have proposed a range of pedagogical practices in an attempt to redress some of the problems identified with an increasingly fragmented curriculum and learning culture. Among them, Apple (1979), Freire (1970), and Giroux (1981) addressed the entrenched economic and cultural mechanisms driving this educational model and developed arguments for a critical pedagogy. Other scholars “challenged epistemological frameworks based on modernist rational knowing, linear developmental schemes, the notion of objectivity, the divide between theory and practice, and the exclusion of the contributions of women, indigenous people and people of color” (Rendón, 2009, p. 15). Further interrogations of the curriculum and teaching frameworks in higher education paved the way for more inclusive theoretical models,

including feminist teaching theories (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), holistic educational theory (Miller, 2000), transformative theory (Dirkx, J., Mezirow, J., & Cranton, P., 2006) and integral theory (Esbjörn-Hargens et al., 2010; Gunnlaugson, 2009). In the process, scholars have cautioned that we must approach this phenomenon with a sense of urgency:

Today, as our social reality has become dramatically complex, higher education [has become] a multi-institutional configuration... Within this vast dynamic complexity, the questions of the relationship between the extraordinary knowledge development of our time and questions of purpose, meaning, faith, and ethics have become both more difficult and more urgent. (Parks, 2000, p. 11)

By privileging learning as intellectual development that is rational and empirical, while viewing the social, emotional and spiritual development of young adults as secondary to academic matters, we risk neglecting how we are preparing college students to address larger societal and social issues (Chickering et al., 2006; Rendón, 2009). As critical, feminist, and engaged theorists have argued, educational models that perpetuate bias and discrimination by maintaining hierarchies within the school and the classroom (i.e., by race, gender, social class, etc.), and that identify an emotional as well as intellectual divide between teacher and student, student and content, and even student and classroom community, ultimately perpetuate systems that serve to isolate and silence (hooks, 2010). However, Chickering et al. (2006) argued that colleges and universities are the only social institutions in a secular democracy that can educate its citizenry to effectively respond to and address these broader problems with the level of cognitive and emotional competency they require. Hooks (1994) also argued that to educate and give

voice to the whole person within the context of a pluralistic, democratic society, it is necessary to challenge and change the way pedagogy is understood.

Within the stratified culture of higher education, professors are also recognizing their own need to incorporate personal meaning and value into their work in the classroom while calling for a new pedagogical vision that responds to these needs. Hooks (2010) addressed this problem by envisioning engaged pedagogy as dependent upon the “mutual relationship between teacher and students that nurtures the growth of both parties...[by] expanding both heart and mind” (p. 22). To counter the paradigm that separates intellectualism from intuition, self from other, teacher from learner, scholars are beginning to explore a more holistic framework for both teaching and learning identified as contemplative pedagogy (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010), in which the instructor is both a reflective teacher (Schön, 1987) and a contemplative practitioner (Miller, 2014) who fosters qualities of mind that can potentially lead to “awareness and acceptance, compassion, integrity, tolerance, patience, focused-attention, and wisdom” (Rogers & Maytan, 2012). In this way, some postsecondary teachers are implementing contemplative and mindfulness learning strategies in order to support the development of the whole person so that the inner life of both student and teacher can be given a central place in learning:

By encouraging contemplative ways of knowing in higher education in diverse disciplines, we can encourage a new form of inquiry and imaginative thinking to complement critical thinking, and we will educate active citizens who will support a more just and compassionate direction for society. (Bush as cited in Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 165)

These teachers are employing contemplative pedagogy to explore practices that will integrate personal meaning and values into the teaching and learning experience. At its foundation, the developing field of contemplative studies represents an effort to claim a more embodied, integrative framework for learning where students approach content as they simultaneously explore “the systematic training of consciousness” (Roth, 2011, p. 29). Moving beyond “western epistemological biases,” the premise of this pedagogical approach claims that learning is both a subjective and an objective experience and that developing awareness through contemplative disciplines is necessary in order to understand the role of the learner in this intersubjective process (p. 29). In turn, this pedagogy addresses a larger question facing the world of higher education: “How can higher education become a more multidimensional enterprise, one that draws on the full range of human capacities for knowing, teaching, and learning” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 2)?

Contemplative education attempts to foster the development of experiential, contemplative, and mindful inquiry in curriculum and pedagogy. In addition to addressing the social and emotional needs of contemporary college students as factors that inform their intellectual growth, contemplative pedagogy also addresses the needs of the teacher to be fully engaged in the process of connected knowing and teaching (Belenky et al., 1986) that takes place in the learning exchange. Contemplative pedagogy relies, therefore, on a conception of mindful teaching as a process through which “teachers struggle to attain congruence, integrity and efficacy in their practice” (MacDonald & Shirley, 2009). In this evolving paradigm, contemplative pedagogy seeks to foster critical thinking, focus and attention, insight, compassion, connection, inquiry

into the mind, personal meaning-making, creativity, and an understanding of the moral and ethical dimensions of education (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). In this way, contemplative pedagogy is informed by the growing body of research on mindfulness in education and medicine (American Mindfulness Research Association, AMRA, 2014), as well as research-based studies in cognitive and social psychology that are shedding new light on how students learn (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010).

At the same time, contemplative pedagogy is seen as a framework for teaching that supports both the intellectual as well as the emotional life of the teacher as well as the student. This is important as it supports a process through which professors can question the “dominant agreements that govern pedagogical practice in higher education” in order to “assemble and validate...newly constructed agreements that speak to who we are as whole human beings—intelligent, social, emotional and spiritual” (Rendón, 2009, p 48). In other words, an intention of contemplative educators is to deepen the learning process for students and teachers while also addressing issues of fragmentation and isolation within academia. Barbezat and Bush (2014) suggested that contemplative pedagogy could be understood as a “contemplative epistemology” (p. xiii), a theoretical lens that holds the potential to fundamentally shift the way in which students and teachers engage with each other as well as the material they are studying. However, as Ergas (2013) noted, contemplative practices remain only marginal in Western curricula because “we have not yet developed a rigorous conceptualization of contemplative practice as *pedagogy*” (p. 4). This study considers how current faculty are conceptualizing contemplative practice as pedagogy in the context of Western institutions of higher learning.

Mindfulness Research

Over the past 50 years, mindfulness and contemplative practices rooted in Eastern religious and philosophical traditions have become the focus of significant study and research across the disciplines, from psychology (e.g., Arch & Craske, 2010; Goleman, 1995), to medicine (e.g., Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1998), to neuroscience (e.g., Davidson et al., 2003; Farb, Anderson, Mayberg, Bean, McKeon, & Segal, 2010), to education (e.g., Eppert & Wang, 2008; Miller, 2006; Oman, Shapiro, Thoresen, Plante, & Flinders, 2008). According to the American Mindfulness Research Association, the number of published studies on mindfulness in the sciences and humanities increased from 0 in 1980 to 549 in 2013.

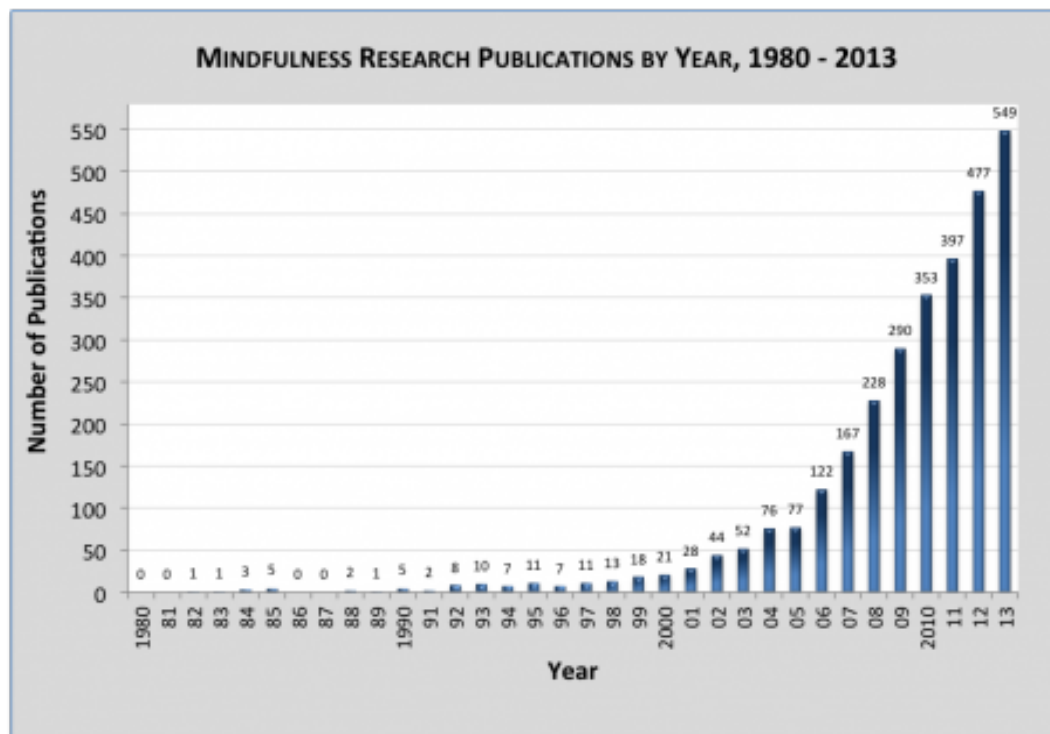


Figure 1: American Mindfulness Research Association, 2013

This body of research reflects a growing interest in the West in mindfulness meditation and contemplative inquiry as practices that can decrease stress, reduce chronic pain, increase self-awareness, improve attention and concentration, support positive emotions, and enhance creativity (Smalley & Winston, 2010). These empirical findings have informed recent developments in educational theory including contemplative pedagogy. In this context, contemplative pedagogy provides a framework for learning and engaged teaching that has the potential to address a range of challenges facing both students and teachers in higher education today by fostering a range of competencies:

We point to ways by which meditation may complement the traditional goals of the academy by helping to develop traditionally valued academic skills as well as helping to build important affective and interpersonal capacities that foster psychological wellbeing and the development of the “whole person.”

(Shapiro et al., 2011, p. 494)

This teaching and learning model seeks to support a more “balanced” education that “cultivates abilities beyond the verbal and conceptual to include matters of heart, character, creativity, self-knowledge, concentration, openness and mental flexibility” (Lief, 2007, p. 1). This new direction in teaching offers exciting opportunities for teachers to consider how to effectively integrate contemplative and mindfulness practices into the classroom that have the potential to foster deeper personal growth within the context of intellectual engagement. The development of contemplative pedagogy as a field of practice embedded in a “relational ontology” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010) is supported by the newly identified academic field of contemplative studies (as developed at institutions including Brown University, Stanford, UCLA, the University of Virginia),

and the growth of such academic organizations as the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, the Mind and Life Institute, The Mindfulness in Education Network, and The Association for Mindfulness in Education. Shapiro, Brown, and Astin (2011) reported that the empirical research to date on the application of mindfulness and contemplative practice to learning has led to impressive findings specifically relevant to higher education, among them that mindfulness and/or concentration-based meditation may “improve a student’s ability to focus, process information quickly and accurately; it may decrease anxiety and depression among students; and it can support the development of creativity, skills needed for interpersonal relationships, self-compassion, and empathetic responses” (p. 4). Gunnlaugson (2009) has provided a definition of contemplative education that identifies the theoretical lens that grounds this study:

Informed by various contemplative wisdom traditions, contemplative education involves the integration of contemplative practices into the curriculum of traditional higher education settings for the purposes of fostering intuitive, non-conceptual and experiential forms of knowing along paths of learning characterized by wholeness, unity and integration. (p. 26)

Through this interpretive lens, reality is understood to be an intersubjective experience that is socially constructed (Butin, 2010).

Research Problem

While there has been a growing interest in bringing contemplative pedagogy and mindfulness practices into the academy, there has been little research into the experiences of faculty as they develop new curricula that integrate mindfulness and contemplative

practices into their teaching—including their purposes for creating these new teaching models, what their contemplative curricula looks like, inherent challenges they have faced or personal growth they have experienced through their work with students, discoveries they have made about the application of this form of pedagogical inquiry within the academy, and perceived benefits they have observed within the context of student learning. As academic institutions and their faculties consider emerging approaches to pedagogical practices that address the intellectual as well as the inner life of both the student and the teacher, it will be helpful to better understand how individual instructors have constructed these frameworks for learning and how they have experienced the integration as well as the effects of this approach to teaching and learning within their classrooms. In this qualitative study I explored the experience of several faculty members in higher education who are integrating contemplative and mindfulness practices into their teaching in the broader context of a traditional liberal arts curriculum. In particular, the study focused on why and how these instructors have created and implemented experiential contemplative or mindfulness-based practices, their experiences integrating these practices into their curriculum, and the potential outcomes they have identified for themselves and their students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to understand ways in which faculty members in higher education are developing mindfulness-based contemplative pedagogies and to identify critical variables that have informed how they have conceptualized and implemented this educational model.

Research Question

What is the experience of faculty who are using contemplative pedagogy as a model for teaching in the postsecondary classroom?

Subquestions

- What factors informed their decision to create contemplative or mindfulness-based curricula?
- What has been the effect of these practices on their teaching and on student learning experiences?
- What does their contemplative, mindful pedagogy look like in practice?
- What do they hope to achieve, for themselves and for their students, by incorporating contemplative practices into their teaching?

Defining the Terminology

For the purposes of this study, contemplative pedagogy is understood as the essential feature of an integrative teaching and learning approach in higher education that can incorporate some or all of the following characteristics, including mindfulness meditation and a range of mindfulness and contemplative practices:

- Exploring multiple perspectives and including multiple ways of knowing
- Weaving together the domains of self, culture and nature (interconnectedness of self and other)
- Combining critical thinking with experiential feeling (reflective self - inquiry)
- Including the insights of constructive-developmental psychology

- Engaging regular personal practices of transformation (i.e., meditation) and bringing those into the classroom
- Encouraging “shadow work” within learners and teachers, an exploration of the nonrational side of the human self
- Honoring the range of conventional, alternative, holistic, critical and transformative approaches to education
(Esbjörn-Hargens et al., 2010, pp. 5-6)

Mindfulness is most commonly understood as a “practical way to be more in touch with the fullness of your being through a systematic process of self-observation, self-inquiry, and mindful action” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 6). In this way, mindfulness has been referred to as a state of awareness, a practice that develops such a state, a manner of processing information, and a trait (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005; Kostanski & Hased, 2008; Siegel, 2007). As a practice, it can involve any number of activities that help to foster greater insight and awareness and connection (to self and others) through embodied, intentional exercises. Mindfulness meditation is a practice that can include concentration and open awareness training, contemplative inquiry, journaling and reflective practice (Zajonc, 2013). Kabat-Zinn (1994) wrote that: “[The power of mindfulness] lies in its practice and its applications. Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (p. 4).

In addition, Langer (1997) has been instrumental in studying mindfulness strictly as a phenomenon and quality of mind, one independent of meditation or contemplative inquiry. As a social psychologist she has done extensive research studying the attributes of mindfulness and mindlessness and investigated how these mental states inform how we think and how we learn. She defined mindfulness as “openness to novelty; alertness

to distinction; sensitivity to different contexts; implicit, if not explicit, awareness of multiple perspectives; and orientation in the present” (Langer, 1997, p. 4).

More broadly, contemplative practices can be characterized this way:

Contemplative practices quiet the mind in order to cultivate a personal capacity for deep concentration and insight. Examples of contemplative practice include not only sitting in silence but also many forms of single-minded concentration, including meditation, contemplative prayer, mindful walking, focused experiences in nature, yoga, and other contemporary physical or artistic practices.

(The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, 2007)

Throughout this study I will refer to mindfulness meditation, mindfulness practices, and contemplative pedagogy as aspects of a “body-oriented pedagogy” (Ergas, 2013, p. 4).

These definitions will be adaptive and fluid depending on how research participants define them within the context of their teaching. However, the definitions and concepts presented here inform the terminology used throughout this study.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (hooks, 1994, p. 13)

Transformation toward increasing wholeness is the goal for a contemplative teaching and learning environment. (Byrnes, 2012, p. 26)

In 2011, Shapiro et al. published a review of the research into contemplative pedagogy specifically related to higher education. The report, commissioned by the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, entitled *Toward the Integration of Meditation into Higher Education: A Review of Research*, investigated

research-based evidence of the effects of meditation on cognitive and academic performance for college students as well as its relation to emotional development, including: creativity, interpersonal relationship skills, empathy and self-compassion.

Based on their findings, the authors concluded that:

The applications of meditation in higher education are potentially broad, affecting cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal domains. Research addressing the effects of meditation on academic performance, psychological wellbeing, and interpersonal experience for students in college, medical school, and other higher education settings has shown promising results. (Shapiro et al., 2011, p. 520)

While the broader literature reflects significant empirical findings exploring the effects of mindfulness practices on students, there is a paucity of research into the actual experience of teachers in higher education who have incorporated contemplative and mindfulness practices into their classroom and how they are defining and developing this work:

In the late 20th century and early 21st century, contemplative education/studies courses, concentrations and initiatives have emerged in the academy. Although there has been significant discussion of postsecondary courses and programs that have integrated contemplative views and practices in the literature, there have been few inquiries of contemplative curricula and pedagogy in higher education. (Wehlburg, 2013, Foreword)

At the same time, Sanders (2013) noted that there is growing evidence that contemplative education contributes to the positive development of students, and that meditation specifically “correlates with several beneficial academic and psychological factors related to student learning and functioning in higher education” (p. 1). Shapiro et al. (2011)

called for further research addressing the question of how best to incorporate contemplative practices into the unique culture of colleges and universities: “While there is a growing body of research to support these findings, there is a need for thoughtful, well-designed research to guide educators in integrating meditative and other contemplative practices into the academy” (p. 36).

In my review of the literature and research into contemplative pedagogy in higher education, I found very few studies investigating the experience of faculty who are committed to engaging a contemplative, integrative teaching paradigm. While several scholars have argued for the need for a more contemplative turn in teaching practices across higher education, there is little research into the ways in which teachers are engaging this curricular model and their experience implementing contemplative practices in their classroom teaching. This is a significant gap in the growing literature on contemplative and mindfulness pedagogy and higher education, especially given the quickly expanding field of contemplative studies and the increasing numbers of postsecondary teachers who are developing contemplative frameworks for their teaching. As a measure of this growing field, the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, incorporated in 2008, already has a membership of almost 800 educators from around the country.

By giving voice to the experiences of some of these teachers, and by examining how and why they have adapted their teaching to incorporate a contemplative experience or practice, this study can help us to better understand the ways in which these modalities can inform teaching and learning in higher education, and ways in which faculty are engaging the question of how to teach with integrity and wholeness themselves while

addressing the intellectual and emotional lives of their students. As institutions of higher education face significant challenges concerning how faculty can best support student learning and student development in the context of a multidimensional, technological global environment on the one hand, and on the other a growing sense of fragmentation and isolation across the academy, this will become an ever more urgent issue in the years ahead. What some have called a revolution in learning (Levy, 2013), contemplative education situates postsecondary teaching at this critical juncture. This is a field ripe for further investigations into faculty and student experiences.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Taken as a set, [these theories and practices] foreground the importance of interlinking individual emancipation, pedagogical innovation, revolutionary vitality, evolutionary thinking, spiritual tradition, and political action. (Molz & Hampson, 2010, pp. 42-43)

The philosophical argument for an experiential American educational model has some of its earliest roots in the theoretical school of pragmatism as articulated in the work of John Dewey (1938). Not only did he elaborate a theory of education that based effective teaching and learning on the qualitative experience of the student, he questioned some of the premises that shaped western models of education. Namely, as noted above, the either-or phenomenon that led to the perception of teaching as the imposition of knowledge “from above and from outside” and as knowledge as “essentially static...taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future” (Dewey, 1938, pp. 18-19). Dewey suggested that progressive education, in order to support the development of the whole person (specifically in the context of a democratic society), should be based upon a creative, dynamic, participatory process between student and teacher that allows for the “kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (p. 28). This pedagogical stance identified teaching and learning as an iterative process that involves the ongoing reconstruction of experience and knowledge (Dewey, 1938).

Over time, an attempt to shift the educational model upon which learning in K-12 and higher education has developed has led to several theoretical constructs that redress important assumptions embedded within the teaching-learning paradigm. Some

of these approaches include critical pedagogy (Apple, 1979; Freire, 1970; Giroux 1981), feminist theory (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982), transformative learning (Dirkx et al., 2006; O’Sullivan, 1999), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), holistic education (Miller, 2000), and integrative learning (Esbjörn-Hargens et al., 2010). Contemplative pedagogy, which embraces “a view that values experiential and transformative learning as forms of ‘contemplative knowing’” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 15), has drawn the attention of a wide number of academics across disciplines who recognize the need for radical shifts in teaching and learning in order to transform the pervasive biases that inform the traditional epistemology embedded in educational models (hooks, 2010).

The historical trajectories that have led to the integration of contemplative inquiry and mindfulness practice in teaching pedagogies in higher education are broad and complex. As suggested above, the academic culture both mirrors and interrogates the dominant culture within which it is embedded. In turn, this interaction between evolving epistemological and philosophical frameworks in the context of social and cultural change has resulted in contemporary models of teaching and learning that rely increasingly on a range of disciplinary perspectives and diverse inquiry methods (Flinders & Thornton, 2009). The field of contemplative education has been informed by extensive research not only in the areas of psychology and medicine, but has been viewed as well as a process that can deepen imaginative inquiry and creativity (Brady, 2007). I will consider the relevance of this research as it relates specifically to both how learning works in the emerging adult and how these practices support the work of the teacher.

And I will identify ways in which these findings are informing pedagogy in the complex world of higher education.

Higher Education: Spirituality, Wholeness and Embodied Cognition

The work of Harry Lewis (2006), Parker Palmer (2010), Sharon Daloz Parks (2000), Laura Rendón (2009), and Arthur Zajonc (2010), as cited above, represents a growing call for a reassessment of the fundamental educational mission of higher education. Rendón's study (2009) was the first of its kind to examine how faculties are attempting to "shatter" the current belief system that she claims works against "wholeness, multiculturalism and social justice" (p. 1). Her intention was to arrive at a model of wholeness in teaching; this became Sentipensante Pedagogy (sensing/feeling). Her work lay the groundwork for a reframing of pedagogy in higher education with the sole purpose of repositioning faculty in territory that honors and engages their multiple identities and invites them to bring their whole selves into their teaching, writing and research while simultaneously addressing the inner life of the student.

Lewis (2006) labeled the success of higher education as the achievement of a "hollow excellence," claiming that universities have forgotten the ideals and goals that were once fundamental to their mission: while universities succeed more than ever as repositories of knowledge, he argued, they have forgotten their essential role, which is to help students "learn who they are, to search for a larger purpose for their lives, and to leave college as better human beings" (p. xiv). In the largest study of its kind, Astin, Astin and Lindholm (2011) investigated the spiritual life of college students and faculty and they found that almost 80% of students and faculty reported that they were

committed in their teaching and learning to a personal search for purpose and meaning. When asked how frequently they experienced that kind of search in a college classroom, 60% reported never.

Consequently, in response to these issues, one area of research has focused on the role spirituality plays in the educational and developmental life of undergraduates. Chickering, Dalton and Stamm (2006), for example, examined the historical context out of which secular institutions of higher education came to repudiate the inclusion of any form of moral indoctrination in the classroom. They suggested that during this process the learning environment in institutions of higher education shifted towards rational empiricism and professional preparation, losing sight of the need to address issues of personal growth with a focus on authenticity and a connection to the inner life and that these institutional changes are the result, in part, of the ways in which universities have evolved from faith-based, Christian institutions to modern, secular institutions:

The wholesale acceptance by the 1960s of the university as the institutional center for developing the knowledge on which a modern scientific technological society depends eliminated entirely any theological basis for the engagement of churches with higher education. Today the church has become the sole guardian of faith, the college and university the prime champions of knowledge. (Sloan as cited in Chickering et al., 2006, p. 80)

Astin et al. (2011), in their longitudinal, seven-year study, asked how “students change during the college years and the role that college plays in facilitating the development of their spiritual qualities” (p. 1). In their analysis, they cited a surge of interest among scholars and researchers in the topic of spirituality in higher education. In

their research they referenced several definitions of “spirituality” in the literature, but most relevant to this study is the definition cited by Helminiak (1987): “Within the spiritual domain, human development can be characterized both by one’s capacity to integrate the many other aspects of development—cognitive, social, emotional, moral—with one’s capacity for integrity, wholeness, openness, self-responsibility and authentic self-transcendence” (Astin et al., 2011, p. 28). The findings from this study indicate that most college students claim to have an interest in spirituality and that, in turn, most freshman expect that college will be a time for their own spiritual development. But these authors also identified the ways in which secular institutions of higher education can actually inhibit the spiritual growth of students. They claimed that those who believe that higher education should only be concerned with the cognitive or intellectual development of students in fact encourage a “kind of fragmentation and a lack of authenticity...where academic endeavors can become separated from students’ most deeply felt values” (p. 7).

While the topic of spirituality and student development in a secular context has been of interest to many scholars, there has been as well other currents in the research exploring alternative approaches to the dominant rational-empirical approach to education. Some scholars have considered the ways in which this epistemological framework could be balanced through “soulful” learning and the creation of a spiritual curriculum (Miller, 2000), but the broader discourse investigating a shift of curricular paradigms has extended in many directions. There are strains of this line of inquiry found in theories of engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), connected learning (Belenky et al., 1986), integrative education (Esbjörn-Hargens et al., 2010), and transformative learning

(Brookfield, 2000; Mezirow, 1997; O’Sullivan, 1999). All of these approaches share what Habermas (as cited in Mezirow, 2003) identified as a divide between instrumental and communicative learning. Instrumental learning in this paradigm is about controlling the environment. Communicative learning relies on critical-dialectical discourse to perceive truth as that defined by and contextualized within a given reality. Goleman (1995) claimed that such dialectical discourse has the potential to develop qualities of emotional intelligence, which supports a framework for learning that addresses the social, psychological and emotional development of the student. In Mezirow’s (2003) analysis of transformative learning theory he also referenced Kegan’s (1982) work in the area of constructive-developmental identity psychology which located specific developmental stages of the individual self, noting our unique capacity for critical self-reflection, especially in early adulthood. As in all of these approaches, growth is understood to be dependent upon a process of differentiation, involving an “emergence from embeddedness” (Schachtel as cited in Kegan, 1982, p. 31). For some, this process of a reflective, connected, constructivist learning model is informed by thinkers such as Freire (1970) and Giroux (1981), who identify the ultimate goal of education as liberation from oppression and see universities as “locations that help to create activists to bring about the democratic reconstruction of society” (Marshall & Oliva, 2006, p. 19).

Vygotsky (1978) considered the development of the whole person in the context of their potentiality as learners. His analysis involved what he called a “zone of proximal development” (p. 86), suggesting that there is a sphere within which people learn, in that space between what they understand and know and their potential for knowing. When applied to emerging adults, this frame for learning can be linked to Maslow’s (1943)

developmental stage of self-actualization in his hierarchy of needs, and Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory, in which he states that: "When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective and integrative of experience. A frame of reference encompasses cognitive, conative, and emotional components, and is composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and a point of view" (p. 5). In turn, cognitive scientists have concluded that our cognition "emerges from a background of a world that extends beyond us but that cannot be found apart from our embodiment" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993, p. 217). This understanding of cognition as an interconnected, embodied, relational process identifies both the intellectual and experiential (emotional, physical, spiritual) as factors that inform how we know.

Mindfulness and Contemplation in Education

The breadth of research exploring the mental, emotional, and physical effects of mindfulness meditation and mindfulness practices represents studies across the disciplines (from medicine to law) and includes research subjects from Buddhist monks to cancer patients to elementary school students. In order to ground this current study in relevant research, I will reference studies that link mindfulness specifically to growth indicators relevant to emerging adults: including positive qualities of mind that support learning (focus and attention) and engender positive emotional and mental health, and character attributes that support acceptance, tolerance, and compassionate action.

Meditation and contemplation are two categories of practice that inform contemplative pedagogy. They are, however, two distinct types of practice that engage

different techniques and that can generate different qualitative experiences. In this way, studying and describing the benefits and practices of mindfulness meditation and contemplative inquiry is challenging as each approach is derived from a complex mix of historical, cultural, spiritual practice and discourse. That being said, contemplation has been characterized as a radical openness involving attention and awareness (Miller, 2014), while mindfulness, to return to Kabat-Zinn’s (1994) definition, can mean “paying attention in a particular way...that nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality” (p. 4). In turn, all meditation practices share the goal of “training an individual’s attention and awareness so that consciousness becomes more finely attuned to events and experiences in the present” (Shapiro, Brown & Astin, 2011, p. 494). Goleman (1988) suggested that there are four kinds of mindfulness practices, focusing on the body, feelings, the mind, or on mind objects. He broadly divides meditation into two groups: concentrative meditation and mindfulness meditation, establishing the following characteristics for each:

Figure 2: Concentrative vs. Mindfulness Meditation

| Concentrative Meditation | Mindfulness Meditation |
|--|---|
| Disciplined, single-pointed focus of attention. | Opening and expanding to an awareness of thoughts and feelings as they pass through the mind, but not focusing on a single purpose. |
| Attention is focused in a non-analytical, unemotional way, with the intent to directly experience the object of meditation. Meditator may focus attention on breath, a word (Benson & Proctor, 1984), or specific sounds (see Carrington, 1998). | Involves three core elements: <i>intention, attention, and attitude</i> (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin & Freedman, 2006). *Intention involves consciously and purposefully regulating attention. *Attention is the ability to sustain attention in the present moment without interpretation, |

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| | discrimination or evaluation. *Attitude is a frame of mind brought to mindfulness meditation; commonly described as openness, acceptance, or nonjudgmentality. |
| Like the zoom lens on a camera. | Like the wide angle lens on a camera. |

(Shapiro, Brown & Astin, 2008, p. 7)

Accordingly, meditation is a form of contemplation that involves concentrated and focused practice (Miller, 2014).

There are now hundreds of studies confirming the positive outcomes of meditation and identify mindfulness meditation and contemplative practice as healing paradigms that can address issues related to depression, stress, chronic pain, obesity, post-traumatic stress, among many other emotional and physical challenges (The Center for Mind-Body Medicine, 2015). In addition, several studies offer evidence that meditation can strengthen attentional capacities which can help students focus their attention in order to retrieve and hold a range of information (Jha, Krompinger, & Baime, 2007; Tang et al., 2007; Van den Hurk, Gionmi, Gielen, Speckens, & Barendregt, 2010). Other studies have shown how mindfulness training decreases stress hormones to promote relaxation while supporting the immune system (e.g., Davidson et al., 2003; Witek-Janusek et al., 2008). And still other studies demonstrate that regular, ongoing meditation practice can impact the thickness of the cerebral cortex, which plays a key role in brain functions including memory, attention, awareness, and language acquisition (e.g., Lazar et al., 2005). In addition, mindfulness and meditation practices can decrease the heart rate, allowing practitioners to breathe more deeply and slowly, decreases blood pressure, and improve digestion and vision (Rogers & Maytan, 2012). In other words,

mindfulness meditation has been shown to help practitioners relax, calm the mind, and improve mental functioning.

Jon Kabat-Zinn was one of the first researchers to investigate the impact of mindfulness practice on health, and in one early study he looked at psoriasis patients to see if their condition would be impacted by the introduction of mindfulness meditation training into their treatment protocol (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1998). The result of that study showed that mindfulness as a medical intervention has the potential to be effective in increasing the rate at which healing can occur. Kabat-Zinn went on to develop a treatment program that has had huge implications for the medical and mental health fields. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is now a model for treatment programs internationally, and has informed such programs as: Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (Rogers & Maytan, 2012).

Specifically looking at college students, several important studies led by Shauna Shapiro and her colleagues have shown that regular meditation over a period of time (8-10 weeks) can decrease their levels of depression and anxiety (Shapiro, Schwartz & Bonner, 1998). Additional research with college-age and adult populations has shown that meditation can also reduce internal stress and enhance wellbeing (e.g., Baer, 2003; Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007). Other studies have shown how meditation can improve an individual's ability to regulate emotion and strengthen memory (Roberts-Wolfe, Sacchet, Hastings, Roth & Britton, 2012) and how specific practices can increase the feeling of connection (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008) and a sense of relatedness and closeness to others (Brown & Kasser, 2005). And two studies evaluating the impact

of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction on levels of self-compassion demonstrate a link between mindfulness meditation and increases in self-compassion (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007).

Roberts and Danoff-Burg (2010) conducted a study with more than 500 college students in which five aspects of mindfulness were evaluated: nonreactivity, nonjudgment, observation, awareness and describing. Their study was titled: “Mindfulness and Health Behaviors: Is Paying Attention Good for You?” Their findings: that mindfulness (as a state) promotes mental and physical health. Two other studies focused on the effects of meditation interventions on college students’ psychological distress (Deckro et al., 2002) as well as on variables including stress, forgiveness and hope in college students (Oman, Shapiro, Thoresen, Plante, & Flinders, 2008). These studies found that meditation programs provided significant relief from stress and an increased capacity to experience forgiveness.

There is a rapidly growing body of research investigating the links between meditation, mindfulness and contemplative practices and enhanced states of mind and being. These findings shed light on how meditation and mindfulness programs and interventions can support emerging adults at a time of significant emotional and intellectual development and growth. They also describe the broader benefits that can be shared by students and teachers alike in cultivating connected, contemplative, mindful learning communities. Indeed, one meta-analysis showed that mindfulness has the potential to specifically improve student-teacher relationships and instructional strategies in the classroom (Albrecht, Albrecht, & Cohen, 2012). Of course, one of the many challenges inherent in this kind of research is finding ways to measure the variables under

study. In order to investigate how meditation impacts the cerebral cortex over time, for example, it is necessary to work with long-time, regular meditators. These individuals clearly sustain a practice of mindfulness meditation, unlike students who are just being introduced to the concepts and practices.

Langer's (1997) work is critically important to the field as her research investigates mindfulness as the "juxtaposition of cognition to habit" (MacDonald & Shirley, 2009, p. 24). In this paradigm, Langer (1997) views mindfulness as "the continuous creation of new categories; openness to new information; and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective" (p. 4). In contrast, mindlessness "is characterized by an entrapment in old categories; by automatic behavior that precludes attending to new signals; and by action that operates from a single perspective" (p. 4). In her research she investigates how changes in perspective allow someone to notice novelty, which in itself engenders creativity and supports a reconstruction of our knowing. This expansive ability to create meaning has the potential to break down categories and mindless habits of mind in order to open up avenues towards learning. Langer's studies investigate changes in behavior based on the understanding that perception is itself an act of cognition. In this way, her work informs the field of teaching and learning and suggests that understanding mindfulness as both a trait and state is central to understanding the phenomenon, providing a cognitive framework for practice. Her findings therein connect mindfulness with embodied cognition (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993). She noted, in turn, that creativity and mindfulness could be considered two ways of looking at the same "qualities of mind" (p. 129). Eisner (2002) reaffirmed this central link between cognition and perception in learning:

To be able to create a form of experience that can be regarded as aesthetic requires a mind that animates our imaginative capacities and that promotes our ability to undergo emotionally pervaded experience. Perception is, in the end, a cognitive event. What we see is not simply a function of what we take from the world, but what we make of it. (Eisner, 2002, p. xii)

Pedagogy, Learning and the Emerging Adult

The contemplative learning paradigm is grounded in the theoretical perspective that “compassionate action is fostered in students when they learn not only with the intellect but also with the heart” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 98). Zajonc (2010) went on to argue that “expanding our ontology and enriching our epistemologies...is a requirement for any future philosophy of education that will give us the integrative education our students and our world sorely need” (p. 98). What is relevant for this study is how this learning paradigm specifically addresses our understanding of how emerging adults learn and how these practices can support the wellbeing of student and teacher. Ambrose et al. (2010) (like Dewey, 1938) defined learning as a process that leads to change as a result of experiences. The authors identified three critical variables in their definition: “1. Learning is a *process*, not a product. 2. Learning involves *change* in knowledge, beliefs, behaviors and attitudes. 3. Learning is not something done *to* students, but rather something students themselves do as the direct result of how they interpret and respond to their *experiences*” (p. 3). In addition, they defined development for the emerging adult “as a response to intellectual, social, or emotional challenges that catalyze students’ growth” (p. 159).

Perry's pivotal 15-year study, the findings of which were published in 1970 as *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, identified nine "positions" of student development across the four years of college. These nine stages were broken down into three broader categories: modifying dualism, realizing relativism, and evolving commitments (Perry, 1970). One of the many illuminating findings from this study had to do with the changing developmental pressures on emerging adults across generations and the implications this has for higher education. The study showed that college students cannot be adequately supported by an educational culture that maintains an outdated epistemology. Specifically this was in reference to Perry's findings that, compared to the level at which students in the 1950's and 1960's were developing within the context of his scheme (to Position 8 or 9), fifty years earlier a college senior "might achieve a world view of Position 3 or Position 4" (p. 214). In other words, the findings identified that the worldview and the level of intellectual and ethical development for each generation is adaptive and evolving. This led Perry to argue that new educational customs (be they curricular models, residential life models, or teaching and learning models) must be responsive to the emerging levels of intellectual and ethical development of each generation.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed a model that has shaped subsequent thinking in the field and upon which ongoing investigations have been based. They proposed seven areas (what he called vectors) of development that together frame the complex issues that impact student growth in emerging adults. They are: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose,

developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This broad framework for psychological, emotional and intellectual growth broke down the complex processes that inform this developmental period. Indeed, it also showed that this period, while challenging in that a young adult is managing these multiple growth processes simultaneously, is also an opportunity for positive and expansive transformation. Transformation, in this context, is defined by Mezirow (2000) as “a movement through time of reformulating reified structures of meaning by reconstructing dominant narratives” (p. 19).

Perry’s study was challenged for its reliance on a sampling that was limited to middle class white men at Harvard. However, Ambrose et al. (2010) noted that others who studied student development in a more inclusive context (i.e., Gilligan, 1977; Kohlberg, 1981) also showed that there is a generalizable trajectory in student development and it is intrinsically linked to learning. The literature identifies a range of factors including gender, race, social identity, and sexual orientation, that impact and modify these developmental trajectories (e.g., Adams et al., 1997; Baxter-Magolda, 1999; Belenky et al., 1986). And although developmental models for learners in college are similar, the challenges at each stage are unique depending on how identity and culture inform the psychological changes inherent in growth. In this way, how students learn is impacted both by their level of development and the cultural climate established in the classroom. Optimal learning happens when we “consider students holistically as intellectual, social, and emotional beings” (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 187).

Parks (2000) elaborated on the developmental theories of Kegan (1982) and Fowler (1981) by adding to their framework of *how* students learn and know by drawing

attention to the question of *what* students know: “careful consideration must also be given to the formative power of the images (content) our structures of mind hold and to the role of imagination in human intelligence” (p. 13). In other words, her findings suggest that how we develop and implement curriculum in higher education is critical to how we support the intellectual and spiritual growth of emerging adults.

The Role of the Teacher in Contemplative Education

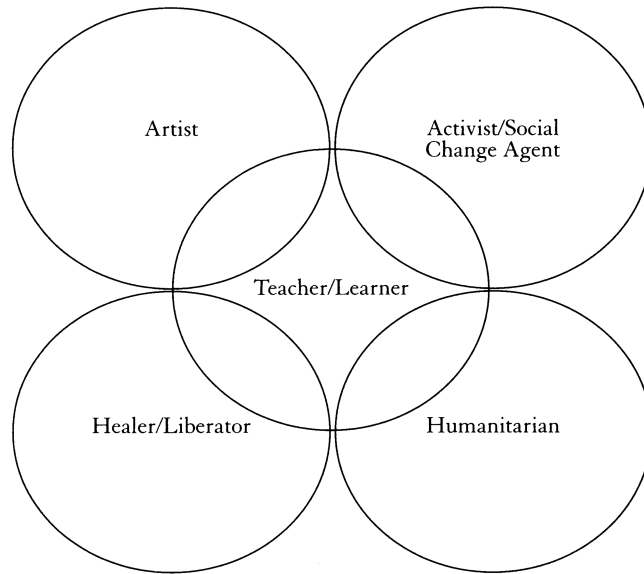
The literature that addresses the psychological, emotional, and spiritual domains of learning in higher education ultimately considers the role of the teacher as critical in fostering student growth. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that the relationship between students and faculty is absolutely central to student learning and student wellbeing in the college years. And yet the literature also shows that there has been evidence of a growing distance between students and faculty as the pressures on faculty to publish more frequently and to serve on more institutional committees has left them with less time to devote to their students (O’Meara & Braskamp, 2005). So while on the one hand the teacher is instrumental in setting the context for learning (in the classroom and in the learning community broadly), faculty are increasingly feeling distanced from their students by virtue of an increasing institutional expectation for research output in addition to their ongoing teaching responsibilities. The impact of this has been to lessen the time faculties have available to mentor, to advise and to actively support their students (Millem, Berger, & Dey, 2000). Another significant consequence of this changing work environment is that within the first years of their careers, faculty are seen

abandoning their hope for an integrated professional and personal work-life balance (Lindholm, 2003).

Rendón (2009) addressed these challenges in her *Sentipensante Pedagogy*, in which she identified a need to create a model for teaching and learning in the classroom that “speaks to our humanity [teachers and students], compassion, and care for our self-worth and the external world we inhabit” (p. 4). That teaching model identifies the instructor as:

- A. A teacher/learner, who possesses knowledge and expertise but who also realizes that no one human being knows everything, and that the key to learning is to remain open to the experience;
- B. An artist, who fosters creativity and insightful thinking,
- C. An activist/social agent, who is concerned with social justice work,
- D. A healer/liberator, who can play a role in healing the wounds of students’ past invalidation and releasing self-limiting beliefs,
- E. A humanitarian, who views teaching as a service to humanity.

Figure 3, Faculty Positionality in Sentipensante Pedagogy



(Rendón, 2009, p. 138)

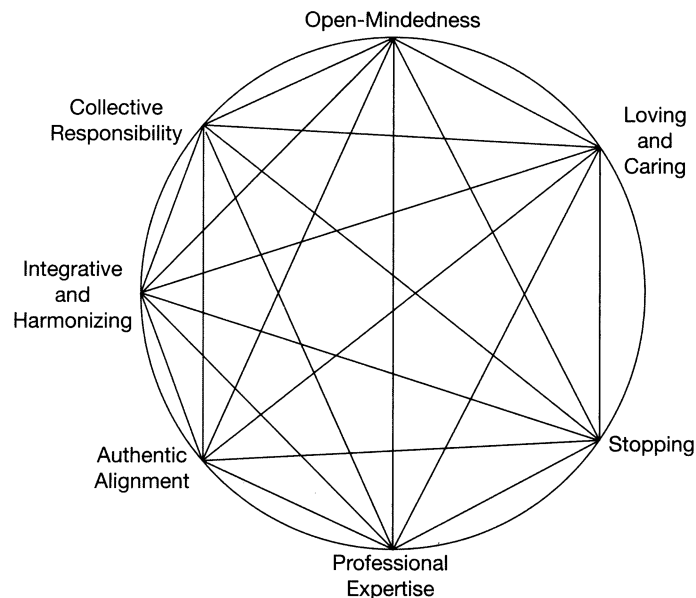
Similarly, Miller (2000) suggested that only when educators engage their soul as well as their mind will their teaching and their sense of engagement change profoundly.

Palmer (1998) wrote that teaching emerges from a person’s inwardness. And yet faculty tend to feel fearful that teaching with a level of connection and openness will intrude on the private lives of both students and teachers (Astin & Astin, 1999). Freire (1970) noted that the intention of experiential practice is to explore personal meanings by holding “objectivity and subjectivity in constant dialectical relationship” (as cited in Skubikowski et al, 2009, p. 178). Holistic and mindful teaching reinforces the idea that “an intellectual and moral relation between teacher and student makes possible what is often called the social construction of meaning” (Hansen, 2001, p. 11). Indeed, contemplative pedagogy invites the instructor and the student to engage collaboratively,

and thus intimately, in the learning process. This invites a level of renewal and engagement for the instructor, while placing the “student in the center of his or her learning so that the student can connect his or her inner world to the outer world. Through this connection, teaching and learning is transformed into something personally meaningful yet connected to the world” (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, p. 6).

McDonald and Shirley (2009) conceptualized mindful teaching as a process “in which teachers struggle to attain congruence, integrity and efficacy in their practice” (p. 4). Their theoretical framework identified seven “synergies” as well as three “tensions” of mindful teaching. The visual representations below show the qualities and limitations McDonald and Shirley identified as being critical to the processes in which the mindful teacher engages:

Figure 4: The Seven Synergies of Mindful Teaching

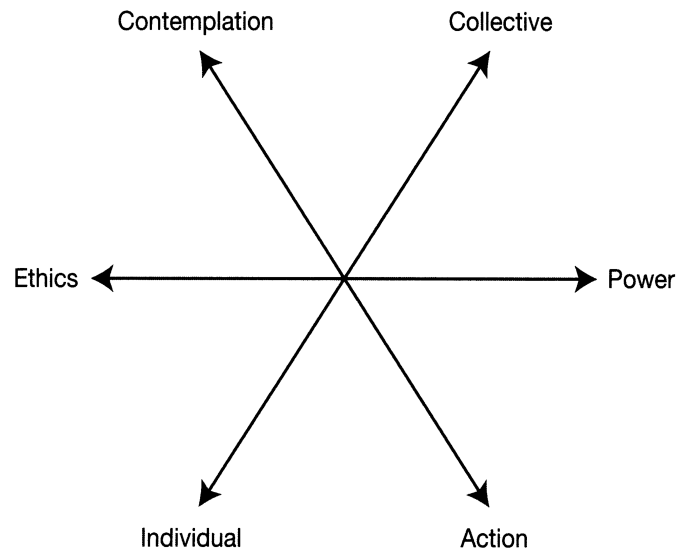


(MacDonald and Shirley, 2009, p. 61)

According to this conceptual framework, these seven qualities and attributes, when dynamically engaged as part of the teaching process, have the potential to deepen and enrich the teaching experience. In this theory of mindful teaching, each of these competencies is meant to work in combination with all of the others—not necessarily simultaneously, but in a constant unfolding and refocusing. The state of open-mindedness implies a state of acceptance that fosters critical self-inquiry; a loving and caring teacher is one whose primary concern is the wellbeing of his or her students and who teaches from a place of love; the ability to stop encourages the teacher to cultivate calm abiding in order to become a self-reflective practitioner; the teacher should be an expert in his/her professional field or content area; the ability to authentically align with the curriculum with the needs of the learners is vital to building an effective learning environment; expert teachers are able to integrate new practices into their teaching while maintaining proven strategies; and collective responsibility suggests that teachers, students and the larger community view education as a civic responsibility and together work to support and build a positive and effective education system.

Underlying these seven synergies, complementing them while also holding them in conflict, are the triple tensions of mindful teaching:

Figure 5: The Triple Tensions of Mindful Teaching



(MacDonald and Shirley, 2009, p. 69)

These tensions represent forces in opposition that challenge the equilibrium attempted through the seven synergies: the tension between contemplation (the pull within) on the one hand and action (the demands of the work) on the other; the tension between the individual teacher's needs on the one hand and the collective's needs on the other; and the tension between the call to take ethical stands even when they are in opposition to the status quo as defined by those in power.

Summary

Research findings suggest that mindfulness and contemplative practices can positively impact teachers and students across a number of significant measures by developing positive qualities of mind (Rogers & Maytan, 2012). Contemplative pedagogies, that can include mindfulness or contemplative inquiry and practice, can be seen to counter what many perceive as the fractured and fragmented culture of teaching

and learning in higher education. While hundreds of research studies are being conducted each year exploring how mindfulness training can inform teaching and learning, more and more teachers are experimenting with ways to bring these practices into their classrooms:

While contemplative practices have been foundational to wisdom traditions throughout recorded history, it is only recently that these practices are being examined in different contexts of learning, particularly in higher education.... These [practices] draw broadly from the perennial world wisdom traditions (i.e., Buddhist, Taoist, Quaker) and recent scientific research (i.e., neuroscience, cognitive science, clinical psychology) in the interests of investigating contemplative practices as a means for enhancing learning and development across a broad array of educational contexts and disciplinary fields.

(Gunnlaugson, 2009, pp. 25-26)

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore approaches to contemplative teaching currently employed by faculty members in higher education. In turn, by examining the personal experiences, reflections and practices of a select group of faculty, the study sought to elucidate the evolving landscape of this pedagogical movement in the context of faculty experience: through their perceived successes, the assumptions and epistemological frameworks they bring to their teaching, the challenges inherent in their application of this form of inquiry, and the promise they believe these practices afford to faculty, students, and the larger learning communities of which they are a part.

The following questions and sub-questions framed this study:

Research Question

What is the experience of faculty who are using contemplative pedagogy as a model for teaching in the postsecondary classroom?

Subquestions

- What factors informed their decision to create contemplative or mindfulness-based curricula?
- What has been the effect of these practices on their teaching and on student learning experiences?
- What does their contemplative, mindful pedagogy look like in practice?
- What do they hope to achieve, for themselves and for their students, by incorporating contemplative practices into their teaching?

Qualitative Research Tradition: Case Study and Grounded Theory

Creswell (2007) noted that qualitative research allows us to consider an issue in its full complexity by giving us details that can only be established by inviting people to tell their stories “unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature” (p. 40). In this way, the qualitative researcher contextualizes and interprets a specific phenomenon or experience in light of a compelling research problem (Glesne, 2006). In this study, in order to investigate the individual teachers’ experiences engaging contemplative pedagogy within the context of higher education, I designed a collective case study in order to “present a detailed account of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). The study included five cases within a bounded system each of which represented a unique approach to the phenomenon under consideration, namely the experiences of faculty members in higher education who have incorporated contemplative or mindfulness-based practices into their teaching. Accordingly, each case represented a unit of analysis. The case study model was appropriate for this study as it is simultaneously “a methodology, a type of design...or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). I also analyzed the data borrowing from the analytical framework of Strauss and Corbin (1990) to explore the variables that influenced faculty decisions to develop what they perceived to be a more holistic and embodied pedagogy. I followed Merriam’s (1998) approach to coding on two levels: “identifying information about the data and interpretive constructs related to analysis” (p. 164). I then developed categories for units of information in the data sets and, through a constant comparative method of data analysis (Creswell, 2007), I compared and revised these categories in an iterative process as I gathered new data through interviews and

observations in the field. These categories or themes framed my final descriptive analysis and discussion. This coding process was used to analyze the phenomenon by its properties, describing strategies that supported the way in which the phenomenon was carried out and the results of those strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In developing these analytical strands I considered themes that emerged across the cases in order to understand what variables were shaping the core phenomenon, what influenced the phenomenon to occur, and what strategies were employed during the process (Creswell, 2007). As Yin noted (2003), this framework is appropriate when: “How or why questions are being posed, the investigator has little control over the events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (p. 2).

The study was bound by time, place, and activity (Creswell, 2007): participants were current faculty members in a private liberal arts college in the United States who are incorporating contemplative pedagogy practices into their teaching. The research site was purposefully selected as it is the location of a community of scholars who are actively developing and implementing contemplative pedagogies within the framework of a traditional liberal arts curriculum. Data was collected from January through June, 2014. Since data collection stretched across a full semester, the timeframe allowed me to fully immerse myself in a series of ongoing interviews and conversations with research participants while observing classes that incorporated contemplative practices into their curriculum. The core theoretical code, “reframing the teaching-learning process through mindful, contemplative practice,” provided a unifying lens through which I examined the purposes, experiences and intentions of faculty employing contemplative pedagogical practices in the higher education classroom.

Site and Participant Selection

Five faculty members at one institution of higher education (representing five different disciplines) were recruited. (Throughout this study I will use pseudonyms when referring to study participants and the institution at which they teach, which I will call Hillside College.) Purposeful network and theoretical sampling (Glesne, 2006, Creswell, 2007) were used, whereby I identified teacher-practitioners using a contemplative or mindfulness-based framework for teaching (i.e., when designing curricula and in their teaching practice). I was aware of several faculty members who had written about or had shared with me their interest in mindfulness work in the academy. Through initial conversations with them I learned of additional faculty members at the same institution who were engaged in a faculty meditation group and others who were interested in bringing contemplative practices into their teaching. Once I identified and located these faculty members, I invited several of them to participate in the study and then spoke with them individually to discuss the study in detail. In the end, five of these teachers agreed to participate in the study.

I chose to interview and observe participants within the context of a single institution as it allowed me the opportunity to spend concentrated time within this community during the course of one semester: interviewing each of the participants at different points in the semester and observing them teach. This enabled me to gain deeper insight into the work and experiences of these individuals and to understand the larger context within which they were exploring these teaching paradigms. It also allowed me to observe in detail the experiences of students in classes led by these instructors. In this way I was able to use prolonged engagement and persistent

observation to develop both a broad and rich perspective on the phenomenon under question: “If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304).

My goal was also to interview and observe instructors working across a range of disciplines, which was possible at this particular site. The instructors who participated in this study represented the fields of photography (studio art), writing and gender studies, education studies, environmental studies, and religious studies, and included three men and two women. In addition, they represented a range of positions within the faculty: one was a long-time tenured full professor, approaching retirement; one was a recently tenured associate professor; one had been a tenured associate professor who recently gave up her tenure (to devote more of her time to writing) and was now a senior lecturer; the other two were long-time non-tenured faculty (each has been teaching in their departments for more than 15 years). All faculty members have Ph.D.’s, except for one, who holds an M.F.A. degree.

Data Collection

Interviews. Data were collected primarily through in-depth, semi-structured, topical interviews that were audiotaped and transcribed. Participants were asked to review a written description of the research study and to provide their consent prior to the interview. This study qualified for exemption status by the UVM Institutional Review Board in February 2014. Initial interviews lasted between one to two hours and were followed by supplemental interviews as necessary throughout the semester. During each

interview I also took notes in order to identify specific issues or comments that stood out during the interview process. These notes, in turn, became an additional data source.

The interview format was essential as it allowed me to “go behind mere outward behavior and phenomena” (Platt in Warren & Karner, 2010, p. 128) to better understand the participants’ beliefs, experiences and views (Glesne, 2006). I used these interviews as a mechanism to better understand why these faculty chose to implement this pedagogical model, how they in fact “operationalize” contemplative/mindfulness-based pedagogy, and what their experience has been integrating contemplative practices into their classroom teaching (Appendix B, Interview Protocol). In addition, these interviews provided a foundation for the investigation into the experiences of each participant, allowing me to establish an ongoing and iterative dialogue with them that led to “further questions and notes that highlighted [relevant] thoughts and ideas” (Glesne, 2006, p. 95).

Participant Observations. Additionally, I observed participants teaching on multiple occasions and interacted with and engaged students about their experiences in the classroom. In this way, while I was primarily a non-participant observer in these classes, taking field notes while observing a class, I was on occasion an observer-participant, as defined by Glesne (2006): most specifically in the sense that I participated in all mindfulness and contemplative practices engaged in by the students in the classroom. This was enormously helpful: by taking a learner’s stance and being flexible (Glesne, 2006), I was able to both observe and experience these practices while adjusting the terms of my role as observer. I therefore became a more accepted and welcome member of the classroom community. In turn, this helped me to observe the actual events taking place in the classroom without threatening the emotional space established by

students and teacher. And it allowed me to record notes from my own experience engaging in these practices in the classroom. These notes also became a source of data that helped me understand these contemplative practices experientially. In addition, I used Wolcott's (2009) framework to guide these observations, as they encompassed each of these techniques: 1. Observing broadly, 2. Observing broad aspects of specific events, 3. Observing for paradoxes, 4. Observing for problems facing the group, and in this case, observing engagement with or responses to these practices.

Document Collection. In order to understand the experiences of the participants in the study and the range of complex variables informing their approach to contemplative pedagogy, I collected course syllabi, samples of student work (specifically reflective writing linked to contemplative coursework or mindfulness practices), course descriptions, as well as readings and texts used in the classroom. These documents were essential in helping me to understand how these faculty members identify and describe their contemplative pedagogies in public in the form of institutional documents (i.e., in the course catalogue, in syllabi, in departmental course descriptions, etc.) and how they define and locate their practices in the context of course readings and texts. Institutional documents (such as course descriptions on the college website) also helped me to look at the experience of these faculty members through the lens of campus-wide and collaborative initiatives. Patton (1990) noted that document review can reveal information that otherwise would remain hidden from the researcher. Indeed these documents enabled me to make links between and across faculty experiences and within the larger campus culture and community.

Data Analysis

Field Notes. I maintained both reflective and observational notes in an online field journal throughout the study beginning with reflections on each interview, observations of on-site class visits, and reflections in response to classroom experiences. As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), I reviewed field notes as soon as possible after they were recorded and, when appropriate, devised provisional codes, with the goal being to use my field research to build an “emerging map of what was happening and why...by coding and working through iterative cycles of induction and deduction to power the analysis” (p. 65). However, I was selective in coding field notes in order to parse out “material unrelated to the research questions, either pre-specified or emerging” (p. 65). In this way I used the field notes to identify similar phrases or observations as well as ideas or observations that were surprising or appeared to be counterintuitive (Miles & Huberman, 1994), including my own responses to experiences or readings that might contradict the intention of faculty in the classroom. Noting these initial findings I was able to follow-up with additional questions. I also used these initial descriptive codes to formulate the next layer of codes I used to analyze data including interview transcripts.

Case Study Design and Thematic Analysis. I did not approach coding with a pre-established set of provisional categories. Instead, I used a more inductive approach in order to avoid the need to fit certain ideas or perspectives into a fixed framework. That being said, I used the conceptual framework established by my research questions and the research problem to inform the descriptions and then the labels I attributed to sections of text. This was in keeping with a coding strategy identified by Strauss and Corbin (1990),

in which they suggested the researcher begin with an initial review of data (line by line, sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph), starting with descriptive labels that then grow into more abstract categories related to the underlying constructs embedded in the research questions. I also relied on Strauss and Corbin's (1990) criteria to sort and distinguish categories identified as related to the core phenomenon: "causal conditions (what factors cause the core phenomenon), strategies (actions taken in response to the core phenomenon), contextual and intervening conditions (broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies), and consequences (outcomes from using the strategies)" (Creswell, 2007, p. 64).

I then based my overall data analysis on the coding strategy outlined by Stake (1978): using categorical aggregation and direct interpretation to infer meaning within the data, establishing patterns across multiple points of data, and developing naturalistic generalizations to cull lessons learned from the data that could be applied more broadly. So, from first-level open coding of interview transcripts and related data I created broader categories that linked and defined more generalized findings within and across participant experiences. From there I used selective coding to connect the categories and to identify variables that informed the phenomenon. Finally, I examined and compared these variables in order to paint a broader picture of the phenomenon under question and to present a descriptive analysis exploring what influenced these faculty members to develop new curricular models for their teaching. This analysis replicated what Miles and Huberman (1994) identified as a variable-oriented strategy: looking for themes that cut across the phenomenon, with the result that individual case dynamics are underplayed, while the themes address the broader questions raised in the study. This

allows the researcher to use inductive coding to locate relevant categories identifying events, happenings and instances (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and then to compare and contrast how these categories inform the phenomenon.

Finally, through a constant comparative method, my goal was to generate a theoretical construct that, together with codes and categories, “form a theory or hypothesis that encompasses as much behavioral variation as possible [and which is] molecular in structure rather than causal or linear” (Hutchinson, 1986, p. 62).

The themes generated are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The set of initial codes with which I worked included the following:

Codes:

TE-Teaching Experience

TEP-Positive Teaching Experience

TEN-Negative Teaching Experience (Fragmented/Burnt Out)

M-Mindfulness Meditation

ST/EP-Student Teacher Relationship

E-Engaged Pedagogy

EM-Embodied Practice

CP-Contemplative Pedagogy/Practice

TP-Teaching Philosophy

SE-Student Experience

PN-Professional Networks

TB-Teacher Benefits

TBC-Teacher Support through Community

PP-Meditation as Personal Practice

NAT-Need for authenticity in Teaching/Academia

SG-Student Growth

CC-Contemplation linked to content area

Categories generated from these codes were: the teaching experience and the need (for self-care, inner alignment, connected teaching) to add a more personal dimension to their teaching practice, the impact of contemplative pedagogy on teacher and student, the challenges of bringing a contemplative practice into the classroom, the need to link contemplative work with the content area, the student experience, the role of community and professional support when developing new teaching-learning paradigms.

In turn, the final four themes generated were:

- The mindful teacher: Teaching authentically by integrating mindful teaching with content-based pedagogy;
- The mindful learner: Developing the whole student through engaged, contemplative learning practices;
- Conceptualizing contemplative pedagogy as an embodied, experiential practice;
- Building networks of support for contemplative teaching and learning communities.

The core theoretical code, “reframing the teaching-learning process through mindful, contemplative practice,” provided a unifying idea through which I examined the purposes, experiences and intentions of faculty employing contemplative pedagogical practices in the higher education classroom.

Reliability and Validity. To promote data credibility I used a process of member checking where I shared my interpretations of the data with the participants and the participants provided feedback to clarify my analysis or add additional perspectives when appropriate. I also employed self-reflection to consider my own assumptions and the critical lens I brought to my research. Together with peer examination of my findings, these practices helped me to discern how “researcher, research participants, setting and phenomenon of interest interact and influence each other” (Glesne, 2006, p. 6). This, in turn, helped me to assess how faithfully I recorded and analyzed the phenomenon under study.

Through interviews and post-interview memos, observations, on-site field notes and document collection, I was able to employ triangulation in order to compile data that represented multiple perspectives and domains and which, taken together, allowed me to build a richer source of data in order to generate more believable findings (Glesne, 2006).

Researcher Positionality

To teach in varied communities not only our paradigms must shift but also the way we think, write, speak. The engaged voice must never be fixed or absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself. (hooks, 1994, p. 11)

As a teacher in higher education and as someone who has engaged in contemplative practices for many years, I bring to this research certain biases and assumptions about the inherent value of contemplative inquiry and practice. When interviewing research participants I shared my familiarity with contemplative practices

but I avoided making personal references to the values I ascribe to their application in learning communities.

Based on my work in higher education in the arts and also as a teacher educator, I am very interested in the complex teaching and learning processes embedded in college education and how, more broadly, institutions of higher education are addressing, through pedagogy specifically, how to educate the whole student: emotionally, cognitively, intellectually, spiritually, creatively. In my work as a writer and teacher and based on my experiences engaged in meditation and contemplative practices, I believe in the fundamental role contemplation and creative self-expression play in both deepening our understanding while building creative community that challenges any presumed or singular perspective. The arts allow us to disassemble and then reassemble a given reality. Indeed, this process resembles what hooks (1994) referred to as the engaged voice in dialogue with a world beyond itself, always changing, always naming itself anew. It makes sense, then, from my perspective, that this would be the goal of social justice education, the goal of arts education, and the goal of education broadly speaking: the growth and development of the whole person, endowed with a complex moral conscience, who can “recognize and assess the claims of multiple perspectives and [is] steeped in critical, systemic, and compassionate habits of mind” (Parks, 2000, p. 10).

Greene (1995) wrote eloquently of the need for us to unleash our imaginations in our teaching and our studies: “People trying to be more fully human must not only engage in critical thinking but must be able to imagine something coming of their hopes; their silence must be overcome by their search” (p. 25). I agree with Greene (1995) in her perspective that learning must engage the “imagining consciousness” of students in

order to be deeply meaningful. And I link that process to the inner awareness developed through contemplative practice:

The point of acquiring learning skills and the rudiments of academic disciplines, the tricks of the educational trade, is so that they may contribute to our seeing and the naming. Feeling the human connection, teachers can address themselves to the thinking and judging and, yes, imagining consciousness of their students. A person's consciousness is the way in which he or she thrusts into the world. It is not some interiority, some realm of awareness inside the brain. Rather, it must be understood as a reaching out, an intending, a grasping of the appearances of things. Acts of various kinds are involved: perceptual, cognitive, intuitive, emotional, and, yes again, imaginative. (Greene, 1995, pp. 25-26)

It is my belief that teachers in higher education have the opportunity (perhaps the duty) to create learning environments that support learning that is perceptual, cognitive, intuitive, emotional, and imaginative. In other words, frameworks for learning that address the development of the student in his or her full complexity and humanity. This is a serious calling, and it is with a sense of possibility in the evolving landscape of curriculum and pedagogy in higher education that I approach this study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) wrote that: "What you "see" in a transcription is inescapably selective. A critical theorist sees different things than a deconstructivist or a symbolic interactionist does" (p. 56). The lens through which I approached this material was based on the idea that reality is a socially constructed phenomenon and that the act of learning is an intersubjective experience (Butin, 2010).

Limitations

The research study was limited by the scope and size of the project, designed to include the stories of a small number of participants within the context of a single institution. A benefit of this sample size was that it allowed me to explore and participate in more deeply the experiences of each participant. However, it also limited the scope of the study as an exploration of the experiences of a specific cohort of participants located within a very specific context. This limited the range of the study but it allowed for a more focused and site-specific investigation. Additional limitations are cited in the final chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

Do current education efforts address the whole human being—mind, heart, and spirit—in ways that best contribute to our future? What steps can we take to make our colleges and universities places that awaken the deepest potential in students, faculty and staff? (Palmer, 2010, p. vii)

This study investigated the experience of faculty who are interested in reframing the teaching-learning paradigm in higher education by incorporating contemplative pedagogical practices into their teaching. In this chapter I will discuss findings based on a comparison of data within selected categories that led to the formulation of broader themes across cases. In addition to this level of category analysis, I also employed contextualizing strategies to understand these themes within the context of both the individual narratives of those interviewed and within the context of the learning environment in which all of the faculty teach. In this way I paid close attention to how the participants identify meaning and value within the context of that which they are describing. The data used for analysis included: extensive interviews with the study participants, course syllabi, course readings, student evaluations, field notes (classroom observations), and related university documents. The data revealed four central themes that represent the experiences of faculty who are developing strategies to integrate a contemplative pedagogy into their teaching. These themes are:

- The mindful teacher: Teaching authentically by integrating mindful teaching with content-based pedagogy;
- The mindful learner: Developing the whole student through engaged, contemplative learning practices;

- The mindful classroom: Conceptualizing contemplative pedagogy as an embodied, experiential practice;
- A Supportive Institutional Culture: Building networks of support for contemplative teaching and learning communities.

The breakdown of the faculty interviewed is as follows. All names are pseudonyms:

| Instructor | Discipline and Rank | Degree |
|-------------------|--|---------------|
| Robert | Education, Associate Professor of Education | Ph.D. |
| Mary | Writing/Literature, Director, Writing Program; Lecturer | M.F.A. |
| Rose | Environmental Studies/Religion, Senior Lecturer | Ph.D. |
| Dan | Environmental Studies, Associate in Science Instruction | Ph.D. |
| Jim | Studio Art, Professor | Ph.D. |

The Mindful Teacher: Teaching for Wholeness and Authenticity

Rendón (2009) identified a need among teachers in higher education to redefine the mainstream teaching pedagogy in order to create space for the inner work necessary to engage their whole selves in the teaching and learning process. The experiences of faculty interviewed for this study supported this finding. Each participant described a process whereby they came to question how they might incorporate mindfulness practices into their work with students, specifically in the context of their teaching, based on the

value they each personally placed on their own contemplative experiences. All of those interviewed have engaged in personal meditation or mindfulness practices for a long time, some for decades. However no one, when they began their teaching career, incorporated any aspect of their personal practice into the classroom. Nor did they overtly integrate their practice into their scholarly or creative work. Their contemplative practice and their academic work remained quite separate. This changed for each of them at a certain point some years ago when they began to experiment with contemplative pedagogy. In fact, they all seemed to engage more actively with this work after a conversation began on campus in 2006 in response to a talk given by Arthur Zajonc, then the executive director of the Association for Contemplative Mind in Society (which was founded in 1997 and whose main focus is now higher education through their Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, founded in 2008). While some were clear about how and what specifically led them to change their approach to their pedagogical practice, others viewed these changes as part of a more organic progression to teach more authentically and holistically. They identified the impetus to change as the result of a desire to connect their own experiences of contemplation and mindfulness with their teaching and their students. Again, the participants identified different impulses for this, however they all referenced an increasing level of student stress and anxiety and a desire to help students themselves develop tools to become more relaxed and present in the classroom (and in their lives). Very specifically, in one instance, one of the participants linked her decision to bring contemplative practices into her teaching in response to her increasing sense of disconnect with the culture of academia. Ultimately, all of the faculty felt that contemplative pedagogy provided important tools to help students grow

intellectually and emotionally, and that it was essential for the faculty themselves to incorporate these methods into their work so that their teaching could reflect the values and perspectives with which they approach learning and the ways in which they understand and approach their academic disciplines.

Changing Course: Bringing Contemplative Practices Into the Classroom

Faculty members described how and why they first began to introduce contemplative or mindful practices into their classroom by describing their own needs within the context of academia as well as student needs in terms of their growing levels of anxiety within a high-pressured learning environment. Jim, the faculty member who has been teaching the longest at the institution at 26 years, and the only full professor among those interviewed, explained his turn towards contemplative pedagogy this way:

My practice kept up for 3 or 4 years then I kind of let it go, um, until around the late 1990s, and I was kind of struggling in my art work and I was trying to figure out how to open new possibilities for that and so meditation seemed to really make sense. And I think it did help open new possibilities for me artistically. So my own practice started—it got renewed at that point—I started practicing seriously, and then I realized it would be useful for the students as well. So I started bringing it into all the art classes about 6 years ago I guess.

Like his peers, he was somewhat reluctant at the start, but he felt certain that this kind of experience would ultimately help the students with their own emotional well-being and, importantly, something identified by all the participants, would positively inform the way they engage with the course content:

And you know I was kind of hesitant, like most people are to bring that in, because it does mean silence, which is you know like uh oh, you know (*laughs*). I was worried about proselytizing. I was worried about forcing something on them different than what they had signed up for. But I really realized that this could be very helpful for them, just in terms of the artwork. I know it's helpful in terms of the rest of their lives as well, but the artwork, I needed to bring it in on those grounds.

Likewise, Dan identified a reason for bringing contemplative inquiry and practice into his teaching as having to do with his desire to bring himself fully and authentically into his role as teacher. And for him, too, it was not always evident that this could in fact be integrated into an academic context:

The emphasis was always there but I feel like I didn't really know how to do it and how to open a doorway...I mean, it's not new to anybody. But it's new that oh this can be part of academics...Part of what influences my teaching is having seen many professors whose lives are unbalanced and I'm thinking oh what a bad role model you are for students. And if we are working to really educate whole people and work towards a better world, we have to you know bring who we are to this classroom and show in our behavior and what we say and what we portray as important as not just being this intellectual learning.

He also spoke at length about how this change in pedagogical practice changed his teaching:

It definitely changed...it helped me understand what I want my emphasis in teaching to be. It helped me know...it helped me feel good about: how can I

teach what I think is really important within the confines of my work as a science instructor.

And he, too, linked mindfulness practice to learning modalities that could potentially enrich student learning by validating the process of meaning making as a form of participatory epistemology:

It hasn't changed any of the activities I teach that much, but it's definitely changed my being able to feel like I'm teaching what's most important. You know that there's this theme of it... There are a lot of underlying themes and this is one of them rather than ignoring it. Rather than, you know, standing up there and saying oh, science is objective mostly—and there's a subjective part too. It's just kind of a more powerful way of bringing it all in.

All of the participants suggested that their teaching had always been shaped to some degree by their own spiritual or mindfulness practices—and in the case of Henry, by his longtime practice as an Aikido instructor—and their integration of those practices into the classroom more overtly began quite organically over time. Mary, for her part, felt that she introduced contemplative work without identifying it as such because it was intrinsically linked to creative work: “And so, when I got to the college... I was experimenting with things like... I was doing typical writing stuff like bringing in little exercises, writing exercises, and there's kind of semi-contemplative things built into the arts anyways.”

Henry noted that “I think the first effort to incorporate something arguably contemplative outside of the normal teaching was Aikido as a high school teacher” and that contemplative pedagogy for him “has continued to be an area that, ah, just makes

sense if you're interested in bringing people together to have thoughtful interactions around ideas." However, he also noted that he did not include any formal mindfulness exercises in his teaching until he arrived at the college. It seemed that he brought it more directly into his teaching in part because of his own needs to address what was then a demanding new academic environment:

I did not do those (contemplative practices) at the [my] graduate school...I was doing it but I didn't actually incorporate it into my classes. But as soon as I got here, I was doing it my first semester here. I had students doing aikido out on the lawns. We were doing 60 seconds of silence by my second year....In some ways I needed it. Truth be told...I found it to be a lovely, calming...you know I had 70 students in my class. Walking into that big lecture hall and just sort of calming everybody down, including myself. I had complicated lectures going and all these ideas and OK, let's just settle it down for a second and make sure that I'm clear on where I'm going and calm them down.

Although Mary experimented with different kinds of contemplative pedagogy before she felt comfortable bringing these practices routinely into her classrooms, she was first inspired to more consciously experiment with this form of pedagogy after she heard Arthur Zajonc speak on campus: "I think I started THINKING about it more after the first roundtable and maybe experimenting a little, but I don't think I really started to bring it in until after I had that workshop with Arthur. But I remember at that workshop wanting to share what I did." She also noted that the initial process was not entirely smooth or comfortable: "What I remember is that it was hard to start. I can tell you that. I remember the first time I did it I was really scared. And I was thrilled I had a name for

it. I could say to my students: ‘This is something called contemplative pedagogy and it’s a movement in higher ed.’”

And Jim stressed that he began to link these practices to his teaching based on his own positive experiences with mindfulness meditation and its influence on his artwork: “It was definitely out of my own experience and my own experience with art, you know, that led it into the classroom.... Well I mean I knew it would make me a better teacher (laughs). And I knew it would make for a better situation in the classroom.”

Rose’s process was more directly linked to the evolution of her own practice:

In the process of getting tenure and recovering from that was when I up-ed my own spiritual practice and then I thought, wow, I felt that I had more tools to bring into the classroom that...so it all happened kind of organically. I didn’t even know there was such a movement as contemplative practice in the classroom... I thought well, here’s my own spiritual life and here’s already I try to do a lot of things and pedagogy that are basically teaching the whole person, recognizing that students have hearts and bodies as well as intellects. So that was already...so that kind of groundwork was already there from the start...from when I started teaching.

However, Rose also noted that her own exploration into ways to incorporate mindfulness practices into her teaching was embedded within a much more difficult personal struggle to find meaning and a sense of purpose in her role in academia. Rose benefitted enormously as one of the first recipients of a Fetzer Grant to bring contemplative pedagogy into course design. (Contemplative Practice Fellowships managed by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society were funded through the Nathan Cummings

Foundation and Fetzer Institute and administered by American Council of Learned Societies and The Center. The Contemplative Fellowships of up to \$20,000 supported the “creation of curriculum in diverse disciplines that encompass and encourage the study of contemplation,” CMind Website, 2014.) However, she also noted that through discussions with the other Fetzer Fellows she identified ways in which she had struggled in her academic life. In this way she articulated a phenomenon identified by each of the participants that had to do with different ways in which they felt the unique culture of higher education led to professional lives that were both highly stressful and highly fragmented. It was in this context that they discussed their own need to teach in a way that was personally fulfilling and which connected them more profoundly to their academic or creative work and to their students:

There was also...what does it mean, what does it mean to be a whole person...as a faculty person? And what does it mean to be a whole person...teaching a whole person? So we spent more time talking about our fractured lives. And there was a lot of sharing across very painful experiences...

Meditation, aikido, mindfulness exercises, yoga, spiritual contemplation, are all different forms of contemplative practice that inform the life and the work of these faculty members. Consequently, in order to engage their students and their work with integrity and a sense of authenticity, they all felt compelled to teach through a lens of mindfulness and connected and engaged learning. Indeed, it was clear that their intention to teach mindfully and to teach mindfulness was inextricably embedded in their commitment to teach *from* a place of wholeness while seeing their students in their wholeness. In other words, their contemplative practices provided a context out of which

they could link how they taught to the emotional and psychological lives of their students and themselves. Rose struggled with the disconnect she felt in academia: “I went into this [teaching in academia] for this reason, I thought it was going to be this, it’s not this, it’s that...and that is like harming me spiritually and psychologically.” Several years after getting tenure, Rose made the very difficult decision to relinquish her tenured status in order to remain at the university in the role of senior lecturer. She observed:

In my post-tenure despair I was like: how do I bring the rest of myself into this? And how do I reach students in other ways? Not that I wasn’t reaching them. I was reaching them but, I felt a little bit like, for different reasons, their suffering in this cultural moment, they weren’t the same reasons as me, but I felt that if I could address some of that—and just seeing the stress level on campus...I knew I wanted to unify myself a little, just for my own sanity.

Mary summed up the depth of the experience overall as it was described by each of the participants. For them, bringing a contemplative, mindful framework to their teaching reengages them with their central purpose for teaching by linking their love of teaching, their students, their research and art work with the emotional and intellectual life of the student-teacher exchange:

And now what I find really interesting is that my voice completely changes when I speak in the classroom. It’s much deeper. And it’s slower. And I think I sound more like...the unconditional love comes out...This is where you have to be to do it, right? You are feeling love. That’s where I am and it comes out in my voice...And whatever it is that comes up um is just such I think it’s like the thing that makes me want to be a teacher to begin with! You know? It’s just kind of

like, it's about being human, it's like OK this is my full humanity that's speaking.

Contemplative Pedagogy and Social Justice Education

Meanwhile, Henry described why contemplative practice is also important as a mechanism to deepen the learning experience by breaking down binaries that can reinforce paradigms of separation and otherness:

When that happens, when you enable to create a space in which the whole human being is welcomed and feels safe, you can do things in that classroom, you can take people to places of learning that they have never been before... So if you can bring the bodies of your classroom to light, to awareness, through breath, through contemplation, and welcome every single body, you are welcoming all sorts of difference. You are including difference in a profound way. And you can say, well no I'm just interested in intellectual work. Yes, but the intellectual work is part of a biography of mind and spirit, and so you can actually do the intellectual work more deeply if you create an environment in which every body feels fully welcomed in that class, but not called out because of the particular body which I am.

This is a framework that was echoed by others as they attempted to articulate how the use of collaborative and collective contemplative practices can open learning communities to a more expansive and accepting climate for intellectual discourse and exploration.

Mary spoke about the fact that her teaching has always been at "the intersections of disciplines or divisions" and from early on in her teaching she was trying to create environments that "had a contemplative quality": "I was bringing issues of race and class and gender and sexuality into my classroom *intentionally*, and so already we had that

elevated emotion in the classroom that comes with addressing social issues...and so I, so already I was working extra hard at making sure that the environment had a contemplative quality, even though that wasn't the word I was using... I was using the word community.”

In fact it was through social justice work that Mary was introduced to contemplative pedagogy:

A number of colleagues and I got a grant to do social justice work in the classroom. And one of the speakers we brought up...came to talk about social justice. She started us off—she just came in and she spread a piece of cloth on the table and she put a bell in the middle of the cloth, and as we came in, as people were coming in the room, she was completely silent, she was just smiling and being quiet as we took our places and she let everyone make small talk and she just waited until the talk had simmered down and she never said a word. She never said: “OK stop talking...” And then she said OK and I think she said something like we're going to have a moment of silence now and she rang a bell and we had a moment of silence and then she said: “That is called contemplative pedagogy.”

Mary in fact directly linked her use of contemplative practice with issues related to social justice in the classroom:

If I'm in a classroom and we're talking about white privilege or we're talking about gender and I know that's going to be a little hard for the students, it might not be about the writing we're going to do, it might be “I know you all just read something about white privilege, um”...then I might say can you notice what

feelings that text brought up in you in your body? Because you know so often we jump to our intellectual analysis...And, so you know, do you feel excitement, shame, fear, you know, whatever. Um, and then...and I've noticed that has a really fluid effect on the conversation afterwards. There's less defensiveness and nervous chatter and more thoughtful responses to the text.

Although not all faculty members mentioned social justice specifically, it was clear from their comments that they all shared a teaching approach that supports honest self-expression and compassionate inquiry in the context of mindful learning. In their words and in their course syllabi they demonstrated their interest in engaging the students intellectually and emotionally and creating classroom climates that were respectful, that were grounded in truth and fairness, and that provided safe environments for personal exploration and intellectual and emotional discovery. In this way all faculty expressed direct and indirect learning objectives that linked contemplative pedagogy with the goals of social justice education.

The Mindful Learner: Contemplation and Intellectual Inquiry

Another important reason cited by faculty to incorporate mindfulness and contemplative practices into their teaching had to do with their belief that mindfulness and contemplative work develops in students an ability to approach content from a perspective of integrated and experiential seeing as well as with deeper personal connection. In other words, there was a shared understanding that mindful, reflective students can deepen their intellectual agency by approaching learning from an inner stance that is open but focused and connected and that recognizes the ways in which

meaning is made through subjective/objective embeddedness. This is very much in keeping with Rendón's (2009) integrative/illuminative stance reflecting the relationship between subject and object and content and contemplation in her approach to pedagogy. In her conception of a pedagogy that incorporates content and contemplation, she noted how the two are connected and complementary and that "when the dualities are united, knowledge and wisdom may evolve" (p. 88). Likewise, the study participants identified important ways that they link the value and purpose of contemplation and mindfulness inquiry and practice with a deepening level of intellectual and personal inquiry and understanding. In addition, Henry noted how this framework aligns with the purposes of a residential liberal arts setting: "Contemplative practices have a profound role to play in attending to the quality of human interactions we're having as we're doing our content, our intellectual work together. You know, the quality of the work we're doing together [is important within] a residential liberal arts college."

Since Henry's field is education, he discussed how using these practices enables him to model a form of pedagogy that he values within the context of teaching his students different approaches to teaching and learning. As he noted:

[These] practices, I think when they're worked in over the course of a semester, from my point of view, they increase the awareness of different ways of doing intellectual work that is not just a lecture. It's not ONLY a discussion. That there's ways to move in and out of a variety of pedagogical approaches, and if we're an education program, we should be working on that, we should be explicitly modeling different kinds of pedagogical approaches and then explaining the rationale for those different pedagogical approaches: Here's why I'm doing

this and here's why I think it might be relevant for your own teaching. Or, I'm doing this because I really care about this particular way of thinking about a problem, so I'd like to share this methodology with you and then let's talk about the impact it is having on us.

Jim, who noted that his recent book explored "particular ties with an open, meditative state of mind and the practice of photography," was clear about the benefits he believes mindfulness practice brings to the students. Specifically, in his case, he focused on how it helps students to better understand their minds in order to gain greater access to their own creativity:

Certainly looking at our own minds and trying to understand what it's impact and what the repercussions are, I mean that should have a foremost and central place in academia... I refer to that state of mind and I refer to openness, I talk about repetitive thought patterns. I did some of that before, anyway, but I'm doing it a little more actively and I'm trying to link it together to some extent... I told [the students] that they might think about their meditative state of mind when they approach this [assignment], that it would be helpful, and that it certainly was.

Dan, who in his scholarly work is interested in systems theory as it applies specifically to ecology, also identified in our discussions how a mindful awareness can help students approach their study of the environment by placing themselves *within* the systems they are observing. This is in marked contrast to the more traditional pedagogic approach in the sciences that locates the subject outside of and separate from the object under study. Jim noted:

I think of it as from a larger systems view. Like, look at what history shows about what this is. Look at how disconnected we are from the way nature and life cycles really work. Let's not just study this tiny part and pretend that it exists out here on it's own. Let's look at it within the context of the human endeavor in the whole earth system. That, I think, would be good education.

He continued by explaining the value he places in this form of learning and what some of his goals are in incorporating mindfulness and contemplative practices into his teaching:

It's kind of about exploring the ambiguity in the human experience in some respects. Cause I think these practices do both a focusing in and a kind of...casting a huge net...And that's part of what I want to do: have students experience that complexity, that messiness. That messiness is real and we try to control and manage and model, you know, take out all the uncertainty. So, another one of my big interests in teaching and in all of this is also trying to push students to go beyond that and to see how we've learned these things through theoretical physics, through new biology, about chaos, uncertainty, cooperation in life systems rather than competition. And so that's...I think some of this is best explored for most of us through these contemplative and embodied type practices, rather than mathematical models for sure aren't going to work for most of us.

Dan also stressed his view that it is through this embodied connection that these practices deepen learning: "If you're leaving the connection always out there, it's not really connection. So these practices help bring the connection in: body and spirit get connected to this intellectual learning-knowing knowledge."

Mary linked the contemplative work she does with her students to a direct result

she observes in the quality of her students' writing. "The more I do contemplative pedagogy in the classroom...there's less drama in their writing. You know. Their pieces grow!...Especially the classes where I've been really intentional about it. It's just amazing. I mean I get these pieces back and I mean WOW."

Rose discussed the assumptions that inform how and why she uses contemplative pedagogy, and how she perceives its benefits for students as learners:

There's the assumption I bring into it that we all have psycho-spiritual lives, um, and I link those two because for some I think it's more psychological and for others more spiritual. And then, coming from that, then the student is best taught as a whole person, body, spirit, mind...and that when you bring a certain attentiveness...when you sort of change what you're doing so that there's a kind of stillness and attentiveness to the text, or the problem or whatever it is you're doing, sometimes listening to one another, um, that deepens learning, it creates...a portal, you know, for things to enter, that isn't otherwise there.

To return to Henry, he provided a working definition of contemplative pedagogy that conveyed for him the purpose of this approach to teaching in the context of a broader, privileged liberal arts institution:

Contemplative practices are practices that foster, that quiet the mind and foster the capacity for insight. And then with Kabat-Zinn's "Being in the present moment without attachment and without evaluation"...But fundamentally for me now it is about trying to enable the whole human being to be in that classroom. Right...so to bring yourself, body, mind and spirit—I'm sort of greedy. I don't just want your brain. I want all of you in my classroom here and now... Education is a

moral endeavor period. How it's structured, who's paying for it. Every single one of those things is a moral decision, an ethical decision. So, at a liberal arts college like ours, we must take on the ethical question. You know, what are the values we hold in this institution, and where are we holding ourselves and our students accountable for upholding those ethical commitments? That's a really important question. And I think contemplative practices are in fact...raise ethical questions about how we are coming together as a community of people. I think that's where it is. Let's give one another the attention and the text the focus that it deserves. That is an ethical stance. It's a moral stance. And if sitting silently helps us to attend to that ethical stance, I don't have a problem with it.

Finally, Dan stressed that from his perspective contemplative pedagogy provides an important alternative to traditional forms of teaching which might in fact no longer be effective given the nature of our highly technological world:

But it's so easy to get facts and information these days. I think a lot of the professors at Hillside College are teaching disciplinary ways of knowing and finding out knowledge. They're not teaching facts they're teaching thinking and critical thinking and how do we discover knowledge. But it doesn't include these other ways of knowing and experiencing within our bodies.

Developing the Whole Student through Contemplative Practice

As noted above, participants all discussed the fact that one of their reasons for bringing contemplative pedagogy into the classroom had to do with the benefits they thought it would bring to the students. In all cases, faculty identified contemplative pedagogy as a learning framework that could inform students' capacity to become

mindful learners. In this context, I reference the definition of mindful learning articulated by Langer (2000): “Being mindful...leads us to greater sensitivity to context and perspective, and ultimately to greater control over our lives. When we engage in mindful learning, we avoid forming mind-sets that unnecessarily limit us” (p. 220). This perspective was shared by all of the faculty interviewed, and was connected to their belief that mindfulness and contemplation in the learning environment of the classroom support students to approach their area of inquiry with greater presence and awareness and greater attentiveness to the relationship between subject and object or student and content. What was implied, in turn, was that mindful teaching can deepen the relationship between student and teacher, thus invigorating student learning with a sense of relevance and purpose. It can provide an emotional ballast to the intellectual work of the student while engaging the complexities of content both empirically and rationally. This was an important point made evident through the interviews and the student feedback.

Henry addressed the research and the science as a way to discuss how these practices can help students become mindful learners: “There’s a lot of science research that says there’s two forms of attention we need to foster. One is the ability to really focus intensely. And the other one is to really be able to focus openly...So we know that there’s some interesting relationship between these sort of forms of thinking and that if we can foster them consciously in a classroom that we make the point that we’re actually looking at two...we’re looking at two different kinds of thinking and we want both kinds: the really intense, zeroed-in focus, and then the sort of peaceful abiding kind of

attention.” While Dan noted how he uses this more non-traditional approach to learning (subversive to some) to push students to think in new ways:

The subversion is that you know inner connection and a relationship rather than reductionism and this really is gonna throw all that thinking out and what does this mean?... We don't think that within science we're supposed to bring all these other questions and these other ways of learning in. And students come in thinking ah the professor wants them to give certain answers and perform in a certain way, and [instead] I say: “What I want to see is your understanding and how you put things together.”

Jim, meanwhile, linked the intended effects of mindfulness practice to the way students could more expansively approach their art work: “They seemed to understand the rationale of kind of looking at ourselves we can see the repetitive thought patterns and a lot of that can produce repetitive art work, so being able to kind of settle down, using the breath to stay present, and also paying attention to what's going on in our heads, can be helpful in that way.” He continued: “many meditation forms...do open up and allow for the expansive state of mind that does allow for creativity.” And Mary recognized that part of the value of bringing in certain practices was: “making the class into a space that is for the whole person...and that helps diffuse some of the anxiety around writing and the academic culture, and that nurtures creativity.” What is clear from this is that their reasons for bringing contemplative practices into the classroom had to do with their own need to engage students in a way that felt purposeful to themselves (using mindfulness and contemplation as a platform for teaching), and their belief that these practices would simultaneously help develop in their students a capacity for more expansive, mindful

inquiry.

Mindfulness and Self-Care

Another clear theme that emerged from the data was that faculty felt acutely concerned for the wellbeing of their students in what they all described as a highly stressful and highly pressured learning environment. The college is one of the country's most selective and has a reputation for being rigorous and demanding academically. In addition, the college is supported by a large endowment and a significant percentage of the students come from families whose incomes are among the highest in the country. That is not to say that all students at the college share in this privileged background. But all students on campus do share in what can feel like a high-stakes learning environment, whether they are embedded in a culture of wealth and private education or whether they come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, from marginalized communities, or are the first in their family to attend college. For all students, the pressure is great to succeed. The consequences noted by the faculty include high levels of anxiety in the students as well as depression and, among the women, eating disorders. One faculty member mentioned suicide as an ever-present concern. In their role as teachers they have each come to use mindfulness and contemplative practices to help students navigate the emotional challenges the students face on this particular campus.

Mary described her response to student needs this way: "So sometimes it's about their emotional reaction to a text, and sometimes it's about a piece that they're going to be working on. And more and more I've started to actually just do it as artist self-care when I think the kids need it and sometimes I don't even bring up a piece or a reading. It's just like: "Could you thank your body for carrying you around." "Thank your mind

for all the work that it's doing...like your brain." So some of that is just self-care and sort of helping them reframe...the intense build-up of anxiety and stress that starts to happen [here]." And Jim described his use of mindfulness practice in response to what he perceived to be an increasingly unhealthy environment for his students:

I'm also thinking about the students...I am thinking about their own lives and how they're going to proceed here at the college and in the future. I don't like to see them suffering with their own processes...I had a couple of kids, before I was doing this...One of them, a young man, killed himself...and that just shows the extremes of what's happening. I mean the eating disorders here are just like insane amongst the women and uh...and you know everybody's anxious it seems. So I'm also, I'm concerned about that.

Rose reinforced the link between a mindful state and the self-efficacy of the student:

"The safer and more centered a student feels the better able they are to learn."

Henry referenced "this hyper-evaluative, hyper-reactive environment" as presenting its own challenges for the students and the institution and faculty: "And the hunger I feel in students for relevancy and authenticity, which is overused but these are kids who've taken 7-8 AP courses. They will remember anything that you give them. So what are you going to give them?...What is the quality of intellectual work that we need to be doing together?" Jim also identified this phenomenon among the student body:

"Yeah, I think it's good. It also enables the students to really um—you know they're all rushing around. This place heaps the work on the students. I think it's too much you know. Everybody realizes it and nobody is really doing anything because they think that their area justifies whatever...so the kids are really racing around. They tend to be really

anxious anyway. They're over-achievers, they're always measuring things. So coming into class and stopping for a few minutes I think they really welcome that. In addition to, I think they realize that it's helpful to their art practice too."

For all of the participants, one response to Henry's question, about how to fully engage the whole student in this highly stressful context, has been to approach teaching and learning as a fully embodied, integrative, collaborative act of meaning making, supported and informed by a contemplative and mindful practice.

Positive Student Experiences

Participants also consistently referenced the fact that their integration of contemplative practices into their teaching was informed by the impact this approach to pedagogy had on the students, as evidenced by student feedback, the ways in which student work was strengthened and deepened in the process, and the very striking impact the practices had on classroom climate and student wellbeing. While most faculty were initially drawn to contemplative pedagogy because of the benefits they perceived it would bring to themselves and their teaching, they all stressed that they continued to develop ways to bring mindfulness and contemplative practices into their classrooms because the students have responded consistently positively to its application. Henry said, quite simply: "If it wasn't efficacious, if the students didn't find it meaningful, then I would have stopped."

All of the participants identified ways in which the students expressed their appreciation for having these kinds of experiences brought directly into the classroom. Henry, again, noted that regarding student feedback: "I would say overwhelmingly, it's positive. They appreciate the silence, they appreciate the experience." Jim referenced

the fact that his students have always responded positively to the incorporation of these practices into this teaching, and it was evident that this was extremely important to his decision to continue to develop new ways to bring these practices more fully into his teaching:

And the response was overwhelmingly positive. You know, no one had any problem with it, and they seemed to understand the rationale of kind of looking at ourselves we can see the repetitive thought patterns and a lot of that can produce repetitive art work, so being able to kind of settle down, using the breath to stay present, and also paying attention to what's going on in our heads, can be helpful in that way. And also there's an openness that comes with it too...So the response has been really, totally positive. Since then I've been increasing the times: first it was shorter than 10, now it can go longer than 10.

In fact, Jim and Rose both experimented with teaching an entire class *on* meditation, as opposed to embedding mindfulness practices within an academic course. This development was informed by the very positive feedback prior students had given regarding their experiences working with these practices. The ideas for these courses also came out of the instructors' intentions to more fully engage students in meditation and contemplation while making the practice itself the focus of inquiry. As Jim said in explaining his reasons for developing the course: "Certainly looking at our own minds and trying to understand what it's impact and what the repercussions are, I mean that should have a foremost and central place in academia." In his course the texts were strictly about meditation, most based on Zen and Tibetan meditation traditions. The course took place over a three-week winter semester, in which classes meet for several

hours four days a week. This provided an opportunity for more intensive practice, and again the feedback was enormously positive: “It was very intense, you know, it was 4 days a week, three hour classes, and we meditated, we did sitting meditation for, I don’t know, 2 ¼ hours each of those three hours. Some of the kids had had a little experience, but most of them had not...The responses were over the top, so that was very nice.”

Rose’s course was entitled “Contemplative Practice and Social Change” and it too was taught over a winter term: “The premise was, here are all these social change folks who have done amazing things, Gandhi, King, and then some lesser knowns, and they all have a spiritual practice. Technically not a contemplative practice...And I said that part of what I wanted to do is have our own non-religious mindfulness practices just to get a sense of what was going on for these people.” Rose used the context of social change as a platform to bring students more deeply into these practices. And she was pleased by what she discovered in the process and by the feedback she received from her students:

I really liked that we were doing a practice together because a certain formality remained, um, but so, but there was a kind of—I wouldn’t use the word spiritual necessarily—but there was certainly a kind of community that developed just because we were sitting and meditating together. And then I would often give what I would call a practice talk...and then I would do...more lengthy meditations like 15-20 minutes and we would be reading something, I would say, so what came up, you know. What were your experiences? And people would be very open and would talk about bodily experiences or what they were distracted by or emotions that came up...so I would share too. And that’s again not a level of intimacy I would normally get in class, so...I loved that.

Dan, for his part, said it was hard to determine how students felt about or responded to the contemplative practices he introduced to them, but he believed they did have a positive impact but that the impact would most likely be more identifiable over time: “When people are too close to what they’ve learned they can’t reflect on it in the same way as they can when you’re five years out. So, I’m sure it has an effect. And I’m sure that...I can’t imagine that a student wouldn’t reflect on it at some other points out of the classroom.” But he also suggested that, since this is such an unfamiliar framework for learning for most students, how they would respond to its impact would probably be defined over time more qualitatively, in line with the nature of the experiential process itself. He said it this way: “I think the outcomes and effects are totally qualitative on certain nonmeasurables, all part of the new emergent properties that are to come about as society develops.” But he also said: “I think it’s doing something helpful on numerous levels. And I actually feel like I would be doing a total disservice to teaching students to understand environmental systems if we didn’t do at least some of this in some ways.”

Finally, Mary captured this notion of reading student’s experiences of mindful practices through the quality of their responses in the classroom. And she described too how this experience of attending to and noticing the results of these practices on the students and the teacher-student exchange consistently reinforced her intention to use these practices to deepen her teaching and the student experience:

And what gave me confidence to keep doing it was students were really interested...Student response has been 90 to 95% positive...usually about a quarter of the class or fifth of the class voluntarily put it in their teacher evals and it’s always because they say it was great...I also get verbal feedback from

students that they like it...And also students will not necessarily say something but after I do contemplative pedagogy with a class they will give me a look of pure love (*laughing*)! Like: thank you so much for that. So I mean...I feel like they have various ways of communicating their appreciation of what's happened.

The Mindful Classroom: Conceptualizing and Implementing

Contemplative Pedagogy

The incorporation of contemplative practices in Western curricula is still a relatively marginal phenomenon...One reason for this marginality is that we have not yet developed a rigorous conceptualization of contemplative practice as pedagogy. (Ergas, 2013, p. 4)

The findings of this study suggest that while the faculty interviewed shared the same terminology to identify and describe their approaches to contemplative pedagogy—including contemplation, inquiry, mindfulness, meditation, holistic, embodied, spirit, spiritual--they did not all approach the practices in the same way nor did the language they use signify the same thing for each person. Despite the fact that faculty shared in their reasons for developing contemplative pedagogies, each person integrated these practices into their classrooms in similar but different ways. Like any pedagogy that informs instruction, these practices were designed and implemented in ways that were specific to each teacher and each class. Indeed, while there was a consensus about goals and purposes for including mindfulness and contemplative practices into the classroom, there was no single definition of what contemplative pedagogy is or looks like. In fact, when asked if they could articulate a definition of contemplative pedagogy, the participants found it difficult to spontaneously formulate a precise description of the

practice and its purpose.

Contemplative Traditions

Henry, when asked this question, began with what he remembered to be a specific definition of mindfulness, and from there added thoughts about what the practices meant to him: “You know contemplative practices are practices that foster, that quiet the mind and foster the capacity for insight—I think is one of the early definitions. And then Kabat-Zinn’s: “Being in the present moment without attachment and without evaluation.” So those were really helpful. But fundamentally for me now it is about trying to enable the whole human being to be in that classroom. Right...so to bring yourself, body, mind and spirit.” Henry’s experience with contemplative practice has included a very advanced level of work in Aikido, which he referenced frequently in our conversations. And in his comments about how he utilized contemplative pedagogy he often referred to contemplative exercises as embodied practices that allow for the student (and teacher) to be more present to each other and to the intellectual work at hand.

Mary, Dan and Jim have each been practicing a form of Buddhist meditation for many years. Mary and Dan’s Buddhist practices are based in the Zen tradition; Jim described his practice as primarily informed by the Shambhala tradition. (Although the texts he used for his class on meditation were mostly by Zen writers.) These Buddhist practitioners spoke often of mindfulness and insight as two aspects of contemplative pedagogy that informed their teaching. For Jim, this was evident when he discussed how the practices he used could quiet the mind while giving the students greater insight into their own patterns of repetitive (and distracting) thinking: “I try to refer to [mindfulness] and I refer to that state of mind and I refer to openness, I talk about repetitive thought

patterns...I'm trying to link it together to some extent." Dan, like Henry, referred in his definition to a more expansive context for learning, one which moves beyond the idea of learning as a rational construct of knowledge acquisition: "I guess the broadest, simplest definition would be something like mind, body, spirit way of approaching pedagogy rather than just a mind/intellect way." And Mary, likewise referred to contemplative practices as "making the class into a space that is for the whole person...and that helps diffuse some of the anxiety around writing and the academic culture...and that nurtures creativity."

In contrast, Rose approached contemplative pedagogy with an emphasis on the contemplative part of the practice, as opposed to mindfulness or mindfulness meditation. Rose's personal practice consists of meditation and mindfulness and is connected to a Jewish spiritual tradition. As a religious scholar she also wanted to emphasize in her work the non-religious aspect of the practices. And yet she was clear that her use of meditation and inquiry was linked to a spiritual notion of contemplation: "I said that part of what I wanted to do is have our own non-religious mindfulness practices...How a contemplative life, or some kind of...I really worked around the spiritual thing, but as I introduced it in the class, I said obviously this has Buddhist roots, um, that's not what we're doing here. You know, I was very, very clear about what we weren't doing. And then I said, but, because all of these people...had their own spiritual practices, this is an experiential dimension that I want to explore." Contemplative inquiry for Rose was central to the practices being introduced to her students. While for Jim, "contemplative" was a more problematic word to use in this context: "The term contemplative practices too, that's kind of a cagey term and I think that's how sort of it snuck in in a certain way,

by using that instead of using mindfulness or meditation, which might be more loaded in the religious sense.”

Describing Contemplative Practice in Course Materials

So while the participants shared similar intentions in bringing contemplative practices into their teaching—both as a tool to support their own work as mindful teachers and as a practice to guide students towards more open and mindful aptitudes and attitudes as mindful learners—the techniques they used and the language they used to introduce these practices to the students varied based on their own backgrounds engaging spiritual or contemplative or mindfulness practices. In a similar vein, they each identified contemplative pedagogy differently in their course syllabi and course descriptions. There was not one standard descriptor that was used to explain how contemplative or mindfulness practice might be embedded in a particular curriculum or course. Indeed, in some cases it was not mentioned at all. For example, Mary noted that: “I like it when I do it more mindfully and gradually. But, I’m not always in that space. And it’s not built into my syllabus.” While her syllabus does not explicitly mention contemplative pedagogy or mindfulness practice, this is how she references this work in two of her course descriptions on the college website: “We will discuss the content and the style of these texts as well as engage in writing workshops, contemplative exercises, and a service learning exchange with high school writers in NYC.” And: “Together we will engage in some contemplative practice and study selected films.”

Dan’s course syllabi and online course descriptions likewise make no mention of contemplation or mindfulness. And the same is true for Rose, with the exception of an assignment she uses in her “Nature’s Meanings” course called The Environmental

Imagination Project. That assignment involves finding a place in nature to which each student will return every week throughout the term for one hour. As Rose described it: “...it should be a place that will invite you to experience and contemplate the non-human, as well as human-built environment.” The directions are these:

During your visits, you may wish to simply BE in the place, or you may want to write some things down while you are there. Either approach is fine. As soon as possible after your visit, however, you will be asked to write a short journal entry...that captures your experience of the place and also comments on the reading you have been doing for the week and the conversations we have been having in class.

Both Henry and Jim, on the other hand, explicitly embedded mindfulness or contemplative practices into their course material. While Henry’s course descriptions on the college website made no mention of contemplative practice or pedagogy, here is how he described his contemplative framework for teaching in his Secondary Methods syllabus:

This course seeks to foster a meditative perspective towards teaching by introducing you to contemplative practices as an integral part of the course.

Broadly defined, a contemplative practice is “any activity that quiets the mind in order to cultivate the capacity for insight.” A meditative perspective, then, is built through contemplative practice and enables a teacher to welcome silence as an opportunity for reflection and/or stillness. Patience, sustainability, calmness, integrity, compassion—these are some of the characteristics of a teacher who is able to engage his or her students with a meditative perspective. In the non-stop

frantic world of K-12 teaching, the ability to quiet the mind so that one is better able to listen to, and “see,” students is a crucial component of effective teaching. Our work in this regard is heavily shaped by the philosophy and practices fostered by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society in Northampton, Massachusetts. Jim, in the course descriptions for his photography classes, included this reference to mindfulness at the end of each text: “Non-sectarian mindfulness practice will be part of this class.” However, this is how he described his intensive introduction to meditation class:

Basic sitting and walking meditation will be taught and practiced. We will use the breath to foster a relaxed attention and to gain perspective on our restless minds. Meditation has been shown to lower stress and increase concentration, but the emphasis in this course will be on using these techniques in daily life and academic endeavor. Contemporary readings from the Tibetan and Zen Buddhist traditions will be assigned but the meditation will be employed in nonsectarian fashion applicable to any belief system. Truth should be verified by one’s experience. Students will write papers and give presentations. No meditation experience necessary.

What is telling here is that the participants, while personally committed to a contemplative dimension to teaching and learning, are perhaps themselves navigating issues concerning what this pedagogical landscape signifies to other faculty and to the students. While all faculty mentioned that they felt perfectly comfortable within the context of their college community to engage learning through this contemplative lens, it

nevertheless appears to be an aspect of their teaching that is still only marginally (in most cases) identified as central to their pedagogy in written course material.

One reason for this could have to do with an issue that came up in the course of the interviews about the need to introduce this form of mindful teaching in a clearly non-secular framework. All of the faculty made it clear that they were introducing these practices in a way that was devoid of spiritual context, even though they were indeed drawing on their own personal experiences within the context of a specific tradition. There was a clearly conscious decision made on the part of each of the faculty members to present these practices specifically as teaching-learning tools, as pedagogical tools, and not as anything associated with any specific spiritual tradition. However, when Jim approached the philosophy and religious departments to see if they might be interested in co-sponsoring a course on contemplation and meditation, he ran into the kind of resistance that can be more common on college campuses. He also then explained his approach to these practices in a way that would stand equally for all of the faculty participants:

So early on I sought support from the philosophy and religion department, and that was a total mistake, especially for the religion department. I got back a really aggressive letter from the chair basically saying that, you know, we pride ourselves on being academically objective and we don't want any of the practice stuff coming into the classroom. And this was after, I was very careful to explain that this is...it's an investigation of the philosophy, it's a totally secular practice, and there's no belief structures being incorporated at all. It's really just looking at our minds and looking at our experience and trying to understand what's going on

with that. And we're trying to understand some Buddhist structures to prompt questions. But that's as far as it goes. And I think that's as far as it should go, because anything else becomes proselytizing and really doesn't have a place in academia. But certainly looking at our own minds and trying to understand its impact and what the repercussions are, I mean that should have a foremost and central place in academia.

Rose put it this way: "I really worked around the spiritual thing, but as I introduced it in the class, I said obviously this has Buddhist roots, um, that's not what we're doing here. You know, I was very, very clear about what we weren't doing."

Based on the participants' descriptions of what they were doing in the classroom, they were all exploring ways to integrate a nonsecular, mindful, embodied form of teaching and learning into the intellectual work they were doing with the students in order to deepen student learning, to allow the instructors to teach in a mindful and connected way, and to broaden the epistemological dimension of the learning process (replacing the dualistic learning stance of subject/object with an integrative stance of subject/object/contemplation, per Rendón, 2009) in order to explore learning as an expression of experiential inquiry. This has the potential for knowledge to open into wisdom or, as Rendón (2009) said, "when the dualities are united, knowledge and wisdom may evolve" (p. 88).

Contemplative Practice as Embodied Learning

To return to the question of what contemplative pedagogy looked like as implemented by these faculty, although the exercises and activities were different, what they shared in common was their focus on bringing attention to, and attending to, the

body, and identifying the body as a vehicle not just for intellectual knowing but for mindful, embodied knowing. In other words, each of the participants used mindfulness, meditation, or contemplation as tools to shift the class's frame of reference inward, to the emotional-psychological-physical expanse from which each person makes meaning by engaging with the outer world. As Langer (2000) described it, reality is not fixed but always changing. Thus when we consider any phenomenon, if we do not do so mindfully, we risk confusing our mind-sets with the phenomenon itself: "And the mind-sets we hold regarding learning more often than not encourage mindlessness, although learning requires mindful engagement with the material" (p. 220). In addition, as noted above, these practices were used both to foster a more flexible and attentive state of mind and to help students manage and regulate their high levels of anxiety and depression.

While Jim and Dan described using simple, short, guided meditations in their classes, and Rose used both short meditations and the Education Imagination Project, Henry and Mary used more visual, directed, physical prompts to help the students engage their bodies, find expression through voice, and focus on calming breath. Mary described one activity this way:

I'll start out with the body. I'll move to the breath. Then I'll move to the guided visualization about whatever they're working on. And what I had done before I started all that, I had handed out a paper where they draw a picture of their voice...oh I had them finding their voice in their bodies. I was like: "If you could find your voice what does your voice look like." ...I'll also tell them to open up the bottoms of their feet and feel the earth...Or [I say], where are you anxious? Where do you feel you maybe have too many texts or too few or not the right one

or ...just to help people think about the stuff they already kind of know but maybe are too anxious or scattered to bring their mind to. Um and sort of inviting them to allow the evolution or a change or a shift and to experience it energetically before they come up with “the” answer.

While Henry described a very specific and very physically engaging strategy to bring students’ attention to their bodies:

We’ll sit for a minute or two, and I’ll ask them to stand up and invert the head so that there’s actually a blood flow to the head so we’re all tired in the afternoon, after lunch. And then we actually stretch a little bit, so there’s actually... literally to get blood flow um, moving out of the belly up through the head and down through the legs. But then the two deep breaths, which we know increase circulation and we know good circulation to the brain is a really helpful thing and the brain functions better when we have better circulation. So the combination of blood flow and breath, we know clinically is good for cognition so the idea is to actually do that and then I do two mighty shouts, as I call them, the two Kia shouts and I do that for a couple of reasons, one again to sort of bring our attention, to bring some energy to the stillness, but also so every student’s voice is heard loudly...So by doing this practice and ‘aehh’ two very loud Kia shouts from a martial practice, you’re actually getting to know your own voice when it’s utterly calm and centered and extremely powerful.

What all of the faculty share in their approach to contemplative pedagogy is using mindfulness practices, meditation, silence, contemplation, reflection, breathing and movement exercises, writing or artwork, as means to help the students experience

learning as a fully embodied and connected process. “Contemplative practices and their effects are many and varied; nevertheless we must provide an elaborate understanding of the *educational process* they invoke if we wish to justify their place within the curriculum” (Ergas, 2013, p. 4).

Building Teaching-Learning Communities through Mindful Practice

Finally, what was evident through this study was that the faculty participants all felt relatively free to explore pedagogy of their choosing as long as it was experienced positively by the students and the students felt it was of benefit to them. The consensus was that the administration really left the faculty very much on their own to freely develop their individual teaching strategies, and only in one case did a faculty member say that he did not broadcast loudly his use of contemplative pedagogy since he does not have the security of a tenured position. And one other implied that the college administration did not actively support this interest in contemplative pedagogy: “But the administration is also, they’re resistant to it, you know. They don’t really fully value it, I don’t think.” But overall the participants felt that they were free to explore and continue to develop their use of contemplative and mindfulness practices in the classroom. In fact, in the course of this research I discovered that there are other faculty on campus interested in bringing this kind of teaching model into their classrooms, and considering the relatively small size of the college community, it seems to suggest that faculty are both supportive of each other in this endeavor and feel unencumbered by the administration in a way that allows them to freely engage their specific teaching preferences and styles.

Observations From the Field

Throughout this study I attended and observed many classes in which contemplative practices were engaged. However, in most cases, contemplative practices referred to a very simple exercise of sitting quietly at the start of the class prior to an active encounter with the course material. In others, the contemplative element of the course took place outside of class through assignments that intended to draw student attention inward in the context of a particular area of study. What I noticed in this context is that student participation and experience is linked to how these practices are introduced and modeled for the students. In other words, when instructors themselves communicated and embodied the efficacy of these techniques, students were more responsive and open to what was still an unfamiliar element of instruction, namely silence, contemplation, meditative movement, reflection. It was important, too, for teachers to explicitly link the value of these practices to the goals of the course in order to help students open up to the experiential potential of the practices.

In all of the classrooms I observed, silence, movement, inquiry and contemplation were seamlessly interwoven into the learning environment. However, these activities were also mostly bracketed as an element of the learning experience that was designed to inform the larger purposes of the class. What was less evident was how to bring the contemplative work to a deeper level, where students could really link their meditative experiences with how, why and what they were learning. While this was a more tacit purpose for some of the teachers, it was left largely unaddressed.

In addition, these practices were limited to only a very short duration. All of the teachers both led and participated in the contemplative work, and in all cases the full

class rested in the moment of inner silence and settling. In only one class I observed did the teacher avoid engaging in contemplative work for her lesson because of resistance she had felt on the part of one student. She told me that that was later resolved but that her approach to contemplative pedagogy is not consistent, depending more on the tone and sense of connection in the class and on her own state during each class.

Institutional Support: Building Networks for Contemplative Teaching and Learning Communities

What this research also reveals is that networks of support within the academic environment are critical in nurturing the development of this work within and across institutions of higher education. Not only did each of these faculty members mention in the course of our discussions the Fetzer Grants (that Rose received and that she felt launched her work with contemplative pedagogy), but they all mentioned the importance of the Center for Mind in Society and the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education. In fact, Mary stressed that it was a talk at the college given by Barbara Love (a Social Justice educator and a faculty member at UMASS Amherst), during which Dr. Love introduced the term contemplative pedagogy, that served as the catalyst for opening up the community to share the multiple ways they were already engaging teaching and learning through contemplative practice. Mary then organized a pedagogy roundtable based on this idea of contemplative pedagogy, and she was stunned by the turnout:

I was literally floored. You know, we would have sessions on things that we thought would get 20 people to come and only 8 would come. And we expected about 8 to come to this. And then we got 20. And the people...we went around

the room that day, and I'll just never forget it, it was actually incredibly moving...and I think other faculty would tell you the same. Because what we did is I just said, you know, here's what we're doing, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves and tell us why you came. And as we went around the room every other person who spoke said: "I had NO idea there were other people interested in this. It means so much to me to be here. I am floored by everyone here..." It was like, it was like this coming out party! And everyone was like: "You're here too!" It was like, "Can I touch you!" (Laughing.) ...And you know one of the things that was interesting was there was a couple of people there who had actually studied or had grants from the Contemplative Mind in Society or Fetzer, and so they spoke with some sophistication.

Based on my interviews it appears that it was after these initial meetings that several of the faculty on campus began to feel more confident about their intention to integrate into their teaching pedagogy a form of contemplation that had been central to them personally, and privately, up to that point. This gathering of like-minded faculty, at the same time that the Center for Mind in Society began to develop national programs and events linking contemplative studies and higher education, gave faculty the confidence to act upon this impulse and quietly bring their own mindfulness and meditation practices more fully into their teaching. This also evolved on this particular campus at a time when research in the area of mindfulness and learning and teaching increased rapidly, and organizations promoting mindfulness in education (at the K-12 level and in higher education) started to shape conversations around the country on the meanings and significance of contemplative education (The Garrison Institute's Contemplative

Teaching and Learning Initiative Database, www.garrisoninstitute.org, 2014).

On this campus, one important development that is currently under study is a proposal to develop a Center for Contemplative Studies. What is interesting about this, and none of the faculty interviewed had any idea if how this proposal would be viewed by the administration, but this idea reflects another movement nationally to link mindfulness research and pedagogy with centers of learning at institutions of higher education. Brown University now offers a concentration in Contemplative Studies through their Contemplative Studies Initiative and there are institutes or centers in mindfulness or contemplative studies at Stanford, NYU, University of California, UVA, Penn State, just to name a few. And at the college, in addition to the interest by some faculty to introduce courses *on* meditation as well as using contemplative pedagogy to frame their teaching more broadly, Henry has recently initiated a Contemplative Commons space for ongoing, weekly, faculty-student meditation practice. What this all suggests is that contemplative studies and contemplative pedagogy is a field and a phenomenon that will continue to gain attention and grow as communities of learning explore its application in the classroom and across the campus.

The challenge remains as to how to integrate contemplative practices not only into the classroom but, more broadly, into the fabric of learning and the mechanisms of teaching. The teaching practices observed here identify first steps towards this integration. As I discussed with one of the participants, a next step would be to make the campus culture more welcoming to contemplative and meditative experiences and frameworks for learning and thinking. His effort to expand on these efforts includes overseeing a Contemplative Residential House on campus. And then there is the work of

Jim, who is now teaching a First Year Seminar *on* mindfulness, integrating theory and practice in a holistic and critical learning context. Both of these approaches offer insights into how contemplative pedagogy can develop into more expanded forms of teaching and learning across the campus.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand ways in which faculty members in higher education are developing mindfulness-based contemplative pedagogies and to identify critical variables that have informed how they have conceptualized and implemented this curricular model. My research was guided by the following questions:

Research Question

What is the experience of faculty who are using contemplative pedagogy as a model for teaching in the postsecondary classroom?

Subquestions

- What factors informed their decision to create contemplative or mindfulness-based curricula?
- What has been the effect of these practices on their teaching and on student learning experiences?
- What does their contemplative, mindful pedagogy look like in practice?
- What do they hope to achieve, for themselves and for their students, by incorporating contemplative practices into their teaching?

In this chapter I will summarize key aspects of the study and consider important conclusions drawn from the findings presented in Chapter 4. I will also consider implications for the developing field of contemplative studies and I will identify directions for future research.

Conclusions

The data revealed four central themes that represent the experiences of the faculty in this study who developed strategies to integrate a contemplative pedagogy into their teaching.

These themes include:

- A personal need to teach authentically by integrating mindful, contemplative practices with content-based pedagogy.
- A desire to teach the whole student and to cultivate mindful, engaged learners.
- A conceptualization of contemplative pedagogy as an embodied, experiential practice.
- The importance of building networks of support for contemplative teaching and learning communities.

These four themes represent important factors that informed how these teachers developed contemplative pedagogical practices, how they conceptualized and implemented this teaching framework, and the role peer support played, within and outside of the institution, in the growth of this network of contemplative practitioners.

Below I will discuss these findings in relation to the extant literature in order to suggest directions for future research that could further an understanding of faculty and student experiences in engaging contemplative pedagogies in higher education.

Connected and Purposeful Teaching and Learning

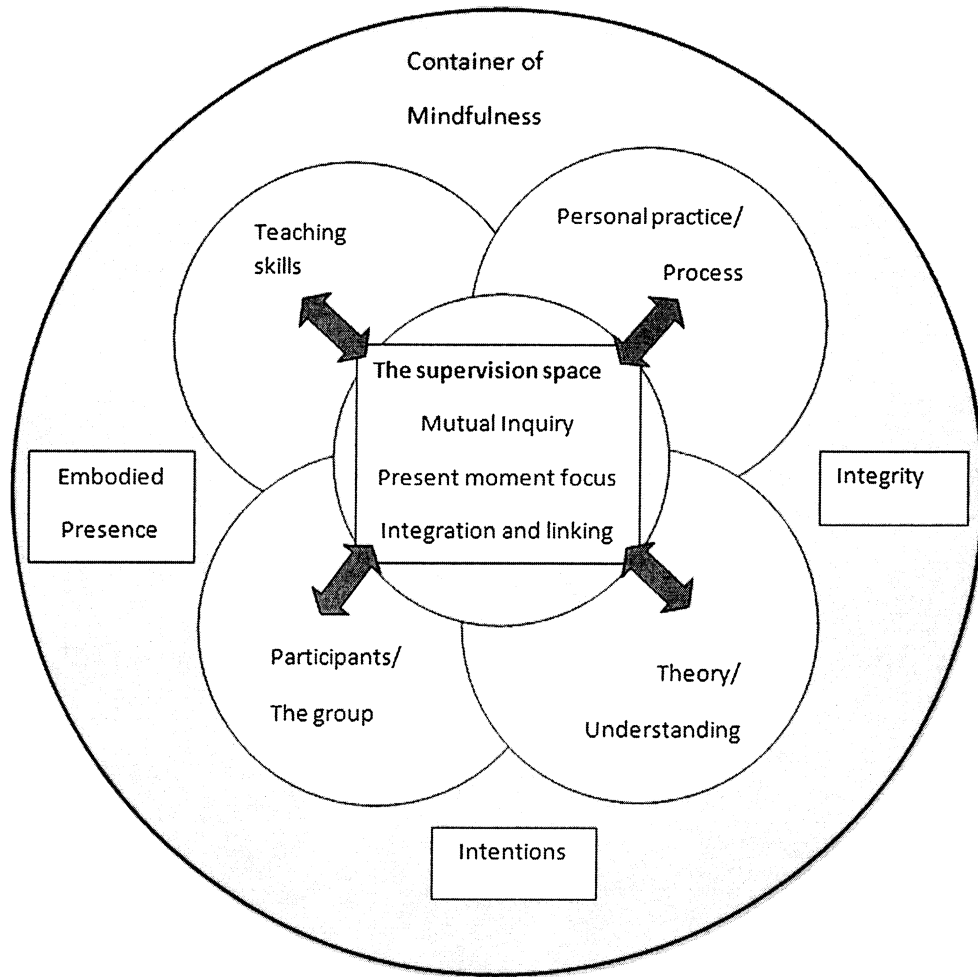
Rendón (2009) envisioned, through her Sentipensante Pedagogy, what she called a “teaching and learning dream (pedagogic vision) based on wholeness and consonance”

(p. 2). The findings from this study suggest that, for these faculty, teaching with wholeness and consonance meant bringing into their teaching a framework for learning informed by their own inner experiences with contemplative practice and mindful inquiry. While these teachers did not explicitly identify themselves as mindful or contemplative practitioners (Miller, 2014), they did locate their own practice as teachers and their conceptions of engaged learning within an educational paradigm that values learning as an inner process that at its most transformative and meaningful engages the full humanity of both student and teacher. And each of these teachers has maintained their own mindfulness or contemplative practice for many years. Miller (2014) related this approach to learning to the three modes of knowing identified by St. Bonaventure: “The first is the flesh where we perceive the external world of space, time, objects. The second is reason, where we know through philosophy, logic, and reflection. The third is that of contemplation, where we gain knowledge” (pp. 23-24). Contemplative pedagogy, as defined within this context, does not limit knowing to a rational, logical engagement with content. Rather, what is evident here through the work of these teachers is that learning can be experienced at a qualitatively different level when the rational level of experience is deepened by reflection and an active attention to the self engaged in the present (Miller, 2014).

Indeed, the experiences of these teachers are entirely in line with research that has shown the cumulative benefits of mindfulness and contemplative inquiry on communities of learning in higher education (Shapiro, Brown, & Astin, 2011). Although much of the research examines the effects of mindfulness meditation or contemplation on academic performance or emotional/physical states of wellbeing (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007),

what was evident throughout this study was that these teachers developed and implemented contemplative pedagogies based on their own experiential knowledge of the benefits of these practices. They were not bringing contemplative or mindfulness practices into their teaching in response to specific findings in the research. However, while they were familiar with the research findings, their experiences themselves corroborated these findings and informed their impulse to use mindfulness and inner contemplation and reflection as tools to deepen learning and their own engagement with teaching. One study (Evans et al., 2014), which explored a model for supervision in mindfulness-based teaching, suggested supervision as a “space for embodied mutual inquiry” (p. 1). This conceptualization rings true as a description that would apply equally well to the classroom environment established by the faculty observed in this study. Their use of contemplative pedagogy was directly linked to their intention to create a space for embodied mutual inquiry in their classrooms, using mindfulness practice and contemplation as methods for inquiry. The following framework illustrates visually how this model for embodied mutual inquiry could be contextualized for the post-secondary classroom. Adapting this framework originally designed for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction supervision to the higher education classroom, “The supervision space” would become “The classroom” and the “Participants” would be the “Students/Teacher”:

Figure 6: A Conceptual Model for Teaching



Evans et al., 2014, p. 3.

Indeed, what each of the faculty members in this study articulated was a desire to engage their students emotionally and intellectually through an embodied, holistic form of pedagogy in order to deepen the learning process for both teacher and student.

Mindfulness and Agency

Langer (2000) defined mindfulness as an open and fluid state of mind through which we actively engage each moment while remaining attentive to the novelty of our environment. Her definition is important because, as a social psychologist, Langer moved the research on mindfulness away from its roots in Eastern tradition and practice into the realm of cognitive development. It is in this way that the epistemological premise of contemplative and mindfulness-based pedagogies is grounded in the non-dual perspective of Eastern philosophy without being exclusively guided by a purely Eastern ideology. However, it is this understanding of mindfulness as a function of cognition that has allowed for its integration into our secular, Western institutions of learning. Langer noted that mindfulness “leads us to greater sensitivity to context and perspective, and ultimately to greater control over our lives” (p. 220). The faculty in this study approached mindfulness meditation and practice with an understanding that it not only calms and grounds the practitioner, but that it can make the learner (and the teacher) more engaged with the *process* of learning by heightening their level of engagement with content *and* each other. As all of the participants observed, these practices help to bring a sense of calm to themselves and their students, they promote in students better focus and concentration, they foster an environment for embodied mutual inquiry, and they make space for the emotional exchange that takes place between students and teachers in the domain of intellectual inquiry. As Mary put it: “It’s incredibly vulnerable to go into an academic environment and...this is where you have to be to do it, right? You are feeling love.”

Another development in research on the mind and learning that is relevant here

comes out of the work of Siegel (2007) who examined mindfulness within the domain of what he calls interpersonal neurobiology. His definition of the mind relies on the fact that the mind is both embodied and relational: “With mindful awareness the flow of energy and information that is our mind enters our conscious attention and we can both appreciate its contents and also come to regulate its flow in a new way...mindfulness helps us awaken, and by reflecting on the mind we are enabled to make choices and thus change becomes possible” (p. 5). It is this striking link that connects *how* we focus attention and use our minds with how we *act* in the world (make choices that lead to change) that is instrumental in explaining the value embedded in the teaching and learning mechanisms of contemplative pedagogy. These findings, in turn, are linked to the principles of transformative learning theory and social justice education that identify transformative learning and social justice frameworks for learning as the processes whereby “learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5).

Henry noted that when he teaches he sometimes has students contemplate the phrase: “Every epistemology is an ethic.” The ethical aspect of contemplative pedagogy, it could be argued, is based on the potentiality it creates for deepening the mindful engagement we bring to teaching and learning while modeling purposeful agency for change. As Henry said: “I think contemplative practices have a profound role to play in attending to the quality of human interactions we’re having as we’re doing our content, our intellectual work together... Because when that happens, when you enable and create a space in which the whole human being is welcomed and feels safe, you can do things in that classroom, you can take people to places of learning that they have never been

before.”

This presence, the act of being fully present in the learning process, appears to engender an openness that can foster inner growth and insight, supporting the inner mechanisms for change. Miller (2014) identified an important concept of presence developed by Senge, Sharmar, Jaworski and Flowers (2004) that can explain how mindfulness and contemplative inquiry can potentially foster agency in students *and* teachers. This notion of presence has to do with developing the skills of deep listening while simultaneously releasing engrained patterns of self-identification. It involves: “consciously participating in a larger field of change” (Miller, 2014, p. 10). This compelling concept of learning involves letting go of outdated mindsets and instead generating new understanding based on deepened perception and connection (to both self, others, content, environment). This language correlates directly with the definition of mindfulness put forth by Langer (1989) and resonates equally with hooks’ (1994) call for a dialogic, engaged pedagogy in defense of social justice education:

To engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers, scholars, and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences...To teach in varied communities not only our paradigms must shift but also the way we think, write, speak. (hooks, 1994, p. 11)

In this way, mindfulness and contemplative practice in education can be seen to foster the potential for self-agency in students and teachers and to support a framework for teaching as social justice praxis.

Mindful Learning in Higher Education

Diana Chapman Walsh, a former president of Wellesley College, made these remarks at a conference in 1998 entitled: “Education as *Transformation: Religious Pluralism, Spirituality and Higher Education.*” They underscore the same vision, on a broad scale, that was embedded in the pedagogical practices of individual faculty members observed in this study:

We seek to envision a whole new place—and space and role—for spirituality in higher education, not as an isolated enterprise on the margins of the academy, not as a new form of institutional repression and social control, but as an essential element of the larger task of reorienting our institutions to respond more adequately to the challenges the world presents us now: challenges to our teaching, to our learning, to our leading, to our lives.

(Walsh, 2000, p. 1)

The faculty in this study might question the word “spirituality” here, as no one identified contemplative or mindfulness practice as part of an overtly spiritual encounter. But they would feel aligned with the argument articulated by Walsh (2000):

From one perspective, higher education right now is rife with fragmentation, relativism, skepticism, hollow rhetoric, disillusionment, and confusion. From another, though, I think we can see the contours of a new and creative synthesis that goes beyond chaos to a fundamental reordering of priorities and preoccupations. (p. 5)

The trajectory of theory and research focusing on teaching and learning in higher education reveals a movement away from rigid constructs of meaning and learning

towards conceptual frameworks that support this new kind of synthesis and reordering. Walsh (2000) also noted that investigations into the purpose and meaning of a liberal education “hint at how profoundly the professor’s inner life—the professor’s identity, integrity, and engagement—color and shape the learning encounter” (p. 5). This idea shapes the core of this study.

The Role of the Teacher in Transformative Education

Much of the research that addresses a need to reframe the psychological, emotional, spiritual domains of teaching and learning in higher education ultimately considers the space of the classroom and the work of the teacher as the critical location for change. Miller (2000) noted that only when educators approach teaching and learning holistically and move from the mind to the soul will their teaching change profoundly. Palmer (1998) wrote that we teach who we are, that teaching emerges from our inwardness. In this way, he suggested, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. And Rendón (2009) identified a need to recreate a model for teaching and learning in the classroom, one that “speaks to our humanity, compassion, and care for our self-worth and the external world we inhabit” (p. 4). Gaetane (2004) identified transformative leadership as “the transformation not only in structures but also [of] leaders as well as participants” (p. 39). In the context of higher education, transformative education and transformative leadership come together in the classroom through individual pedagogies and through the art of teaching. As Freire (1970) noted, the intention of experiential practice would be to explore personal meanings by holding “objectivity and subjectivity in constant dialectical relationship” (as cited in Skubikowski et al, 2009, p. 178). For the teacher as well as the student, this means exploring the learning environment as a location of creativity,

mindful learning and meaningful experiences. It invokes the idea that teaching is a movement towards opening: of consciousness, imagination, intellectual understanding, perspective and emotion.

I've quoted Walsh at length because she has cited in her argument some of the ideas woven throughout this study that suggest challenges experienced by faculty and students in higher education, the vital role the inner life of the teacher plays in the learning encounter, and the potential that new visions for teaching and learning hold for liberal education in the 21st Century. Contemplative pedagogy provides a theoretical framework through which faculty can experiment with learning modalities that create an integrated field of learning and teaching. Such an enterprise seeks to create a space that engenders self-discovery, ethically-engaged learning, and a just and tolerant learning community, within the context of inner reflection, contemplation and mindful engagement.

Challenging Embedded Paradigms

There is an historical context embedded in the construct of contemplative pedagogy that is important to identify. This contextual framework also suggests a reason why this approach to learning and teaching can be viewed as contrary to the more traditional foundations of pedagogical theory embedded in the higher education classroom. Noddings (2003), in her study on happiness as an aim of education, reviewed classical interpretations of educational goals. From the Greeks, she identified the argument that reason is the primary goal of learning. From Aristotle, she referenced the position that intellectual thought *is* itself happiness. She further noted that while few

people today overtly accept this “intellectualist” view, “our school curriculum continues to be heavily influenced by it” (p. 10).

It is this Western construct that prioritizes learning as a rational-empirical form of inquiry that complicates the extent to which contemplative pedagogy can shape learning in higher education. In fact, the epistemological premise that informs some of the methodologies at work in contemplative pedagogy is rooted in a Buddhist concern “with the eternal as experienced as a *state* within the human soul” (Zaehner, 1963, p. 30) This is very much at odds with the Judaic/Christian claim that “there is a transcendental God experienced by prophets as an objective fact” (p. 30). This dichotomy between these two stances makes vivid two distinct theoretical frameworks for engaging learning: the rational framework that establishes the supremacy of the mind and reason as the domain for learning, as opposed to the perspective that learning is experiential and involves a higher-order synthesis of self (one’s inner state) with content. These different constructs shape both the culture of higher education institutions and the intention of contemplative pedagogy. The tension between the two is evident. Zajonc (2010) identified this goal of contemplative pedagogy within this context, and as defined by the faculties interviewed in this study, when he said:

Our current educational philosophy is based on a dominant and largely unconscious worldview that is both outmoded and limiting...By seeing the cultivation of human experience as the basis for education...truth and compassion are recognized as irreducible human experiences that become the basis for genuine ethical action. (p. 60)

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study, most significantly perhaps was the size of the sample population and the fact that all five participants taught in a single institution. While that location was selected explicitly because it was the location of a strong and active cohort of professors engaged in contemplative education, this also limited the parameters of the study as the phenomenon was examined only within a regional context (rural New England) and within the cultural climate of a single institution (selective, small, private liberal arts college). This, in turn, limited the participants (teachers and students) to a largely homogenous population ethnically and in terms of socio-economic status (white and middle-class).

While there has clearly been a surge in interest in mindfulness-based contemplative pedagogy in higher education (AMRE, 2014), this study provided an analysis of how only a few teachers are developing and implementing these methods of practice for teaching and learning. These methods would no doubt vary based on the institutional environment in which they were being introduced. Hillside College encourages faculty in their classrooms to develop their own teaching methods without imposing a specific approach to pedagogy. But this is not the case in all colleges and universities, and in some environments this approach to teaching and learning, bringing contemplative practices into the classroom, would be highly suspect. In such institutions, how and why and what contemplative educators are doing in their classrooms might look very different from those practices identified in this study.

In addition, as a qualitative study this research was based largely on interviews and course documents, both of which are versions of self-reported data. While

information gleaned from interviews was enriched and contextualized by observations in the field, the analysis relied heavily on the perceptions, ideologies and experiences captured through the interviews. These personal stories conveyed important and telling information, however these narratives were strictly single-perspective accounts of the phenomenon under study. In this way the analysis relied mostly on data limited to specific personal experiences. While this served the purposes of this study well, it also limited the extent to which these experiences could be generalized beyond this specific context.

Finally, as with any idiosyncratic practice, each of the five faculty members in this study defined and practiced contemplative pedagogy according to their own distinct practices, ideology and disciplines. While this is not in itself an inherent limitation of the study, it did create challenges in terms of defining terminology and exploring shared methodologies. In this way it became evident that this kind of study is tightly contextualized by the specifics of each case study. In turn, as a newly evolving theoretical pedagogy, contemplative pedagogy is just beginning to inform methods for teaching and learning in the classroom. So while faculties begin to explore strategies to support contemplative teaching, their efforts remain nascent and exploratory. A framework for contemplative teaching will inevitably, in the context of the traditional higher education classroom, look incomplete and perhaps undeveloped. I say this is inevitable because the predominant epistemological framework for learning in higher education remains rooted in the Greek notion of the “primacy of reason” (Noddings, 2003, p. 10). Contemplative pedagogy embraces a more holistic integration of reason and intuition, and as such those instructors experimenting with this form of inquiry are

still grappling with how these two forms of inquiry can be held in balance in the contemporary context of higher learning.

Directions for Future Research

While there is growing interest across higher education in contemplative studies and contemplative education, there is limited research exploring the development and implementation of mindfulness-based contemplative practices in the classroom. In addition, of course, is the question of how to effectively monitor these methodologies for outcomes that are relevant to student growth, both intellectually and emotionally, teacher self-efficacy, and student and teacher self-care. The Brown University Contemplative Studies program offers an exciting model for developing this field of study across disciplines by supporting research and applying relevant findings to teaching practices within the program itself. But what is key here is understanding how contemplative methodologies can inform teaching and learning in order to shift the learning paradigm in higher education. Study to support that broader goal would involve qualitative investigations into these practices globally, with a close look at the ways in which this teaching pedagogy informs the experience of the teacher while developing the capacity in the student for mindful, embodied learning. A bigger study very much modeled on this study would provide a broader picture of how contemplative pedagogy as a field is developing globally and consider how this introduction of contemplative practices into the classroom is informing pedagogy across higher education.

Conclusion

Barbezat and Bush (2014) noted that contemplative practices in the classroom “place the student in the center of his or her learning so that the student can connect his or her inner world to the outer world. Through this connection, teaching and learning is transformed into something personally meaningful yet connected to the world” (p. 6). While contemplative pedagogy remains a relatively new framework for teaching, the literature suggests—and this study supports the idea—that contemplative, mindful teaching can revitalize the learning process in the academy. Higher education is at the crossroads of several phenomenon: it is a learning environment that supports and rewards the pursuit of knowledge; it is a community of emerging adults engaged in their own process of self-discovery and ethical/emotional development; it is a community of scholars who are expected to produce significant research in their fields while developing teaching practices that are purposeful and effective. This complex learning environment challenges faculty to attend to their students in a way that is connected and engaging while fostering their own inner qualities of mind and spirit. Rendón (2009), in her *Sentipensante pedagogy*, sought to:

Assist in guiding the transformation of teaching and learning in higher education so that it is unitive in nature, emphasizing the balanced, harmonic relationship between two concepts, such as intellectualism and intuition, teaching and learning, the learner and the learning material, and Western and non-Western ways of knowing...To shatter the belief system that has worked against wholeness, multiculturalism, and social justice. (p. 1)

It is this premise, that the teaching/learning experience in higher education can become a more holistic, embodied, unitive, mutual space for inquiry, that informs the work of the faculty in this study and that has so positively shaped the learning experiences of their students. The words of two of Rose's students sum up what I read over and over again from student papers: This class assignment "served as a mindfulness and meditative space, allowing me refuge, safety and a serenity that is not easily found among the stress and pressure of the college's academic environment...I have learned how to sit and be present...a skill that will help me through stressful times for the duration of my life." "It is hard to put my finger on exactly how, but I know that I have changed because of [this class]...Sometimes you need to blindly throw yourself into a place, and only after you're fully submerged do you realize that you have a better understanding of not only the place, but also yourself." While contemplative education is a young field, it is ripe for experimentation and exploration.

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), an Indian philosopher whose writings have had an important impact on Western integral theories of education, wrote: "The mind can hardly conceive unity except as an abstraction, a sum or a void. Therefore it has to be gradually led from its own manner to that which exceeds it" (Iyengar, 1945, p. 443). Nussbaum (1997) argued that the purpose of a liberal education, while it includes the development of citizens who can reason and think for themselves, is ultimately to cultivate in individuals the capacity for love and imagination, to "cultivate humanity" (p. 14). Contemplative pedagogy provides a theoretical and engaged educational framework that can support teachers as they lead students beyond themselves towards a field of knowing that connects reason with intuition, observation with perception. The aims of education,

in this context, are directly informed by the habits of mind cultivated in the learning exchange that takes place in this space of an embodied mutual inquiry. Parks (2000) noted that this process is challenging and demanding, as it requires of both student and teacher a willingness to engage the “[struggle] to retain something enduring, while a new way of seeing and trusting is being configured” (p. 46). As this study shows, it can also have a meaningful impact on students and teachers who engage in contemplative practices and mindful inquiry in the postsecondary classroom.

Postscript

Framing the Study: A Personal Perspective

Our notion of dialogue...challenges us as educators to engage in dialogue that respects the fundamental right and need of students to name their worlds, to become more complete, and to be agents of their own praxis. (Gunzenhauser & Gerstl-Pepin, 2006, p. 324)

The categories we make gather momentum and are very hard to overthrow. We build our own and our shared realities and then we become victims of them—blind to the fact that they are constructs, ideas. (Langer, 1989, p. 11)

This study grew out of my engagement with the arts as director of a university creative writing program, my experience teaching and writing, my observations of teaching models that purport to support social justice education, and my reflections on my own long-term meditation practice and ways in which that informs my teaching and my writing. For several years I have been supervising and teaching pre-service teachers and I have been interested in what I perceive to be a divide between literature in the field that identifies a need for social justice education and the actual teaching these students experience in the university classroom. Consequently, I have thought deeply about the nature of what has been called “social justice praxis” as it applies to teaching the whole student in higher education. In turn, much of the social justice literature supports developing a capacity in students to engage in self-inquiry that would lead to a recognition of and respect for each others’ realities (Gunzenhauser & Gerstl-Pepin, 2006). As hooks (1994) said, this would require that not only our paradigms shift, but that our very epistemologies shift as well. In other words, in order to teach through a social justice lens, a shift in language, discourse and perception is fundamental to the process. Accordingly, social justice education demands “balancing emotional and

cognitive components of the learning process; acknowledging the personal while illuminating the systemic; utilizing personal reflection and experience as tools for student-centered learning, and valuing the development of awareness and personal growth” (Adams & Griffin, 1997, p. 30). In this way, in order to teach from and advocate for social justice praxis in education, learning must be framed in such a way that it addresses the development of the whole student. Social justice education is not simply an affirmation of the need for equity. In order to help students break down both personal and systemic barriers in order to become agents of change, as teachers we need to help them learn how we engage and explore those shifting paradigms of personal identity and personal expression, to understand that how and what we perceive is a choice (Eisner, 2002). Depending on how we frame our pedagogies and our personal epistemologies, we approach our shared humanity from a perspective that is either mindless or mindful (Langer, 1989). Our pedagogies and epistemologies, our creative and academic pursuits, all frame and provide “templates by which we reorganize our perception of the world” (Eisner, 2002, p. 83). Educating for social justice, defined in the UVM 2007 Strategic Plan as “educational outcomes that reflect an understanding and appreciation of multiple perspectives and life experiences,” is therefore a complex process that calls for an investigation into the very nature of how we learn, how we think, and how we perceive.

This leads me to creativity and the arts. For many years I directed the N.Y.U. Creative Writing Program. That work coalesced around the process of creative inquiry, self-expression, and the power of literature to transform. Out of this context, my contemplations on the complex learning processes embedded in social justice education led me to consider, more broadly, how institutions of higher education are addressing,

through pedagogy specifically, how to educate the whole student: emotionally, cognitively, intellectually, spiritually, creatively. I believe in the fundamental role creative self-expression plays in both deepening our understanding while building creative communities that challenge any presumed or singular perspective. The arts allow us to disassemble and then reassemble a given reality. Indeed, this process resembles what hooks (1994) referred to as the engaged voice in dialogue with a world beyond itself, always changing, always naming itself anew. It makes sense, then, that this would be the goal of social justice education, the goal of arts education, and the goal of education broadly speaking: the growth and development of the whole person, endowed with a complex moral conscience, who can “recognize and assess the claims of multiple perspectives and [be] steeped in critical, systemic, and compassionate habits of mind” (Parks, 2000, p. 10).

In this personal evolution of interest and inquiry, my reading and research has led me into a matrix of language and conceptual frameworks that mirror, overlap, reflect and inform each other. Denis Donoghue (1983) wrote that: “With the arts, people can make space for themselves and fill it with intimations of freedom and presence” (p. 129). Eisner (2002) talked about how art allows us to “escape the traditional habits of daily perception” (p. 68). And Greene (1995) spoke eloquently of the need for us to unleash our imaginations in our teaching and our studies: “People trying to be more fully human must not only engage in critical thinking but must be able to imagine something coming of their hopes; their silence must be overcome by their search” (p. 25). Greene (1995) went on to observe:

The point of acquiring learning skills and the rudiments of academic disciplines, the tricks of the educational trade, is so that they may contribute to our seeing and the naming. Feeling the human connection, teachers can address themselves to the thinking and judging and, yes, imagining consciousness of their students. A person's consciousness is the way in which he or she thrusts into the world. It is not some interiority, some realm of awareness inside the brain. Rather, it must be understood as a reaching out, an intending, a grasping of the appearances of things. Acts of various kinds are involved: perceptual, cognitive, intuitive, emotional, and, yes again, imaginative. (pp. 25-26)

Hence, in my work I see the practices embedded in the development of the creative imagination and the arts and social justice education inextricably linked with mindful and contemplative inquiry and practice.

Through this study I examined ways in which teachers in higher education are creating learning environments that support learning that is perceptual, cognitive, intuitive, emotional, and imaginative. These teachers are attempting to create pedagogies that establish a framework for authenticity and self-expression. In other words, frameworks for learning that address the development of the student in his or her full complexity and humanity. The goal of these practices in education may be varied, depending on the personal intention of the teacher practitioner. Based on my own use of contemplative practice in the classroom, however, I can attest to the ways in which these practices can nurture an engaged teaching-learning experience that is at once intellectually demanding while simultaneously engendering a creative and connected encounter with meaningful ways of knowing.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

CONCEPTUALIZING CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE AS PEDAGOGY: APPROACHES TO MINDFUL INQUIRY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether you wish to participate in this research study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the experience of faculty members in an institution of higher education who are incorporating contemplative pedagogical practices into their teaching. This collective case study will explore how faculty members in higher education use contemplative pedagogy in their teaching and describe their experience making their curricula and pedagogical methods more reflective and contemplative. For the purposes of this study, contemplative pedagogy is understood as a core feature of an integrative teaching and learning model that includes a range of contemplative practices as defined by each participant.

Data will be collected primarily through in-depth, semi-structured interviews that will be audiotaped and transcribed. Follow-up interviews will be conducted as needed. Additionally, when possible, I will observe participants teaching or leading students in mindfulness or related practices on campus. And I will collect documents (course syllabi, student evaluations, class descriptions), record direct observations and maintain ongoing notes to record personal reflections.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during the time that you are participating. I will be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. However, your name or institution will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and your identity as a participant will be known only to me.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are linked to the information shared about your experiences and the connections made across case analysis that will expand upon known practices and methodologies currently employed as contemplative pedagogy.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------|
| Printed Name of Participant | Signature of Participant | Date |
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| Melissa Hammerle Principal Researcher | | Date |
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Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself by indicating your title/position, your academic field, how long you have been teaching in higher education (where/when), how long you have had tenure?
2. Please describe your teaching philosophy and how you incorporate contemplative practices into your teaching?
3. How do you define the aims and purposes of contemplative pedagogy?
4. What drew you to contemplative pedagogy and why and how did you begin to incorporate contemplative practices into your teaching?
5. How have students responded to your use of contemplative pedagogy? How have other faculty members and administrators reacted to your use of contemplative pedagogies in the classroom?
6. How do you perceive the impact these pedagogies have on student learning and student growth?
7. How has the experience of incorporating contemplative practices into your teaching changed or informed your work in the classroom and in the academy: your teaching, your relationships with your students, your scholarly or creative work, etc.?
8. Have you experienced or observed an impact contemplative pedagogy has had or could have on student growth and development and on the culture of the larger institution itself?
9. General observations, thoughts, feelings about your use of contemplative pedagogy and its impact.