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Contemplating library instruction: Integrating contemplative practices in a mid-sized academic library.

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Abstract

In recent years there has been growing interest in the integration of contemplative practices into higher education, but little has been published regarding contemplative practices or contemplative pedagogies in academic libraries. Nor have explicit links been made to critical librarianship (critlib), particularly regarding the stress associated with the profession and the "resilience narrative" of "doing more with less". In this paper, we review the literature and describe our experiences introducing a variety of contemplative elements into our library instruction program, most recently in the virtual environment. Building on the three levels of "intervention" modeled by Barbezat and Bush (2014) to include librarians, and incorporating critlib theory, we describe the contemplative practices we have used to alleviate librarian, student, and faculty stress and burnout, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction

Contemplative practices (CP) have been broadly defined as "metacognitive exercises in which attention is focused on any element of conscious experience" (Repetti, 2010, p.7), or "embodied practices that integrate intellect, body, mind, and emotional states" (Bushlack & Bock, 2018, p. 144). Well-known examples include meditation, contemplative prayer, yoga, labyrinth walking and reflective journaling, but CP includes a far wider range of activities, as depicted in The Center for Contemplative Mind (CMind, n.d.) illustration "The Tree of Contemplative Practices" (Fig. 1). CMind offers a variety of CP resources, workshops, and webinars, and publishes the *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry.* Since 2010, the Center has focused on post-secondary education, supported through the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education.
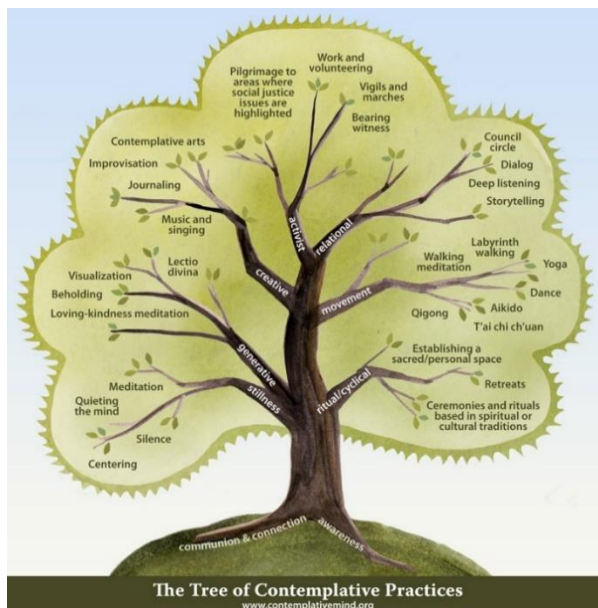

The Tree of Contemplative Practices
www.contemplativemind.org

Figure 1: Tree of Contemplative Practices https://www.contemplativemind.org/practices

In recent years there has been growing interest in the integration of CP into higher education. This is likely a response to three related factors: high levels of stress and anxiety among college students and educators, increasing emphasis on critical thinking and social justice, and recognition of the value of CP as a pedagogical tool. There is a robust and rapidly expanding literature on CP in higher education, but little has been published regarding contemplative practices or contemplative pedagogies in academic libraries. This is surprising given the important role that library research plays in student assignments, critical thinking and student success, the anxiety many students feel about library research, and the proliferation of responsibilities associated with contemporary librarianship. In this paper we review the literature on contemplative practices in higher education and make connections with current thinking in critical librarianship (critlib). We describe our experiences with introducing various elements into our library instruction program, building on the three levels of "intervention" modeled by Barbezat and Bush (2014). Finally, we reflect on the benefits of introducing contemplative practices in the library environment, especially during the dual pandemics of this time - the COVID-19 virus and systemic racism.

Literature Review

The increasing stress and anxiety among college students is well-documented. A WHO survey conducted between 2014 and 2017 found that about one third of students in the 19 colleges across eight countries who participated suffered at least one DSM–IV anxiety, mood, or substance disorder (Auerbach et al., 2018). According to the American College Health Association survey (2018), >60% of students responding reported feeling "overwhelming anxiety" during the past 12 months; >80% had felt "overwhelmed" or "exhausted", >40% reported feeling "so depressed it was difficult to function", and 11.3% had "seriously considered suicide". The rate at which college students in the US sought treatment for mental health problems increased from 19% to 34% between 2007 and 2017 (Lipson et al, 2019a). High levels of anxiety and depression and low rates of seeking mental health assistance particularly impact transgender and minority students (Georgiades et al., 2018; Liu et al, 2019; Snow et al., 2019), a situation amplified by the current COVID-19 pandemic (Gonzales et al., 2020; Salerno et al., 2020).

An American Council on Education report (Lipson et al., 2019b) stresses the need for college leadership to invest in student mental health on their campuses, noting that improving student mental health can improve academic performance, ongoing enrolment, and graduation rates. Wilks et al. (2020) report that US college students have significantly worse mental health than the overall adult population, and that poor mental health is associated with lower academic performance. Addiction to technology and social media, persistent multitasking, and expectations for instant answers to complex questions create stress and are antithetical to the focus and reflection required for critical thinking and academic success. In combination with an

increasingly unstable world, these stresses "weaken students' cognitive, emotional and physical health" (Faerm, 2020, p. 176). The current COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation, generating a barrage of often misleading or conflicting information and a sense of social isolation that has particularly affected young people (Cox & Brewster, 2020; Danese & Smith, 2020; de Figueiredo et al., 2020), among them the numerous students who transitioned suddenly from a campus environment and in-person instruction to virtual learning. While CP cannot provide a simple solution to these sweeping problems, there is considerable evidence for their effectiveness in reducing stress, anxiety and promoting attentiveness and critical thinking.

Contemplative practices have a long history within many cultures and religions, but interest in incorporating CP into higher education is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Among the early proponents, Pullen (1997) draws on the work of psychologist Ellen J. Langer to elucidate the use of meditation and breathing exercises to enhance attentiveness, creativity, and tolerance in the classroom. O'Reilley (1998) argues that truly receptive teaching requires a high degree of spiritual presence, stressing the importance of truly listening. Ritchhart and Perkins (2000) review the benefits of cultivating mindfulness in the classroom. Sarath (2003) describes the process and benefits of including CP in the Jazz and Contemplative Studies curriculum at The University of Michigan School of Music. Kirsch (2008) discusses her use of mindfulness, introspection, and reflection during English classes at Bentley College in Waltham, MA. Briefly reviewing the history of Contemplative Practices, Studies, and Pedagogy, Repetti (2010) notes that "metacognitive activities" such as meditation support "ideal learning" and "attention training" especially for community college students (p.13). Reviewing studies of CP in higher education, Shapiro et al. (2008; 2011) conclude that meditation improves student attention, ability to process information and academic achievement, and helps to reduce stress, anxiety and depression.

Subsequent publications expand on the use of CP for college students and educators (Bush 2013; Zajonc, 2013; Barbezat & Bush 2014), bringing the subject to a wide audience and popularizing the term "mindfulness". Although "mindfulness" and "contemplative practices" are often used interchangeably in the literature, Thích Nhất Hạnh - the Vietnamese Buddhist monk often termed the "father of mindfulness"- describes mindfulness as simply "the energy of being aware and awake to the present" (Nhất Hạnh, 2009, p. 10). The term "contemplative pedagogies" can be more specifically defined as "philosophies of education that promote the use of contemplative practices as valid modes not only of teaching and learning but of knowledge construction and inquiry" (Repetti, 2010, p. 9) or "a broad range of pedagogical tools that support the development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior" (Zajonc, 2013, p. 83).

Psychological benefits of CP

Many of the published studies on CP in higher education are qualitative, often involving single classes or other convenience samples and questionnaires or other forms of self-reporting.

A recent review of 23 studies found that mindfulness, yoga or meditation interventions had "moderate positive effects" on depression, anxiety and stress, but noted that the quality of studies tended to be low, and that more rigorous methodology is needed (Breedvelt et al., 2019, p.3). However, a systematic review of 19 studies in the medical and health-related sciences that included controlled trials concluded that mindfulness-based interventions decrease stress, anxiety, and depression and improve resiliency, mood, self-efficacy, and empathy in health profession students (McConville et al, 2017). Bamber and Morpeth (2018) analyzed 25 primary studies with 1492 participants and concluded that mindfulness-based interventions significantly reduced anxiety in college students (see also Bamber & Schneider, 2016). González-Valero et al. (2019) reviewed 34 studies that included pre and post-tests and reported "satisfactory and significant" effects of both mindfulness interventions and cognitive behavioral therapies on stress, anxiety and depression in students (p.19). A systematic review of 17 stress-management interventions for medical students, primarily mindfulness programs, also found that such interventions decreased stress and anxiety, although the authors recommended further study, particularly regarding the effects of CP on depression (Buizza et al, 2020). An analysis of five randomized controlled trials found that even brief mindfulness meditation interventions significantly improved anxiety and stress among nursing students, but only two studies of longer (eight week) duration had a significant effect on depression (Li et al. 2020). The authors also stressed the need for more high-quality clinical studies with larger samples.

There have been several other controlled trials of considerable rigor in recent years. A randomized controlled study of 50 college students reported improvements across measures of depression, rumination, stress, and mindfulness (McIndoo et al., 2016). A clinical, randomly based, and controlled trial of mindfulness interventions conducted at Cambridge University concluded that mindfulness training "could be an effective component of a wider student mental health strategy" (Galante et al, 2018, p. 72). A single-blinded, randomized controlled trial of 72 doctoral students found that mindfulness practice significantly reduced depression and increased self-efficacy, hope, and resiliency (Barry et al., 2019). A randomized controlled study of a single classroom mindfulness educational session for psychology students found reductions in stress, but not anxiety (Strait et al., 2020). Two recent controlled trials report a modest reduction in student stress following the use of mobile app-based mindfulness meditation (Huberty et al., 2019; Flett et al., 2020).

Numerous descriptive studies involving college students report a range of positive psychological effects, including reducing stress, depression or anxiety, or improving other mental health outcomes (e.g. Kinser et al., 2016; Thomas, 2017; Crowley & Munk, 2017; Schlumpf, 2017; Schwind et al., 2017; Wetzel, 2017; Miller et al.; 2018; Newton & Ohrt, 2018; Patel et al., 2018; Carpena et al. 2019; Gorvine et al., 2019; Liu & Lin, 2019; Saul & Fish, 2019; Vidic & Cherup, 2019; Zollars et al., 2019; Cheli et al., 2020; Witry et al., 2020). While their methodology is typically less rigorous than those referenced above, these positive findings add

weight to the argument that CP can be effective in reducing stress and improving student mental health.

The use of CP in education has also been examined from the perspective of cognitive psychology. Using the framework of contemplative neuroscience, Chaterdon (2017) reviews a range of studies that explore the positive effects of CP on the cognitive processes involved in writing and concludes that implementing CP in the writing classroom may ameliorate some of the cognitive and affective stress caused by the writing process (see Crawford & Willhoff, 2013, for an earlier discussion). Lampert-Shepel and Murphy (2018) examine reflection as "a higher psychological function" (p. 279) from the perspective of the Soviet cultural-historical psychologist Lev Vygotsky, noting that reflective practices are socially constructed and that teachers need to be educated in their use. A recent volume edited by Gunnlaugson et al. (2018) expands the CP literature to encompass intersubjectivity (the psychological relationships between people) and discusses the benefits of sharing reflective dialog in the classroom. In an earlier example of this practice, Gardner et al. (2007) describe having students reflect on and share their feelings and experiences, so that classes become "learning communities, where students and teachers deliberately create communal bonds of trust and interdependence and use interpersonal relations to further their study of disciplinary content" (p. 15).

CP and Critical Thinking, Social Justice and Academic Performance

A variety of studies describe the benefits of CP or "mindfulness" in terms of increased student attentiveness or self-awareness (Travis et al., 2009; Haynes et al., 2013; Short et al., 2015), improved cognitive ability or creativity (Helber et al., 2012; Mahgoub & Abdul-Wahab, 2014), or enhanced reflection, self-knowledge, compassion, humanity and/ or ethical decision-making (Kahane, 2009; Grace, 2011; Napora, 2011; Anderson, 2013; Culham, 2013; Newman, 2013; Mathieu, 2016; Tsingos-Lucas, 2016; Frey, 2018, Mahalingam & Rabelo, 2019; O'Driscoll et al., 2019). Mindfulness training has been shown to reduce bias and oppressive tendencies and promote multiculturalism and social justice (Berila, 2016; Hilert & Tirado, 2018; Erickson, 2019). Daniel and Antoniw (2018) describe how a pedagogy of mindfulness and reflection can promote action that supports social justice. Various authors report that CP supports student learning through improved engagement or focus (Brucker & Chapple, 2017; Franzese & Felten, 2017; Batada, 2018; Greif & Kaufman, 2019). Bushlack & Bock (2018) report strong links between contemplative practices and the classical virtue of "practical wisdom", concluding that "fruitful avenues of further research and pedagogical application exist for investigating and improving this link" (p. 145).

The impact of CP on academic performance is suggestive but less conclusive. An early study of 56 African American students enrolled in an introductory psychology class found that meditation significantly improved their GPA's compared to a non-meditation group, but stresses the need for further research (Hall, 1999). A two-week mindfulness training class improved both GRE reading-comprehension scores and working memory among 48 undergraduates randomly

assigned to the class compared with a control group (Mrazek et al., 2013). Ramsburg and Youmans (2014) and Calma-Birling and Gurung (2017) report that briefly practicing mindfulness meditation prior to lectures was associated with higher performance on post-lecture quizzes, but a similar study of 37 business students found no measurable effects on exam performance (Baranski, 2019). Lin & Mai (2016) found meditation improved academic performance only in the short-term among first year students assigned to the experimental group. Further study in this area is indicated.

<u>Barriers to Incorporating CP in Higher Education</u>.

Despite many positive findings, some authors express reservations about the use of CP in higher education. Fisher (2017) challenges the assumption that students are concerned with spiritual development or life's purpose, and questions the proposed links between CP, critical thinking, and empathy. She also suggests there is a danger of conflating CP with pastoral care or therapy, noting that "any pedagogy that requires teachers to assess potential psychological benefits or harm belongs in a therapist's office, not in a classroom" (p. 16). Fort and Komjathy (2017) are critical of her assessment, but Komjathy concludes that "contemplative pedagogy is simply one approach among many for facilitating deeper inquiry and engagement, and individuals must determine the extent to which it is appropriate for themselves, their students, and their institutional context" (p. 26). Whitford and Warren (2019) note that many students experience barriers to meditation, and that it is not suitable for all personalities. A recent review of 83 meditation studies that included but were not limited to students determined that about 8% of participants experienced at least one adverse event, most commonly anxiety or depression (Farias et al, 2020).

Hyland (2017) deplores the "McDonaldizing" (commodification) of mindfulness practices which are often "divorced from or at odds with the basic tenets of the[ir] Buddhist foundations" (p. 343) and are unlikely to bring lasting benefits. Tisdell et al. (2019) acknowledge the benefits of mindfulness in academic settings, but also caution that "such practices are often being reduced to therapeutic tools and are at the risk of losing the richness of their spiritual and cultural roots" (p.31). Simmer-Brown (2019) also sounds a note of caution regarding the "ethical responsibilities of contemplative teaching" (p. 20) and recommends professional training for those who incorporate CP into their curricula. However, she notes the fruitful connection between deep-rooted Asian contemplative traditions and the current mindfulness revolution in American education (see also Griggs & Tidwell, 2015, for a self-study on developing mindfulness education through personal practice, and Silvestre-López et al., 2017 for further discussion on integrating Eastern and Western contemplative traditions in education).

Barriers to wider adoption of CP in Western higher education may include reservations about its application, effectiveness, and/or adulteration of sacred cultural practices, but also reflect the nature of the Western education system. In 1933, John Dewey complained that "the conditions that stimulate wonder and keep [education] energetic and vital are necessarily ruled

out" in the American education system (p. 53). Silberman (1970) observed that "what is mostly wrong with schools and colleges [is] mindlessness" (p. 36), and the situation has scarcely improved. Berg & Seeber (2016) speak eloquently to the growing emphasis on faculty productivity, effectiveness, assessment, and general "busy-ness", the resultant stress (especially for untenured and adjunct faculty), and the negative repercussions of this environment for students. Moniz & Slutzky (2016) note that Western education in general has "actually *removed* mindfulness from the curriculum" (p. 28). Ergas (2017) critiques the current educational system as "pruning the mind to fit the existing box of education" (p. 10) and makes a case for "reconstructing education" as a "mind-making process" (p. 13) that includes focused attention and contemplative inquiry (see Simmer-Brown, 2018, for a critical review).

A study of "transformation in behaviors and beliefs" among 33 university professors who attended a four-day "Mindfulness Meditation in Teaching" seminar notes the challenge of overcoming "pride of expertise" and collaborating with the "beginner's mind" of students to achieve successful outcomes (Brendel & Cornett-Murtada, 2019, p. 5). This resonates with Leckie's (1996) contention that the "expert researcher model" of university faculty stands in distinct contrast to the novice level skills of most undergraduate students (p. 202). Finally, institutions and institutional cultures can be a barrier to promoting contemplative practices. DuFon and Christian (2013) relate that they were forced to discontinue offering meditation and yoga sessions in a campus space because of institutional by-laws. An analysis of 19 narratives found that many faculty who used CP in the classroom experienced lack of institutional support, "frequently endured various instances of both subtle and open aggression from their academic peers" and "widely preferred to fly under the radar" (Pizzuto, 2018, p. 116). Despite these issues, "the participants widely stressed the importance of contemplative pedagogy and the value that it provides to students … including stress management, focus, and acceptance" (p. 74-75).

It is no coincidence that many of the CP studies focus on students in the health sciences and other service professions such as social work and psychology, where patience and empathy are critical and professional stress levels are high. Their positive conclusions are consistent with systematic reviews of mindfulness studies in the practicing health professions, although the need for further and more rigorous studies is similarly noted (e.g., Burton et al. 2017; Gilmartin et al., 2017; Lomas et al., 2018). A smaller number of studies examine the benefits of CP for university faculty, administrators, or professional staff in higher education (Beer 2010; Webster-Wright, 2013; Beer et al., 2015; Ferreira-Vorkapic et al., 2018).

CP and Libraries

The library literature on CP is in its infancy, but a significant number of publications focus on library workers using CP techniques to cope with work-related stress (e.g., Mastel & Innes, 2013; Anzalone, 2015; Moniz, 2016; Bartlett, 2017; Ruhlmann, 2017; Martin, 2018; Garcia-Febo, 2019). Presentations and discussions at the Connecticut Information Literacy Conference (2019) described the stress imposed on librarians due to rapidly changing

technology, budget constraints and understaffing, information overload, tenure expectations for faculty librarians, and the ever-expanding responsibilities and expectations of liaison librarians. In a 2016 survey of academic, public, and school librarians, 38% of the 629 respondents indicated that workload was their highest stressor (Moniz, 2016).

Libraries have contributed to the introduction of CP on college campuses by joining or initiating efforts to provide "contemplative spaces" - quiet spaces for students, faculty, and staff to meditate (Moniz & Slutzky, 2016; Wachter, 2018). Leftwich is the founder of the online community mindfulinlis, which includes a WordPress site, Twitter and Facebook communities devoted to exploring "mindful practice and self-care within the library and information sciences and beyond." In terms of promoting mindful research, Ahern (2018) describes a simulation exercise to help students search databases as "real, material places" by attending to their emotional and bodily states (p. 63). Cox and Brewster (2020) include contemplative spaces and pet therapy in their review of library support for student mental health in the UK in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but their main emphasis is on communication and collaboration with other campus units. Studies and discussions of CP in terms of library instruction and research are strikingly sparse in the journal literature, but are addressed to varying degrees in three recent books:

The Mindful Librarian (Moniz et al., 2016) includes two chapters that are especially pertinent, "Applying mindfulness to the undergraduate research process" (Eshleman & Slutzky, 2016*a*) and "the Association of College and Research Libraries Framework for Information Literacy: connecting to mindfulness" (Eshleman & Slutzky, 2016*b*). The former focuses on students developing attentiveness and understanding the research process, while the latter focuses on how mindfulness informs the ACRL framework and how the framework can be "integrated with many of the basic tenets of mindfulness" (p. 107).

In *Becoming a reflective librarian and teacher* (Reale, 2017) acknowledges the challenge of the typical one-shot library instruction class for introducing contemplative practices but stresses the importance of having students think about their research and their topics, "writing for inquiry" (why they are interested in a topic, how they became interested in it, what they hope to find out) and keeping research logs. She argues that "deliberate attention to [the research] process" is truly a form of reflection (p. 63), together with activities such as concept-mapping and problem-solving assessment. One of her concluding strategies is that librarians might "model reflection" by "participating in reflection activity with your students" (p. 70).

Recipes for mindfulness in your library: supporting resilience and community engagement (Charney et al., 2017), explores how librarians have integrated mindfulness into their teaching, collections, services, programming, spaces, partnerships, and professional development. Reducing stress and promoting health, community and compassion are recurring themes. Three chapters focus on instruction. Mendélez, (2019) describes applying CP to achieve a "calm pace" to the research process through journaling, silent walks and reflection; Pemberton

& Coats (2019) use personal mindful practices to improve teaching, and Galoozis & Klipfel (2019) describe a mindfulness-based workshop that they designed to decrease research anxiety among graduate students. Their closing recommendations include asking students how they feel about doing research and acknowledging that both students and librarians often feel stressed, rushed and overwhelmed when they come to library instruction sessions. This is often heightened by the virtual environment and the associated challenges with new technology.

CP and Critical Librarianship

While very few journal articles connect CP with academic libraries, there are conceptual links to be made between CP and frequently cited library scholars, especially those within the critical librarianship (critlib) and the Twitter-based #critlib movement. Critlib draws its roots from critical theory and critical pedagogy forerunners, including Paolo Freire and bell hooks, who are frequently cited in the CP literature. Examples of influential scholarship in critlib that have theoretical importance for CP are numerous and should be investigated in subsequent scholarship. For example, foundational works by Emily Drabinski have common theoretical ground with the CP literature, including her scholarship of a "kairos" of library instruction in which she discusses the importance of reflecting on the local needs of individual classrooms as central to library instruction, and a movement away from job-skills oriented, standards-based information literacy instruction (Drabinski, 2014).

Berg et al.'s (2018) critique of the "resilience narrative" in academic libraries draws attention to structural inequities and burdens that shift responsibility from the organization to the individual worker. They urge that libraries should resist the "do more with less" narrative of "resilience" imposed by higher education administrations as financial and staffing support is withdrawn from libraries (p.1-2). Ettarh (2018) coined and defined the term "vocational awe" as the tendency of librarians to glorify the profession of librarianship and seek to defend it from any form of critique, leading to an obfuscation of systemic and deeply entrenched problems in the field, including labor, racial, and socioeconomic issues. Kendrick's research focuses on low morale among academic librarians (Kendrick 2017), especially racial and ethnic minority academic librarians (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019). Burnout and low morale, particularly within public services and library instruction where there is a high degree of emotional labor performed (Matteson & Miller, 2013) is of high concern and can lead to attrition within the ranks. A recent virtual workshop emphasized the need for self-care of library staff in the time of COVID-19, and included speakers such as Ettarh, Tewell, and Kendrick (NNLM, 2020).

Critics of critlib observe that like the library profession as a whole, critical librarianship tends to be a predominately comprised of white library professionals (Drabinski, 2016). Additionally, the overly theoretical focus of the movement may thwart productive change in the field, especially in terms of meaningful change for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) librarians and patrons (Ferretti, 2020). There have also been critiques of adopting mindfulness techniques in higher education and in academic libraries in the critical librarianship

circle that incorporation of mindfulness techniques veers towards "McMindfulness" (a similar critique to Hyland's [2017] "McDonaldizing" CP) and is used as a neoliberal tool for increasing employee "resilience." (Webster & Rivers, 2019, p. 524). These are all important critiques to keep in mind and apply when engaging with CP literature.

Background on ▮▮▮ *and our instruction program*

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ is a private Catholic University located in ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ is ranked as a "High Research Activity" institution among Doctoral Universities in the latest Carnegie Classification, and there is considerable emphasis on both faculty and student research. As of fall 2018, ▮▮▮ had an enrollment of 10,052 students, (FTE 8,447) comprised of 60% undergraduates and 40% graduate students, excluding 910 graduate law students at a separate campus. ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ employs 13 faculty librarians, most of whom are regularly involved in library instruction. In the 2019-2020 academic year, ▮▮▮ librarians taught 358 classes with over 6,000 students. Demand for classes remained steady in the 2020 fall semester despite the challenges of pivoting to hybrid instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information fluency has been a core competency on campus for more than a decade ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and librarians work closely with faculty to ensure that they deliver high quality instruction to as many students as possible. In addition to providing subject-specific library instruction sessions varying from 30 minutes to several hours, librarians provide three levels of scaffolded research instruction for first year students: an introduction to the library as part of the first year "University Life" course, basic search skills for College English I, and more advanced research skills for College English II. Collectively these first-year courses account for about 60% of all library instruction classes and form the foundation of our instruction program. Librarians also provide individual or small group research assistant by appointment, at the reference desk, via email, chat, and virtually via the online meeting application Microsoft Teams®.

<u>Bringing Contemplative Practices to Our Library Instruction</u>

Barbezat and Bush (2014) identified three levels of intervention for contemplative practices that could be implemented within higher education – departments, faculty, and students. They stressed that contemplative practices should be woven into all three levels of an institution for increased impact. When the authors attended a lecture by Barbezat in February 2019, it occurred to them that his model could be adapted and incorporated into our library instruction program. It seemed of key importance to add "librarian" as a distinct level to our adaptation of Barbezat's model. In common with most institutions, much of our library instruction sessions are "one-shots" integrated into a primary instructor's course, so the challenge became how to incorporate CP in such a time-limited frame? There are, however, many ways to think about integrating the lessons of CP into library instruction, and the levels of intervention came to be a source of inspiration.
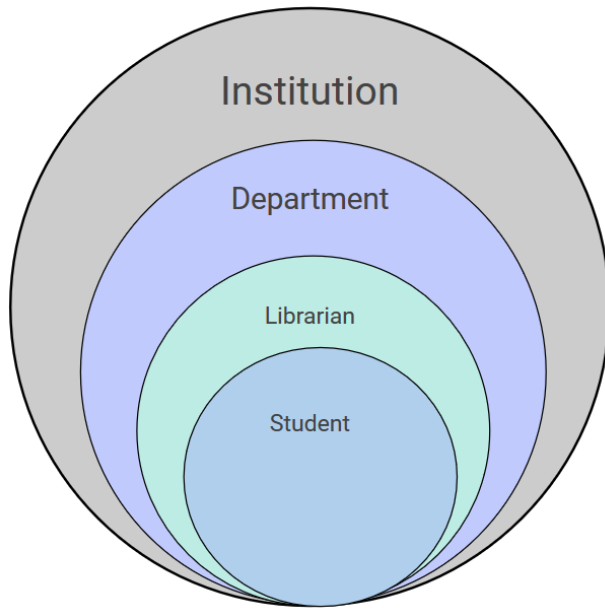
Figure 2: Barbezat's Levels of Intervention Adapted for Library Instruction Programs

Contemplative Practices and Pedagogies on Campus

We know of at least nine academic faculty who formally incorporate contemplative practices in their classes, but as noted by Pizzuto (2018), many "fly under the radar" so the number is likely higher. The second author became involved in CP through being an embedded librarian in courses offered by a faculty member who has incorporated meditation for many years. She was invited to join the Contemplative Pedagogy Committee formed in fall 2018 to explore and promote integration of CP across campus under the auspices of the university's Center for Faculty Development. The committee held a day-long meditation and planning retreat in September 2018, and organized the workshop presented by Daniel Barbezat in February 2019 that led to our resolve to integrate CP into our library instruction. Several guided meditation sessions open to all faculty and administrators are held each semester, and a smaller meditation group meets weekly, initially in person but virtually since the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited in-person meetings.

In fall 2020 the CP committee submitted a "Cultivating Contemplative Community" proposal to the Office of the Provost to help meet the need for mental health resources, contribute to academic outcomes for students, strengthen community, and align with the University Mission and Strategic Plan. The latter is of particular significance in view of the university's commitment to diversity and inclusion, since multiculturalism and pluralism are at the heart of CP. An early indicator of the proposal's success was institutional support for a Contemplative Pedagogy Leadership seminar, scheduled for the spring 2021 semester. The culmination of the seminar will be for the 18 participants to devise and implement a CP training plan within their school or college and provide ongoing support to colleagues.

<u>Interventions at the Department Level</u>

To counter the pervasive academic culture of busyness and anxiety, it was important to introduce CP at a department level, in this case, among the teaching library faculty. Led by the coordinator of instruction, faculty came together to learn, develop new teaching materials, and support one another in an instructional community of practice model. There were several changes adopted which led to this shift. One change was to form an instruction committee made up of several library faculty to brainstorm and design larger scale instruction projects. This moved instruction program decisions into a collaborative space where more faculty voices could be involved.

The authors introduced the idea of infusing CP into the library instruction program at a biweekly "Professional Development Group" meeting, an opportunity for library staff to share new innovations. The third author opened with some facts about the stress and mental health issues among students in higher education. The second author provided background about the initiatives of the CP campus group and the recent retreat run by Barbezat. The concept of "contemplative practices" was introduced and "Tree of Contemplative Practices" (Figure 1) was shown. We then brainstormed general ways that contemplative practices could be brought into library instruction. The ideas generated by this workshop became the basis of our presentation at the CT Information Literacy Conference in June 2019 (███████, 2019).

Another venture was a five-day summer internal workshop series based on instructional topics and guest speakers collectively proposed by library faculty. Workshops spanned a broad range. Day one was based on the prompt: "What can we do to transform the first-year instruction program?" with a set of questions posed to a member of our education faculty, who led a dynamic presentation that contributed to many changes in our instruction program. A subsequent guest speaker was Emily Drabinski, a mentor of one of our librarians and the first Critical Pedagogy Librarian at CUNY Graduate Center, who presented a primer on critical librarianship.

The cornerstone of the departmental cohesion and a watershed moment came from outside the CP circle in the form of an all-day library faculty retreat organized by our Access Services librarian. The day was devoted to pinpointing areas of potential growth, connection, and collaboration, and helping one another to eliminate over-commitments. The day was infused with contemplative practices, including an opening meditation, led by the second author, and a meditative walk of the campus. This retreat has been referenced innumerable times by librarian colleagues as an important experience of solidarity and connection.

An important but gradual shift in our instructional community of practice was introducing discussions to counter attitudes and narratives among teaching librarians based in "deficit-based pedagogy" (Tewell, 2020), and moving to an asset-based pedagogy model (Morrison, 2017). Focusing on student strengths and lived experiences and building services and instruction that allows students to have agency and empowerment to conduct their own research process was a

natural tie-in to Barbezat's conceptualization of CP as a type of mindful teaching and learning in which students are independent thinkers who pull from their own personal experiences (Barbezat & Bush, 2014).

Another shift was a greater emphasis on organization, communication, and streamlining of lesson plans in the library instruction program. While these are traditional duties of library instruction coordinators, these were undertaken intentionally and holistically by the instruction committee to minimize the stress of teaching for librarians. Customizable teaching materials enabled teaching librarians to spend more time on reflection, collaboration and communication with other academic faculty, and focus on higher order issues rather than organizational busy-work. In a similar fashion, a greater emphasis on one-to-one communication with academic faculty became a central contemplative practice in librarian instruction. This was an essential step with many benefits, including relationship-building with faculty and students, understanding faculty course goals and student needs, prior knowledge for asset-based pedagogy purposes, and insight into interpersonal class dynamics prior to instruction. Ironically, the COVID-19 pandemic was a period of growth despite the challenges of virtual and hybrid instruction. A sense of trust and care was formed, leading department chairs and the instruction coordinator to recommend that all teaching librarians and academic faculty have virtual meetings in preparation for librarian instruction to discuss class goals, dynamics, and collaboratively develop an overall plan for the lesson. Many teaching faculty expressed their appreciation for this communication, noting that it decreased their anxiety about library instruction sessions during an extremely stressful time.

Interventions at the Librarian Level

Many of the departmental interventions are designed to flow into the librarian level interventions since departments consist of the individual therein. There are, however, several interventions or practices that are more individual in nature or practiced in smaller groups or pairs. Many of these contemplative self-care practices (e.g., walking outside between classes or meetings, meditation, use of ambient noise or calming music for deep focus in the office, mental health tracking or meditation apps) were already practiced by librarians at our institution, but discussing these in the context of CP and spreading the knowledge about faculty meditation groups on campus was something that this new focus allowed us to expand. We felt it was important to discuss the exceptionally high rate of burnout among instruction librarians, and help librarians, especially new librarians, to avoid internalizing the stress imbued by the pressures of the profession. Contemplative practices do not solve these systemic challenges, but they are important survival tactics for day-to-day life in academia.

Another individual practice that became a group activity among teaching librarians was developing a teaching intention for the semester, inspired by a blog post by Veronica Arellano Douglas (2018). This involved reflecting on one's personal strengths and values as an educator and selecting an intentional area of growth for the coming semester. This was a closing activity

of our professional development meetings in which we introduced CP to our library. A practice solidified by the mindset shift to contemplative practices within the department was to more intentionally engage in reflective conversations with other librarians before and after teaching. Teaching librarians offered their support or advice to one another in the creation of instructional materials, lessons or tools, and to check in with one another following instruction to discuss a class. One such example was the pre-planning and follow-up meetings of summer library instruction in 2019 and 2020 for the pre-college Educational Opportunity Program which the third author spearheaded and collaborated on with other librarians, including the first author. Another example was peer mentorship and support groups formed for newer librarians. These conversations were useful not only for collaboration and mentorship purposes, but also for processing and reflecting on challenging or positive moments in instruction to attempt to discern ways to grow as individual instructors and better assist students.

Interventions at the Student Level

██████ Library teaching librarians collaborated to develop a scaffolded first-year library instruction program, conceptualizing the "three-shot" first year instruction program, as opposed to looking at the three points of contact with first-year required courses as separate and unrelated experiences. Student learning outcomes were devised to take a holistic look at first-year program goals and student experience and to incorporate important feedback from relevant department chairs. This was undertaken with a mind to provide a more theoretically cohesive, and less disjointed or repetitive experience of librarian instruction for first-year students.

In the 2019-2020 academic year we programmatically introduced the question, "Why do we do research?" into the first of our three first-year library orientations, which is required for all first-year students through the university's Center for Academic Success. The student responses were often incoherent but included variations on "to add to a body of knowledge", "to verify previous results", "to solve a problem", and in a few cases "to help get a job". Very few students responded with "curiosity – because I have a question", even when prompted. This provided an opportunity to introduce and reflect on the ACRL framework, (an approach discussed by Eshleman & Slutzky, 2016), especially the concept of "research as open-ended enquiry" (ACRL, 2016).

The open-ended question "what challenges you in doing library research" tended to evoke practical responses such as "I get too many irrelevant results", "I can't find the full text" or "the link didn't work" rather than deeper reflection on the actual research process. Teaching practical search strategies and tips and addressing technical issues are certainly an important part of library instruction, but like Reale (2017) and Galoozis & Klipfel (2019), we wanted to dig deeper into students' understanding of what they are doing, thinking and feeling when they begin research, rather than limiting ourselves to the practical challenges that they encounter. We approached this with the belief that if students understand the research process and why they are

doing research, they will be less stressed about it, and less likely to dismiss it as simply an exercise to be completed with little context or relevance to their experience.

We also took time during the University Life classroom lesson to welcome students into the university's scholarly community – introducing and discussing with them the concept of academia as a community and emphasizing that students are member scholars of it. We used an active-learning exercise in which students were asked to take one-minute and write down as many different uses for a single brick as they can conceptualize. A great deal of creativity and mirth was evident in the following discussion, where we asked students to pull from their previous knowledge, experiences, and creativity to describe the uses for a brick that they had written down. We then discussed how gathering and understanding diverse viewpoints on a topic and grouping common ideas (key words) within broader concepts and theories were techniques that could be applied to the research process. The exercise also provided opportunities to discuss preconceptions and social justice issues. For example, several students stated that a brick could be used to break a window or break into a car (subsequent discussions included scenarios such as a child or pet trapped in a burning building or overheated vehicle) or that walking with a brick in hand would lead to "getting arrested" (leading to a lively discussion of racial profiling).

Another component of our contemplative transformation of University Life library classes was a shift away from an in-person, librarian-led tour of the library building in which multiple classes of 15-20 students would wind through the building in a process best described as "chaotic." We instead adopted an app-based, self-guided scavenger hunt, and further adapted this for COVID-19 by making a second iteration which was entirely virtual. Students had several tasks to complete via their mobile phones, such as locating the reference desk and "take a selfie" with the reference librarian, or in the second iteration, to find hidden Demogorgon icons on the library website (the second scavenger hunt had a Stranger Things, Netflix television series, theme). Several reflective pieces were woven into this app-based tour, including a prompt in which students were asked to recall the spaces they had encountered in the library. They were then prompted to locate the place they would feel the most comfortable studying and to take a photo of that location. The solitary or small group act of wandering and exploring the university library, in a guided way, proved to be far less chaotic than the original group tour and was well received by both faculty and students.

In English 1201, the second class in the first-year library instruction program, we introduced the concept of confirmation bias via a classroom discussion when teaching about forming research questions. This provided an opportunity to counter the assumptions and pressures some students felt, sometimes due to a premature urging from their professors, that they should have fully formed preconceived arguments formed when embarking on the research process, resulting in a closing down of the open-ended inquiry and exploration of allowing sources and evidence to guide one's findings. This worked particularly well in conjunction with "start your research" databases like Opposing Viewpoints, CQ Researcher, and the topic-building exercises used with students to support their 1201 assignments.

Several librarians found other opportunities to integrate CP components geared towards incorporating thoughtfulness, reflection, and open-minded exploration into their library instruction classes. Examples included opening classes with a brief focusing activity (for example, watching a video of Lucille Clifton performing one of her poems and using it as an opportunity to collectively mind map research concepts), taking a moment for quiet reflection or deep breathing, playing music or a calming ambient, calming video during a hands-on searching practice when the classroom would normally be awkwardly silent, and conducting oral and written reflections (one-minute papers) on the research process. We also attempted to add a personal or narrative approach to teaching wherever possible. For example, when offering students library support, we would sometimes couch this in a short personal story about a time when research was difficult and we needed to seek support, or an anecdote about a student who we were able to help (anonymized, of course).

Other small scale contemplative interventions included the adoption of name tents in in-person library instruction, in response to our challenge of how to quickly create rapport with students we had never met. This proved quite simple but effective – for the first time it was possible for us to use a student's name rather than just pointing at them, a rather impersonal practice. We also tried incorporating gentle humor and small talk with students at the beginning of a class or during independent research practice. When teaching in our dedicated instruction space we provided erasable markers to all students and encouraged them to take notes on the white-board tables, mind map, answer prompts or simply draw during library instruction, which students really seem to enjoy. When visiting classrooms where no whiteboard tables were available, we used post-it notes or paper for quick reflective activities and mind mapping, or activities where students answered a prompt. We used icebreaker activities for quick morale-building at the beginning of classes, such as "What is the most boring fact about you?" (Students loved this one), or "What is your favorite Halloween movie?" (The latter was used during hybrid instruction – students used the chat feature in Microsoft Teams to share their responses.) Some librarians led mini-meditations or energy-resetting exercises in which they encouraged students to take a few moments to stretch or (prior to COVID-19 restrictions) move to a different part of the room to have a discussion with a classmate. Lastly, in the fall of 2019, we held our first Mindfulness and the Research Process Workshop – co-led by CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) and a student leader who is also a mindfulness coach - which reached the cap of 25 attendees.

Many of these techniques were learned from other instruction librarians or past colleagues or gleaned from social media conversations. Many librarians had already incorporated these or similar contemplative practices into their teaching. The shift here was thinking about students, faculty, and librarians holistically, understanding the interpersonal elements related to reflective learning, teaching, and relationship building, along with a commitment to applying the theory of asset-based pedagogy to the library instruction program.

Responses to COVID-19

In March 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in our area, resulting in a scramble to move all university classes from face-to-face to virtual delivery and the mandatory closing of the physical library. Our efforts to introduce CP into library instruction suddenly seemed trivial, a cosmic "ha, so reflect on this!" And yet, if ever there was a time for reflection and other contemplative practices this was the time, amid a global health and economic crisis, political instability and inflamed racial tensions. So, in addition to describing how we have adapted library outreach and instruction to the virtual environment, we note how reflection has become a critical part of our efforts.

First, it became essential to engage in ongoing discussions of collective support for library staff and faculty, and address issues that preceded but were compounded by the pandemic. We re-emphasized the need for peer mentorship, internal forms of advocacy, and having intentional discussions about feminist ethics of care (Accardi, 2017), and a need for increased recruiting and continual support of BIPOC librarians and staff. Continuing the theme of decreasing stress for teaching librarians and academic faculty in planning library instruction, we devoted extra effort to getting instructional resources in place and organized. Crucial innovations included a new virtual instruction calendar and an online repository for lesson plans, PowerPoints, and shared syllabi. These helped to alleviate librarian stress in regard to planning and delivering instruction sessions in the new virtual environment and allowed more time and opportunity for higher-order thinking and collaborations with academic faculty. Early in the pandemic we circulated a link to an online essay shared on the Facebook group "Pandemic Pedagogy" called, "Please do a bad job of putting your courses online," and sent supportive emails from librarians to academic faculty collaborators to set a tone of empathy and patience with one another. This was at a time when students and faculty alike were struggling to deal with the explosion of COVID-19 cases and overwhelmed hospitals, mandatory stay at home orders, shortage of basic supplies, and frequent illness and death among friends and family members.

We continued to apply CP techniques in our teaching and research support for students, taking time at the beginning of classes to ask students how they are doing (virtually) and giving them a safe space; it is okay not to "show your face" on video or live chat or to ask questions anonymously. The second author continued to incorporate breath work into classes and introduced "cat therapy" in the form of virtual visits and "purr sessions". More than ever, the importance of evaluating sources and discussing misinformation and disinformation became central to library instruction. We had discussions with students about reflecting not just on the content of information but the underlying agenda of information creators, bias, appeals to emotion and spreading panic, or commercial interests controlling or manipulating information sources. The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented opportunity to discuss and exercise critical thinking and consider social justice and confirmation bias. Contemplative conversations with students about the research process and a librarian's role in this have evoked important questions and discussions about racial and socioeconomic disparities, social justice, climate

change, the deficiencies of a capitalist economy, shortcomings of the political system, populist voting, challenges of the pandemic such as testing and PPE shortages, financial support for the unemployed, disinformation, misinformation, ignorance of science, the need for critical review and evaluation of information, and the importance of good research.

During the pandemic, we have also found ways of empathizing with our students, even when we could not "see" them or gather in large classrooms with them, as evidenced during a presentation we gave with student collaborators for the ████████████ Academic Exposition in April 2020: "Reflecting on librarian and student experiences with teaching and research during COVID-19." Virtual research consultations via Microsoft Teams sometimes became lengthy conversations with students seeming to need interpersonal support. Librarians collaborated with student leaders and organizations on support for programming and research support for student activism by connecting with them through the library's Instagram account. Our access services librarian created a page of emergency wellness resources for COVID-19 hosted on the library homepage and sent to all faculty via email. Overall, in an environment of fear, division, and disruption to our usual forms of engaging with the community, it became increasingly apparent that in addition to taking care of ourselves, we as librarians could provide extra measures of supporting our students.

Conclusion

While there is clearly a need for further and more rigorous studies, there is considerable evidence that contemplative practices can be effective in reducing student stress and anxiety as well as improving critical thinking and ethical decision making. Recognizing that academic libraries are a critical partner in supporting students, faculty, and staff, we expanded the three-part model introduced by Barbezat and Bush (2014) to include a "librarian" level and describe a range of programs and practices that support CP at our institution. These include changes to our instruction program, workshops and specific library instruction activities geared toward reducing student anxiety, and fostering reflection, critical thinking, and student engagement with the research process. We thus moved from a general discussion of "contemplative practices" to specific instances of "contemplative pedagogy" applied to library instruction.

Although our initial focus was on library instruction and the needs of our students, we saw a natural link between CP and the broader critlib discussions regarding the library profession, and the impact of COVID-19 on academic communities. Even prior to COVID-19, it was clear that there are enormous stresses and institutional pressures on library workers, a dire need for increased focus on self-care, and critical and holistic thinking within our conversations, classrooms, and committees. CP can be a powerful tool in this pursuit. The dual pandemics of this time - the virus and systemic racism - need solutions and actions at every level of academia - individual, departmental, and institutional, including the library and librarians. Contemplative pedagogy is not a solution, but it has important theoretical and practical applications for coping with and addressing systemic problems.

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