

WRITE YOURSELF AWAKE: THE DOUBLE PURSUIT OF MINDFULNESS
MEDITATION AND WRITING

By

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ABSTRACT

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Contemplative pedagogy involves teaching methods designed to cultivate deepened awareness, concentration, and insight. Contemplative practices work to undo the Cartesian mind–body dualism that says that mental phenomena are non-physical, or that the mind and body are distinct and separable. This project focuses on an understanding that our internal world includes communication with one’s self, acts of imagination and visualization, and recall and memory. These internal experiences foster many things, such as compassion and kindness, as well as resilience and sustainability through connection.

“McMindfulness” is a term that refers to when mindfulness is used for self-serving and ego-enhancing purposes. Symptoms of McMindfulness show up when mindfulness practices are divorced from their historical and cultural roots and used specifically as tools to improve writing ability and mine for writing content. We also see this in the overuse of Buddhist frameworks in contemplative writing theory. However, Buddhism is not the only tradition that practices mindfulness. There are over 500 million Indigenous and Tribal Peoples all over the globe who have a long history of engaging in contemplative practices in daily and ceremonial life.

This project focuses on the ways that mindfulness practices increase our vibration, tune us into higher frequencies, integrate spiritual downloads, open the pathways to receive and perceive insights from our spirit guides, and perceive higher dimensions of reality. These are not just tools for listening to the inner voice - they are ways of knowing that we can bring into all areas of our lives, including our writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness is a meditative awareness that brings us into the present moment with the goal of connecting us with ourselves, other people, and the environment around us in the direction of universal love. There are many ways mindfulness can be integrated into educational settings, not only for the purpose of longer attention spans and deeper learning, but to heal wounds that run deep on both personal and societal levels. Currently, however, contemplative practices in the west have remained predominantly ego-centered and individualized with the primary goal being to regulate emotional and health imbalances.

In my project, I explore the integration of spirituality into academic work, writing, and in our lives in general. I argue that being in the body is a way of knowing and that being mindful of the way the body feels is a learned practice in today's world. Breathing exercises help the mind learn to be aware of noticing our thoughts and the body, as well as the room or space we find ourselves in. Breathing exercises break down dichotomies like mind/body, inside/outside the body, spiritual/atheist, writing/nonwriting, human logic/emotion, us/them, and hierarchies like human intelligence as superior to plant or animal intelligences. These practices or ways of being and living must be relearned as it is not passed down culturally from many of my ancestors, although there indeed are ancestors who are guided by their connection with each other, the land and their bodies. This project will explore how whiteness and race complicate these practices, as well as how they have been embedded in Indigenous traditions since time immemorial.

I am inspired to uncover and grapple with the spiritual side in everything I do, including where I find myself at this moment - writing. For the purposes of this project, I'm interested in how this state of awareness can be transferred to the writing desk and can lead to deeper rhetorical awareness and insights, and how this contributes to holistic curriculum development and well-being in higher education in general. My interests are grounded in the conversation surrounding spiritual practices in higher education but also in my own experiences. *In Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives*, authors Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A. Lindholm define "spiritual development" very broadly: how students make meaning of their education and their lives, how they develop a sense of purpose, the value and belief dilemmas that they experience, as well as the role of religion, the sacred, and the mystical in their lives. The study reported in this book surveyed more than 112,000 freshmen as they enrolled in 236 public and private (religiously affiliated and non-religiously affiliated) colleges and universities, and then followed up (in 2007) 14,527 of these students (at 136 institutions) as they were completing their junior year. The findings reveal students' engagement in spirituality grows substantially when entering college, as well as students becoming more caring, tolerant, connected with others, and engaged in a spiritual quest, enhancing students' ability to learn deeply through inner work, according to the authors. This work encourages institutions to give greater priority to these spiritual aspects of students' educational and professional development.

The problem with writing instruction is not just a lack of present-moment awareness apparent within composition praxis. Patricia Owen-Smith argues this is a

reflection of humanity at large. The problem concerning the writing classroom stems from what instructors intend to have students *do* in and with the present moment. They make the case that contemplative practice can move us in the direction of healing the Cartesian mind/body split, but for what purposes? Indigenous scholar Yuria Celidwen argues that the contemplative mind is to reconnect us with our communities and the earth, not solely with our inner world. Thich Nhat Hanh says “We began to run a long time ago. We even continue to run in our sleep. We think that happiness and well-being are not possible in the here and now. That belief is inherent in us. We have received the seed of that belief from our parents and our grandparents . . . That is why when we were children, we already had the habit of running” (The Path 21-23). Some contemplative scholars call for a network of schools and universities worldwide to organize in the pursuit of mindful curricula. For example, Robert Yagelski quotes from philosopher David Loy who puts it, ““In this century it has become clear that the fundamental social problem is now the relationship between humankind as a whole and our global environment. It is because of our alienation from the earth that we are destroying it.’ (302)” (12). Yagelski believes the crisis of sustainability is not an environmental crisis but a social problem that stems from the dualistic way that we understand ourselves as beings in the world: “At the heart of the crisis of “sustainability is the Cartesian sense of the self as an autonomous, thinking being, and that self is fostered and sustained by conventional writing instruction” (12). The purpose of this project is to bring instructors into alignment with not only the present moment, but to frame this moment as a catalyst for all future moments, and generations of peoples who breath, walk, and love on this earth. This project intends to reorient the

composition classroom toward future oriented goals of sustainability, universal love, Indigenous perspective and guidance, and to place at the heart of writing an overarching thesis statement that orients us all toward interconnectedness. In this project, I outline the way contemplative practices bring us into the present-moment awareness and aids in the alignment of our bodies, hearts, and minds. First, I narrate my experience moving toward a contemplative mind in my personal life. Second, I discuss the commercialization of mindfulness practices in the United States and some of the consequences this had including a perpetuation of the individualism and egocentrism outcomes. Then, the project reviews the literature about contemplative pedagogy and the potential overuse of Buddhist traditions with which to frame contemplative practices.

This literature review highlights some important findings for composition instructors. The first is that mindfulness practices bring the inner voice to the forefront of composition praxis. This is important because, in terms of writing, there is a general sense that writing content comes from outside of us, and that authority is not necessarily in the writer. The integration of mindfulness practices teaches students about their inner world, a way of knowing that has not been passed down from generation to generation from European ancestors. We have a long history of placing authority in the teacher and in identifying what others have said or done in writing. Mindfulness practices bring the experience of the writer to the forefront in new ways, as the writer's feelings, sensations, and furthermore, connection to the spirit world, are incorporated into the writing experience in a more conscious way. Being disconnected from the inner voice is curiously odd in composition, and in life in general, especially since it seems absolutely

essential for writing content exploration. Noticing the inner voice helps to undo the Cartesian mind-body split because once we hear our voice, we bring our attention to our head space, where the voice is located. This focuses our energy inward, which we seldom do. Furthermore, our minds can focus our energy in more areas of the body than just the head to listen to thoughts. This focus can transfer over to focusing on the sensations in our bodies, as well. Then we can learn to focus our energy in other areas of the body, and more specifically, *send* our attention, awareness and energy to different areas of the body for meditative as well as healing purposes. The inner voice creates a healing or toxic environment in our bodies. Incorporating it into writing instruction brings well-being into higher education. Making no mention of the inner voice in writing instruction leaves students to experience writing as inorganic and it plays into the idea that writing is a product, the text as something outside of ourselves, instead of an extension of our being.

The second main point this literature review uncovers is the overuse of Buddhist frameworks in contemplative writing theory. This is a symptom of western mindfulness culture, or what Miles Neale has called “McMindfulness”. Mindfulness practices have been completely removed from their roots, so much so that we assume meditation comes from Buddhism and that mindfulness is a Buddhist practice. However, mindfulness epistemologies have a long tradition in Indigenous and Tribal peoples’ cultures. Mindful awareness does not only come from meditation, either. It is not just paying attention to our thoughts; it is a way of perceiving reality through connection to the spirit world. It’s noticing a child playing with a butterfly, and it’s listening and perceiving the voice of the wind. The genocide of Indigenous peoples, however, has removed us from these ways of

thinking and knowing, and we have lost this kind of spiritual and emotional guidance as a result. In our attempts to improve individual writing experiences, we perpetuate what we are already good at - self-serving behaviors. Writing scholars lead us inward for greater rhetorical embodiedness but have not directed this awareness outward toward our environment in explicit ways that address our interconnectedness, including sustainable, healthy lifestyles and lives. Although contemplative writing theory has a holistic outlook, it does not embody the goals of mindful awareness as it has been historically understood as a way to develop interpersonal relationships and to connect with the earth. Mindful awareness is a spiritual awareness and once the mind has been expanded by an idea or concept, it can never return to its original way of thinking or being. However, the connection with our communities and the environment in ways that go beyond rhetorical embodiment for writing purposes is not explicitly made in contemplative writing theory.

Therefore, this project concludes with a call to open up our perspective of the contemplative and to consider how ancient Indigenous cultures have been practicing mindfulness since time immemorial to regain focus on the interconnectedness of all beings, the importance of community support and living, and finally to become reconnected with nature, the environment and a sustainable life for the future generations of the planet. Mindfulness meditation in the composition classroom, therefore, is about reconnecting us, through writing, to the essence of our being and our connectedness with our environment and others.

METHODS

Writing and meditation have a symbiotic relationship. Through the double pursuit of mindfulness meditation and writing research, I explore how present moment awareness can enrich the writing process and release writers of anxieties surrounding writing and lead us to a feeling of connectedness with others and our environment. James Moffett theorizes that the key to connecting with writing is through the inner voice, what Jean Nienkamp refers to as the “internal rhetoric”. Scholars argue this internal awareness can be transferred onto the page as rich pre-writing content as well as future meaning making. Mindfulness techniques are a way to heal our minds and bodies of anxieties that get in the way of writing, and instead of feeling the burden of needing to write, meditation becomes a methodology to embody broader, more intuitive connections we have with what we are writing.

I argue that contemplative practices could make up a large majority of class time, with possibly as much as 50% of the class dedicated to simply grounding ourselves in the present moment through mindfulness techniques and contemplative writing prompts and assignments. The research questions I’m interested in are: If instructors are engaging in contemplative practices in the classroom, how explicit are they about their intentions behind these practices? Do students miss the point if we don’t tell them? Do we really have more thought control or detachment from thought when we practice mindfulness? How are instructors guiding students inward but also outward toward connections with others and their environment? What does environment mean exactly? How does it relate

to nature? How much does it matter if mindfulness techniques don't improve the quality of students' writing? How do we undo the Cartesian self and how is Indigenous wisdom a guide to do this? What are the kinds of approaches and contemplative exercises used in a classroom setting? How can we organize to talk about these practices? What would be the significance of having a nation and worldwide network of contemplative professionals that produced a newsletter and email list? Would the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (AEPL)'s newsletter serve this purpose? Or the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) newsletter? (I would create a website for the English 615 Digital Humanities course to include as part of this project if I could go back in time). How do mindfulness practices connect us to the heart chakra? When do you practice mindfulness? How does stopping resist modern life? How does asking, 'who am I?' and 'who is thinking?' save the planet? What are the mis-teachings of mindfulness and the consequences of cultural appropriation? Through exploring these questions and the scholarship on contemplative practices, as well as in engaging in mindfulness meditation myself, I believe this project serves as a sort of mihrab, which is a niche in the wall of a mosque, at the point nearest to Mecca, toward which the congregation faces to pray. This project creates space for us to think about how course curricula, content, and class discussion can be enriched through mindfulness practices, as well as points to more overarching goals, such as cultural awareness and sensitivity, self-reflection, kindness, compassion, community, sustainability, and caring for the earth, and how mindfulness integrated into higher education settings can offer new perspectives on how to move in the direction of healing the western Cartesian mind.

CHAPTER 1: WELL-BEING IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

In higher education settings, student affairs professionals can play an important role in the development of students' spiritual worldviews. In the dissertation, "*The influence of student affairs professionals' spirituality on the development of college students: a phenomenological study*", Kawami Evans explores how the spirituality of student affairs professionals at a California public research university influences their responses to students' spiritual development and exploration of life's big questions. The following research questions guided this study: 1) How do student affairs professionals define and describe spirituality? 2) How do student affairs professionals describe the role of spiritual development within the larger mission of student affairs work? 3) In what ways does the spirituality of student affairs professionals influence their approach to the spiritual development of students? The results of this study showed that the spiritual development of students poses difficult challenges for student affairs professionals seeking to practice whole student development. However, despite this lack of clarity, student affairs professionals do engage in the spiritual development of students. The study also showed that spirituality is intricately connected to the work of student affairs professionals through the student affairs social justice mission. Finally, the ambiguity regarding the spiritual development of students may hamper student affairs professionals' effectiveness in providing whole student development.

The possibility of teaching well-being in freshman composition is discussed in Jill Belli's, "*Why Well-Being, Why Now?*" (2016). In the article, Belli highlights the overlap

between well-being and the implications for writing studies, including connections and shared concepts between writing and well-being, the central role of writing in positive psychology and “positive education” pedagogies, and the potential for writing studies to critique and influence well-being education. The article outlines the possible arguments against teaching well-being, stating that it does not: “facilitate social reform, mitigate inequality, or intervene in the material conditions of students’ existence... it does not assist teachers or students in achieving the Freirean goals of conscientization’ (critical consciousness), humanization, dialogism, or ‘reading the word and the world’” (4). My project disagrees with this statement, however, and brings in Indigenous voices that argue that positive education can enhance our humanization and reading of the world in many ways through mindfulness. Positive education embeds the principles of well-being into teaching, and educators argue that “depression and anxiety of their students drop and happiness rises” (4). According to the article, researchers’ aim is to persuade policymakers to encourage teachers to teach well-being alongside typical rigorous academic study, creating “positive institutions” in K-12 and higher education. Belli argues the composition classroom is an environment where incoming students are acculturated, and freshman composition courses shape the way students behave, think, write and speak. She argues that one of the influences positive education has on writing studies is on minimizing or managing negative emotions that hinder good writing, and an overall focus on strengths before moving to suggest areas for improvement. The article also discusses how mindfulness, meditation, breathing exercises and yoga, may

contribute to easing stresses about writing and may also contribute to better writing and writing habits.

Belli echoes some of the critiques of the commodification of mindfulness as a method for stress reduction and emotional control, as opposed to the universal teachings of love and kindness. Belli, however, does make claims about writing teachers being well positioned to take a more active role in students' well-being, arguing that it would be a "shame if emotion as critical thought does not create new social and political possibilities for composition studies," and that the embracing of critical pedagogy will serve to politicize the conversations about the connection between writing and well-being (7). The outward, forward-motion collective thinking is apparent throughout the literature on mindfulness embedded in writing theory, but it is not brought to the forefront in most of the texts. This project looks at the need to bring forward these ideas of embracing critical pedagogy and creating new social and political possibilities, arguing that there exists the possibility to manifest new world orders from these spaces of deep intrapersonal reflection, but that we must turn to the overarching goals of universal love and kindness and think critically about extracting writing knowledge and experiences from these spaces of mindfulness.

CHAPTER 2: THE CONTEMPLATIVE MOVEMENT

There is a movement of contemplative scholars including Alexandria Peary, Patricia Owen-Smith, Christy Wenger, and Robert Yagelski, among others, who believe in the transformative potential of contemplative practices as an integral part of course curricula to cultivate students' inner world. Merging contemplative practices with writing develops several key components of writing knowledge, including presence in composing and consuming texts as well as the importance of developing rhetorical awareness through this process of the embodied and ecological aspects of composing.

Contemplative pedagogue Alexandria Peary argues against what she calls the "The wrong no-self policy", stating that within the academy "we respect a type of metacognition that is oddly scrubbed of the observing self as well as dislocated from present circumstances" (Prolific Moment 145). She notes that of the policy statements of the discipline, there is no mention of the physical body or bodily sensations of the writer, nor are the affective responses she argues we need for writing. Yagelski argues that national composition policy is "making the body irrelevant to the words the body produces", and instead is heavily consumed by future and past oriented instruction (45). As Peary urges, "The body matters, the material matters. Physicality (for example, of the body) is not secondary to form, or mind, or language (the privileged masculinist focuses of Western thought - it is, rather, fundamental." (128). I argue that the state of the body is central to writing. This project is meant to awaken a curiosity as to how the body might guide the writing we do and how a focus on the body can bring about a new way of

immersing ourselves in our writing through feelings, sensations, and emotions, as opposed to logical arguments based on reason, data, and tangible things. Instead of removing emotion and one's personal feelings and bodily sensations, this project intends to put our senses and what is in our hearts at the forefront to allow our emotions to guide us to evolve both emotionally and intellectually through writing. There is a silencing of our emotions in higher education in general and especially in the writing we are expected to produce in the academy. When was the last time we were told to use our own emotional and sensational responses to something as *evidence*? As Truth? Leaving the sensorial experience and the feelings in our hearts out of national composition policy perpetuates the logic/reason vs. emotion dichotomy that has saturated education for far too long. In writing spaces, to deny us of our emotional body is to deny us of our spirit, as the experience of the human is a spiritual one. We have a spirit and there is a curious silencing of this fact in writing praxis. This project intends to offer potential frameworks to awaken the writer from this silencing.

Is this silencing happening only on a policy level? How is the silencing of our corporeal experience played out in real class time and how can we awaken our minds, intuition, and vision through the body writing as a meditation? Mindful practices bring us into the present moment in the classroom, but there still seems to be a fundamental lack of discussion about our integration with the environment and what that looks like in different contexts. Scholarship (Yellow Bird 2013; Celidwen 2019) that addresses the environment in terms of the contemplative seems to primarily come from Indigenous scholars, although Yagelski's text does make big claims about sustainability as related to

writing praxis. Contemplative writing theorists, like Alexandria Peary, Patricia Owen-Smith, and Christy Wenger, however, seem to be more focused on contemplative practice as related to students' development of rhetorical awareness for the purposes of reading and writing, as opposed to how these practices generate connection with others and the environment. The most recent scholarship (Peary 2018; Owen-Smith 2017; Wenger 2015; Yagelski 2011) about contemplative pedagogy doesn't seem to address in great depth our connection to our inner spirit *and* the impact this connection has on the environment that surrounds us, and finally, what this might mean in terms of writing instruction that goes beyond the development of rhetorical awareness in first year composition courses.

The Silencing of Spirit, Community-oriented Living, and Sustainability

The silencing of spirit is played out in different ways in the scholarship included in this literature review. In my mind, the call for us to awaken to our emotional and spiritual bodies is clear in the texts I read by contemplative pedagogues Alexandria Peary, Patricia Owen-Smith and Christy Wenger. However, because their work remains inward-focused on one's individual writing experience and rhetorical awareness, and does not connect to overarching implications of interconnectedness, global sustainability specifically, and in general, how the contemplative mind implies a community-oriented life on a biological, ecological, material, philosophical and societal level. I believe that what is lost when this connection is not made is the possibility of awakening us to a life that is no longer based on capitalistic gains to one that is refocused on community living

on a living planet. The central texts published by these authors in recent years on contemplative practices in the writing classroom, in fact, seem to absolutely reinforce the idea that mindfulness meditation be integrated into the classroom setting as a tool primarily for individualistic, and possibly ego-centered intentions, including improving our academic work as well as our connection to the work we produce. Alexandria Peary, Patricia Owen-Smith and Christy Wenger offer limited arguments toward connecting with other classmates, the university at large, our life's purpose or mission, and how that mission contributes to the bettering of society and the well-being of the planet. I could compile statements from their books that would point in this direction, but it would be an argument I make, and not something explicit. These texts did not awaken in me a sense that at the heart of this "quiet revolution" within academia is the goal of reconnecting with others and our environment, what this might look like as related to writing. Although their work has obvious spiritual elements, white contemplative western academics understand contemplative practice as a movement toward universal love, but rather as a development of students' inner world.

I am white and was initially conditioned to see mindfulness to connect to the intrapersonal monologue for writing content and to get writing done more effectively and possibly with greater creativity. But I noticed this silence in the literature on mindfulness when I was reading Indigenous Scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's *As We Have Always Done* as I was finishing Peary's and Owen-Smith's books. While reading Simpson's book, I noticed that within the first ten pages she captures in just a few terms from her Indigenous language what takes Peary and Owen-Smith over 100 pages to say. I

noticed her text has elements of mindfulness, but the text itself is not about mindfulness meditation as we recognize it here in the west. Rather, at the heart of her text are environmental and social justice agendas, as well as a push for Indigenous resurgence, that seem to remain relatively silenced in current contemplative pedagogy.

In Owen-Smith's book Daniel Pink observes "that we are quickly moving away from an economy and social structure grounded in 'logical, linear, computer-like capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and society built on the inventive, empathic, big-picture capabilities of what's rising in its place, the Conceptual Age' (2005, 1)" (22). Pink believes the future belongs to a "very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind - creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning-makers. These people - artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers - will now reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys. (1-2)" (23). The significance of this quote is in the type of work outlined here - caregivers, storytellers, consolers, big picture thinkers. How can the writing classroom be a space to foster this kind of vision? How do instructors teach students to write a thesis? What direction are students pointed to go in? Is it toward a logical argument that relies on research? Or is it to bring healing and to create new frameworks and structures to make meaningful changes in our individual and collective lives? How is research addressing issues of inequality, privilege, and social change, and furthermore, concepts such as kindness, healing, and new ways of knowing that aren't understood through western knowledge?

My broader argument in this paper is that the work we need to do is not incorporating new tools and knowledge for writing. What we need is to create new pathways of healing through storytelling, empathy, art, new designs and inventions that enrich our lives, decrease oppression and suffering, and help us reverse the negative effects of climate change. Would this look like a unit in a writing course? Would we teach students to push their arguments in this direction? Would we do meditations and freewriting about how what we read can be understood through healing and social justice frameworks? Those who can recognize patterns are big picture thinkers because, as I know from studying intersectionality, recognizing patterns is essential to undoing systems of oppression. Indigenous cultures uphold storytelling and narrative as a fundamental part of living in community because stories transmit wisdom and create opportunities for mindfulness when they are told, heard, and enacted in daily life through life. Stories are told as metaphors, but Indigenous folks reflect their lived-out experiences back onto the narratives, transforming the stories into spiritual guides as time unfolds. I see this quote from Daniel Pink as touching on our reintegration with the environment and our reconnection with others that seems to be missing from contemplative pedagogy currently. I love how Pink upholds artists as those who will change the world. A mindful life is a work of art. The larger questions this project attempts to answer are: Why are we doing meditation in the writing classroom exactly? What are we exploring inwardly? How can we foster global healing in higher education? How can education act to set us free instead of causing further harm and worse retraumatizing us? How can writing be a transformative, unimagined space that has endless possibilities? This project explores

questions about healing the collective consciousness through meditation and connection and attempts to move us toward a classroom space that teaches about intrapersonal rhetoric as well as contemplative ways of knowing oneself and the world around us. These ways of knowing release chemicals in our bodies that make us feel good, where we can sense meaning beyond words and western logic, mitigate the effects of trauma, and create neural networks based on new ways of knowing. There are many negative emotions associated not only with school but with writing specifically. However, writing is a space where we can in fact immerse ourselves, if only for a moment, in the unknown and explore areas of our minds and our beings we had not previously known. We've been conditioned to hate writing, but writing is a profoundly social act that can connect us with our environment and each other in deeply emotional and spiritual ways. The broader goal and argument of this project is to explore these depths of our being through the creative and profoundly emotional act of writing to move toward education that is and feels liberatory instead of traumatizing.

Emancipatory Education and Reconnection with the Earth

Fostering this sense of inner connection that goes beyond western ways of knowing has deep, ripple-like effects on our connections with others, us as global citizens in our micro universes, the small and big decisions we make, policies we support, information and entertainment we consume, our connection with our other senses, our dream world, visions, magical power to turn hate into compassion, and finally on restoring humanity's ability to heal on a collective level and move forward toward a

sustainable future. Mirabai Bush points out that contemplative practices can address the critical issues facing higher education in this century by returning us to our interior selves, the initial source of all knowing and wisdom, and addressing issues of disconnectedness through contemplative practices has the potential to restore our position as citizens of the world capable of kindheartedness and ethical discernment. Owen-Smith believes contemplative practices offer great promise for a reenvisioned academy of “honor, veracity, and relevance for the twenty-first century” (109). Mindfulness practices offer a journey of deepening our awareness and learning; however, emancipatory education is about more than becoming aware of one’s mind; it’s about what Owen-Smith says is “the planet’s cry for judiciousness, integrity, insight, compassion, harmony, goodwill, and deep thoughtfulness is palpable. This cry is no longer met and subdued by tools of the past. The response should, and indeed must, be led by those of us entered with guiding future generations” (121). In this quotation, how does the meaning change if we do not see the “planet’s cry” as metaphorical, as Owen-Smith may have intended. Indigenous cultures in the Amazon rainforest hear this cry very literally, and scientists and activists say that it is within this generation that we must change the course of environmental destruction or it will be too late. How can we focus on rhetorical awareness of the writing body while we walk on a planet that will probably annihilate us or we will murder? Emancipatory education is more about undoing the Cartesian split - it is about reconnection with ourselves, others and our environment, in a radically different way. Part of this project addresses this radical change and looks to Indigenous wisdom for guidance.

In the largest mindfulness study done at universities across the nation in various interdisciplinary courses, research shows that the most important findings concern faculty who encourage and involve students in conversations about matters of “meaning and purpose in life; who engage them in discussions of religion and spirituality; and who may also act as spiritual role models by virtue of their own spiritual beliefs and practices” (Astin et. al, 241). According to authors, findings provide strong evidence that such faculty play a critical role in facilitating students’ sense of caring and feelings of connectedness with others. One learning outcome of the writing intensive classroom might be to teach students to look inwardly and think deeply about their presence and purpose right now and in the world. Writing may be the key to cultivating emotional development in students and authors argue that teaching contemplative practices in freshman composition could solidify a place on campus that actively teaches the student body as a whole to be better citizens. Contemplative practices create space, a stillness, silence, a vibration, that allow students to tune into something deeper. Dominant western culture values production, logic, consumerism, etc., and contemplative practices help us step away from a fast-paced lifestyle and immerse ourselves in feeling for a moment, however, it is important for contemplative instructors to be informed about McMindfulness frameworks to better anticipate failures and mis-teachings. There is a danger of appropriating these practices because an instructor could very easily lead students inward without knowing to guide them outward as well toward connectedness and healing of others and the environment. The institutionalization and colonization that overwhelms academia does not escape the writing classroom. In the classroom, there is a

danger of teaching mindfulness as something outside of ourselves. In fact, mindfulness is what Michael Yellow Bird calls a birthright. It's a neural network that colonization took away from our ancestors through fast-paced production and seriousness. The contemplative is a return to our true nature, not a tool to control negative emotions. Mis-teachings could happen when a professor forgets, for example, that the breath is in fact the teacher and experiences and contemplative practices will look and feel different to each student. The contemplative is not to better the writing process - its purpose is an ambivalence toward writing all together. After all, there are more important things than writing even in the writing classroom, like love, kindness and healing the planet.

Therefore, this project seeks to ask emerging questions about the writing classroom, not only about how mindfulness can be used as a tool for writing, but about how writing can be used as a tool for mindfulness, a mindful life, and a sustainable future. How can classrooms be not only safe spaces but *sacred* spaces for people? What does safety have to do with the sacred? Does composition policy reflect Indigenous cries for sustainability and reconnection with our environment? How does current policy reflect universal love? How does writing instruction work as a tool to reconnect us with our environment? The purpose of these practices in the writing classroom is to create a greater connection throughout class time. First year college writing is a moment in the day to look forward to - a moment for a slower pace, a relaxing of the body, a tuning into ourselves for the first time that day maybe, a remembering, to balance our feminine and masculine energies, and in the stillness of the moment, sensing others around us, hearing a bird's message outside the window, feeling the direction the wind is taking us, an echo of how

things could be, and exploring this reconnection through social and environmental justice frameworks in our writing. This project looks to Indigenous wisdom to hear the wind's howl.

Groundedness from within a Social Justice Perspective

Patricia Owen-Smith's approach to contemplative reading through social justice frameworks seems like a powerful link to organize the integration of contemplative practices within academy policy and culture. How would our current class discussions on social justice issues shift? How would they look/feel similar/different? How could social justice curricula and resources be organized within a nationwide and worldwide network of professionals teaching mindfulness practices? Conscious mindful awareness may help to decolonize academia, examine the intersections of gender and racial constructs, explore in-between spaces, unknot dichotomies of two totally opposite and opposing categories, as well as other things like perceived hierarchical intelligence over the animal and plant realms of being and knowing, including the destruction of the land and the pollution of the water. Just like it is not a metaphor when Indigenous folks say the land is their body, the term *decolonization* is not a metaphor, either. In the article, "*Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor*", Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang state decolonization is not a metaphor for other things that need improvement in our societies and schools. The authors state decolonization in the settler colonial context "must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and

not just symbolically” (7). According to Tuck and Yang, settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles everyone. In this essay, the term decolonization points to a return to Indigenous ways of living, seeing the world and relating to the land. As a white person, I can only attempt to understand what this looks and feels like, and I am not entirely sure how repatriation of land would resonate with the contents of this literature review. I could draw connections but I’m afraid they would be superficial and wouldn’t help to return land. A mindful curriculum may have elements of repatriation, however, *decolonization* of the university and academia would require returning the land we are on now to its rightful owners, which includes the classrooms I propose we do mindfulness exercises in.

It’s even come to my realization while writing this essay that the inclusion of contemplative practices in the classroom can result in the furthering of colonization through mis-teachings (I explore this more in the next section). Mindfulness is not a practice we are learning or teaching in the classroom to deepen learning in a metaphorical sense; it’s a literal return of our bodies to ourselves in the classroom; it’s to learn about love in the classroom, not writing; it’s really seeing each other and it’s a deep concern for the well-being of the living, breathing earth. Decolonization in this essay points to the return to Indigenous guidance, wisdom, storytelling, caring, ceremony, the sacred, and ways of living in all its forms I do not know and cannot write about as a white westerner. When I hear things like decolonize parenting practices, for example, I would understand this verb as *decolonize* in the Indigenous sense - not in terms of land repatriation as explained in the article - but in the sense of upholding children as wise beings, in terms of

listening practices as a parent, the end of corporal punishment, and a moving away from a sense of domination and control and literal ownership of other people to be more kind, loving and understanding. Will mindfulness practices in the writing classroom help to return Indigenous lands to their rightful place? I have no idea. However, what I can say is that this essay brings in Indigenous voices in an attempt to be a better ally, and it was in this attempt that I learned that Indigenous peoples have been practicing mindfulness for thousands of years and that the practice is diverse - meditation can happen on purpose or be accident; there are thousands of endless ways to practice meditation, from sitting, standing, walking, observing, painting, reading poetry, chanting, dancing, eating, etc., that mindfulness is a birthright, yours and mine, and finally that mindfulness is exactly what occurs in ceremony, that ceremony is to remind us of our mindful existence in our day-to-day lives, and through ceremony we create community and connection with our environment. Mindfulness is not paying attention to the sensations of eating a raisin; it's not a deeper understanding of some rhetorical situation; it's a connection with ourselves, our communities and the environment around us. We cannot have a connection with our environment without connection with our community. Connection with the environment is not a metaphor - it isn't a new age thing; it isn't mysterious or abstract - it's a literal movement of energy that happens, which is seemingly invisible to the naked eye but easily felt through our senses - a knowing westerners are not attuned to, ignore and have lost.

In the conclusion of Patricia Owen-Smith's book, she mentions the importance of Indigenous explanations advanced by people of these traditions, stating that in

contemplative and SoTL research Indigenous perspectives are usually not there. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's book *As We Have Always Done* reveals many parallels and intersecting points to the current literature on contemplative practice. In her book, Simpson locates Indigenous political resurgence as a practice rooted in Indigenous theorizing, writing, organizing, and thinking. She shows that Indigenous resistance is not calling for inclusion, but for unapologetic, place-based Indigenous alternatives to colonialist logic. Her use of Indigenous terms works as a methodology to weave storytelling and native feminist theory. Even in the first few pages of her introduction, the vocabulary and terms she introduces have embedded within them a mindful perspective. For example, the word "*Biibaadan*" translates to "dawn" - the prefix *bii* means the future is coming at you; it also means the full anticipation of the future, that you can see the whole picture. *Daa* is the verb for living in a certain place or the present. *Ban* or *ba* is a verb used for when something doesn't exist anymore or someone who has passed on. *Biidaaban*, then, is the verb for when day breaks, the actual moment daylight appears at dawn, not as a prolonged event but the very moment. Simpson explains that this term shows how everyday "embodiment is a mechanism for ancient beginnings ...and engagement in these practices unlocks their theoretical potentialities and generates intelligence. It is this presence that will create flight paths out of colonialism and into magnificent unfolding of Indigenous place-based resurgences and nationhoods" (193). Although Simpson's book doesn't address contemplative pedagogy specifically, the embodiment principals woven throughout as related to her theorizing of land as pedagogy help to illustrate the richness possibly missing in composition policy. Simpson's text does

not address writing theory specifically, but she does say that many activists are on the streets protesting, while others embody activism at their writing desks.

Mindfulness in the West

Contemplative practices in higher education can help to cultivate qualities of universal love like respect, connectedness and social and civil responsibility in the classroom. In Deborah Haynes et. al, in “*The Blue Pearl: The Efficacy of Teaching Mindfulness Practices to College Students*”, collected data from first-year students who underwent mindfulness training and responded to surveys questions about feelings of connectedness which they recorded in written reflections. The authors report that cultivating mindfulness in the classroom helps to foster an atmosphere of respect, and that the exercises bring the class together as a whole. They are convinced that when courses actively create a respectful environment, students learn to listen, write, and argue persuasively “from a position of civility, which helps them to become principled citizens” (64). According to the article, mindfulness practices foster development of “I=Thou” relationships, where other people, events, and things are treated as “subjects and not merely as objects for use of enjoyment” (64). The authors state that after undergoing mindfulness training, many students claim to have experienced an increased sense of creativity, new ways of managing stress and anxiety, and learned how to cultivate positive mental states for writing in the context of stressful lives.

Of the various ways to foster spiritual development, some have turned to mindfulness meditation as a tool to foster a contemplative mind in educational settings.

Scientist and meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn states that mindfulness has the power to elevate our consciousness to manage the current problems humanity's facing due to the effects of technological advances. Working together as a team to move into a more mindful space and embody the principles and practices of mindfulness in all aspects of one's work is referred to as "the Tao of work" at the Mind and Life Institute where Kabat-Zinn works. The work Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues do at the meditation center is to cultivate mindfulness, "the efforts of which flow from redefining our general understanding of the place and function of work in our lives. This includes appreciating and tapping into the unique inner resources of each individual team member, keeping work life in balance with other pursuits including family and contemplative practices, letting the work become one's meditation practice and vice versa, helping each other see and work on our rough edges and blind spots, and working with whatever comes up mindfully and compassionately, including hiring people, and, when necessary and unavoidable, asking them to leave" (10). I'm drawn to the practice of allowing one's work to move away from capitalist aspirations and come into harmony with one's body and the community in which we live.

Kabat-Zinn's influence in mindfulness culture in the west has its controversies. Kabat-Zinn is the creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, and while he is known for popularizing mindfulness practices in the west, there are controversies that surround his separation of these practices from their spiritual roots. This project will address the consequences of separating meditation practices from their spiritual origins and explore areas that shine light on how to reconnect. The

controversy is addressed by David Forbes in his book *Mindfulness and Its Discontents* in which he argues that Kabat-Zinn firmly reinforces capitalist neoliberal thinking. Forbes claims Kabat-Zinn took over mindfulness, stripped it of its inherent wisdom from its historical Buddhist roots, and colonized it. Mindfulness for Kabat-Zinn, according to Forbes, is paying attention with the purpose of reducing stress, but Forbes disagrees, saying mindfulness is about seeing with the heart. Forbes uses the term “McMindfulness” to address this controversy, stating that McMindfulness occurs when mindfulness is used for self-serving and ego-enhancing purposes that run counter to Buddhist and Abrahamic prophetic teachings: “McMindfulness promotes self-aggrandizement; its therapeutic function is to comfort, numb, adjust, and accommodate the self within a neoliberal, corporatized, militarized, individualistic society based on private gain” (25). McMindfulness becomes a way to practice self-regulation and personal emotional control rather than a way to attain awakening toward universal love. According to Forbes, then, McMindfulness needs to reclaim an ethical framework that goes beyond privatized adjustment to a society based on market capitalism that contributes to stress and other sources of unhappiness.

In his book, Forbes speaks about the controversies of integrating mindfulness practices into schools, claiming that neoliberal education beliefs and policies dominate public schools, something that he states mindfulness educators seldom realize, let alone address. According to Forbes, unless mindfulness consciously opposes neoliberal values and structures, it aligns with neoliberalism. In school, he sees mis-teachings when students are taught, for example, to suppress or ignore feelings, including feelings of

anger, as he sees some feelings of anger as productive and righteous and other kinds as ego-attached and invested. He says students and teachers should address what kind of anger is productive and helpful and when we need it. Forbes addresses the problem of devices and attention deficit, saying that it's easy to point a finger at technology or social media, but that the larger question concerns the social production of social media. The tech companies, he says, are all about capturing attention and they have specific focuses on exactly that and it works. He references David Purpel, who values the prophetic in schools. Purpel says that "an education that speaks in a prophetic voice responds not to the possibility of becoming rich and famous but to the possibility of becoming loving and just" (32). Forbes states that a prophetic critique demands that as part of our mindful practice we envision and enact a society with others that promotes "optimal human development, intrinsic love and relationships, joy, wise compassion, democratic social justice, and universal care" (33). He argues that such a practice often requires us a "level of painful awareness, or mindfulness, of fear, sadness, cruelty, and injustices, not just in society and with others but in our own hearts, and an ability to be with, witness, and face these together with compassion and love" (34).

In addition to McMindfulness, Forbes uses the term "Minefulness" to illustrate another way mindfulness is commodified. *Mineful* awareness is the idea that each person is responsible for their own happiness, but Forbes argues that real happiness "is a political act; it goes against the powerful, who like things as they are" (41). He sees mindfulness proponents believing that practicing mindfulness will lead straight to eudaimonia and happiness: "They talk a good game about compassion, which they argue

is akin to eudaemonia and real happiness. They believe that the personal practice of mindfulness leads to compassion for others.” (42) Forbes believes this belief lacks social and political analysis and prefers to keep things on the personal level of the abstracted, privatized, competitive individual. He states mindfulness proponents don’t see compassion as a social, relational quality, but as a personal, individual act where there is no sense or understanding of the interrelated nature of society itself, of public life and the public good. He believes this is how the neoliberal agenda colonizes happiness and self-care.

Another critique of McM mindfulness comes from Ron Purser in his book *McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality*. Purser states modern mindfulness is a corporate scam and argues against the secularized interpretation of the Buddhist practice. His book analyzes how workplace stresses are associated with a lack of health insurance or job insecurity, as well as not having enough autonomy on the job, long work hours, unrealistic job demands, and that these are not just individual issues of personal well-being. Purser sees mindfulness interventions being so popular because they take the responsibility off the employer and put the burden on the individual to adapt. He believes that a focus on self-care as understood within a sociopolitical framework begins to shine light on mental health as tied to what resources people have available for healthcare and the social determinants of health and well-being. Purser says we must go beyond individualistic stress reduction techniques like mindfulness apps and rather than using self-care as a coping tool, reorient these practices to more of a critique of neoliberal values and moving towards a socially engaged form of mindfulness.

Jeff Wilson also critiques the modern-day commodification of mindfulness in his book *Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture*. In this book, Wilson situates the practice of mindfulness within the lineage of American religious movements stating that what makes this movement unique is the central focus on the traditionally Buddhist practice of mindfulness. Wilson sees the mindfulness movement as having trademark cultural tropes of its era, including capitalism, science, medicine, and advertising. Wilson focuses on the marketing, medicalization, and professionalization of meditation, revealing how Buddhism shed its countercultural image and was assimilated into mainstream American culture. He examines how new cultures take from Buddhism what they believe will relieve their distresses and concerns, and in the process create new forms of Buddhism adapted to their needs.

Therefore, contemplative practice in the writing classroom is about more than easing individual writing anxiety and extracting fruit of the mind for writing content. Meditation becomes a portal between the inner and outer world. It can be an important framing for the writing moment, where the writer becomes spiritually in tune with themselves, others, and their environment. Meditation moves class time in the direction of a sense of connection and community. It invites us to engage in ceremony in the classroom. Contemplative practice is the glue of interconnectedness, and subsequent writing prompts can be a guide to move through these experiences in the direction of self-love, social justice, environmental justice and universal love. Yesterday I sat at the Eel river to meditate and look for answers as to how we can move away from individualism

and toward universal love in the writing classroom. I thought about James Moffett's metaphor of the writing process as a river, where you are immersed but can remove yourself through meditation to sit on the riverbank and watch the contents that pass by to gain clarity and wisdom, and then reimmerse yourself with a clearer and more focused mind. As I looked at the river, I noticed a fallen tree in the water near me which caused the river to change shape and become much more excited and faster where it narrowed. I thought about a strong movement in the direction of interconnectedness, a sort of funneling, focusing, through writing prompts, and writing feedback, that would direct us with increasing momentum and ever-more excitedly toward a thesis statement that reflects interconnectedness.

Like the fallen tree, this project has taken shape from Indigenous voices that state that Indigenous cultures have been practicing mindfulness in a variety of ways for centuries. Mindfulness is a way to awaken toward universal love through what Yuria Celidwen argues in her thesis of an "Ethics of Belonging", where we experience an ongoing interconnectedness with ourselves and other people through mindfulness, and an awakened sense of responsibility toward each other, our environment and nature. This project is my humble attempt to learn about and move in the direction toward a mindful life, toward Indigenous knowledge as a white person, and toward self- and universal love as a westerner, through openness, writing prompts, meditation, writing feedback, and connection with spirit. Robert Yagelski argues this is the revolution that can save the planet. He believes teaching mindfulness has the potential to plant within education what

education takes from us in the first place - the richness of our mindful awareness and being.

CHAPTER 3: MY RESEARCH STORY

My life experiences led me to discover contemplative practice. I started to meditate when I was a young girl praying to the moon at night. As a teen, I stopped going to school to stay home and meditate. This was made possible because I no longer lived with my mother and was an emancipated minor so I missed as many days of school as I could. I called the office administration myself and they let the accumulating absences slide. I could not sit at a desk any longer. I guess you could say I was ready to take a plane around the world. Or maybe I just needed meditation. Either way, I used to stay home reading books about meditation as a 16-year-old and then sit in my room to meditate when everyone left the house for work. Once I felt myself lift into the air I was hooked. As an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, I studied the evolution of the religions, starting with the Hindu gods and soma rituals, then the creation of Christianity through Saint Augustine's (bishop of Hippo from 396 to 430, 400 years after the death of the spirit Jesus, theologian/writer/preacher/rhetorician) call and response, and later meditation theory and practice, the movement and evolution of Buddhism from east to west and back east again, and modern day temple life in Japan and finally received a religious studies degree. Studying Buddhism gave me insight into the life of people practicing meditation. A lot of what I was drawn to at UCB related to spirituality and spiritual knowing. I was atheist at the time, but still drawn to meditation and Buddhist philosophy, but after graduation I really had no direction except to continue traveling.

With the help of a monk, I learned that meditation leads us to sense what true love looks and feels like. I moved to S. Korea to live and teach English and there I met Rocky, one of my best friends from India. Rocky is an orthodox Buddhist monk and in 2009 when we met, had been living in a temple in Korea for two years. He's my age and first began living in the temple in India when he was 13 years old. His lifelong dream was to open an orphanage in India, which he did and currently runs a house for 60 boys. Around the time our friendship began, I asked him to teach me to meditate like he did for hours a day. He responded that he would teach me once I had taught him to speak English, and furthermore, that he wanted me to be his friend, not his disciple. We became best friends and would go on long walks in beautiful parks and sit on benches and talk and watch the cherry trees in bloom, visit other monks for alchemist-informed, dragon-breath inspired tea ceremonies, go out to eat Bibimbap or Indian food, then swap the monk attire for lay person clothing and hit the bars, drink alcohol, smoke, and he and some of the other monks we partied with fell in love with many of my American/Canadian ESL teacher-friends. The rule they followed was that, once married, they would move out of the temple and carry out life as a retired monk. It was about moderation for Rocky. The middle way. He's still living as a monk but asks me often to help him meet a woman. If I never would have met him, who would have taught me how to read whether someone truly loves you by looking into their eyes in a picture? Rocky never taught me to meditate but every couple years or so we have Skype calls and all the monks jump on to say hi. While my time spent in Korea felt sort of spiritually stimulating at the time, I wonder about how different Rocky and I experience love. His love was passionate and full of life.

Thinking back about him, I can still clearly see the light in his eyes. Even though I knew a few things about a mindful life at this point, I still wrapped my experiences around a hardened heart. One of the things about Rocky is he used his intuition actively. He could see things. He knew this about himself. He knew it was because he meditated. He used his intuition to look for love. At the time, his way of connecting was very foreign to me. He always asks about my love life, then he wants to see pictures to look into people's eyes to see if there is indeed love there or not. He says it is because of morning meditation practice (4am-7am at that time) that he can look into someone's eyes for love. This project speaks to this experience in that a mindful life may lead us to this place of looking deeply for love.

A big part of contemplative practice in my life has been through the practice and philosophy of yoga and later through ceremony. In addition to my psychological, historical and philosophical coursework at UCB and my experiences living in Korea, I have practiced yoga and meditation throughout my life. Most, if not all, of my yoga instructors have been white, and many have not focused on spiritual development and guidance in their classes but have chosen to focus more on the position of the body, getting a workout, and stretching deeply. My favorite instructors were those who are spiritually connected people who teach yoga from its philosophical and spiritual roots. Many of my white instructors go to India for weeks every year to learn from the teachers there. Most charge for their classes. Some, it is based on donation. I also identify as white, and not surprisingly, have considered becoming a yoga instructor myself, even when my personal practice as a yogi has not been constant throughout my life and still

only comes and goes as time unfolds. Race can be and is a complication of thinking about integrating yoga and meditation into higher education settings and in the west in general. Often, yoga classes are disproportionately full of white women. If yoga and meditation connect us with ourselves and others, why are yoga classes primarily full of white people? This project looks at the intersection of race, meditation, and Indigenous spiritual practice to highlight some of the ways meditative practices are still very individualized in the west and the fact that the simple practice of yoga or meditation does not necessarily translate to connection with others or a higher consciousness. Indigenous spiritual scholars shine light on the ways Indigenous knowledge and living can work as a framework to help us decolonize our spiritual practices. I've been drawn to Indigenous spiritual practices for quite some time, and while I didn't realize this at the time, mindfulness is an Indigenous way of living. It's what happens to you when you're engaged in ceremony and is symbolic of the ways you can live your day-to-day life.

Contemplative practices do not escape racial inequality just like many other things in the west. I have had many privileges as a white person and being able to attend expensive yoga classes is one of them. I also traveled the world and have primarily only worked part-time throughout my adult life, even as a single mother (although this was because of my dependency on a man). Even as a graduate student I have not had to take out loans. In the decade I spent living in a Latin American country, I didn't think much about my whiteness either (although my North Americanness proved extremely troubling), as European culture and the descendants of the colonizers hold power there. While living in South America, I participated in individual and group family constellation

therapy, which heals generational trauma, plant medicine and Indigenous ceremonies, and my son's biological father is a half Andes Mountains Indigenous plant medicine "healer"/ half European musician. He brings Wachuma cactus from the desert and holds ceremonies for people from Buenos Aires outside of the city. My experience with this man opened my eyes to medicinal healing through plants. I had taken medicinal plants before in my own ceremonies, but not with Indigenous people there who helped move the energy in ceremony.

It was through ceremony that I learned about energy healing, but Patagonia is a very modernized place and cannot escape the commodification of mindful practices. The ceremonies I participated in were all guided by people from Argentina who, although many are mixed with native ancestry, form part of the dominant culture. Not surprisingly, the Mapuche or Quechua Indigenous traditions from the Andes Mountains struggle to make their way into dominant culture, yet somehow the Lakota Indigenous traditions are popular in certain circles in Patagonia, and many Argentines have taken on roles of shamans to engage in ceremony. Historically, however, the Lakota relied on a rich oral tradition to preserve the legends and stories that maintained their spiritual way of life. Creation stories were known only among the holy men, who passed them down through the generations. No single holy man knew all the creation myths.

Once I met a man from the United States in Patagonia who is a Lakota tribal member, and from the same small town as me, who told me he was the last tribal member to receive the Lakota teachings, and therefore was the last person to be able to take on the role of shaman and pass down the spiritual knowledge through ceremony. I told him I had

participated in many ceremonies and gatherings, to which his only response and wonder was if I had paid money to attend these ceremonies. “You cannot charge for these teachings”, were the only words he said to me before giving me a big hug when I told him I was from Fort Ord, California, an old military base where he had also been stationed. In retrospect, I have come to understand that the reason one should not charge for these healing practices is because healing is a deeply emotional, spiritual, psychological and physical process, and one cannot simply pay for healing, as if it were a commodity, and be cured from one moment to the next. In addition, this man was the “last” elder to have the ability to pass on these teachings because, according to Indigenous tradition, any one narrative can be passed down through multiple people, and many times only part of a story is passed down through one person. Thinking about it now, I do not even know what made the ceremonies I participated in distinctly “Lakota” ceremonies. We did temascal huts often, but I have no idea what would have made them specific to the Lakota culture. In fact, I realize now I did not hear any actual live stories or narratives while in ceremony, except maybe a few stories told by folks of Indigenous heritage, except those folks were all from Argentina’s Indigenous ancestors, not Lakota. Any ceremonial practice was almost completely removed from the culture or tradition or was taken up by people on the other side of the world and removed from its place of origin entirely. I also attended the “Encuentro de Indígenas”, which is a week-long camping event that happens once a year somewhere in the world, where Indigenous folks from across the Americas invite European people from all over the world to attend a gathering where the goal is cultural exchange and to learn about Indigenous ways of

living while participating in ceremony guided by the different Indigenous tribal members. One thing I remember from the gathering is a guy who made a “sacred fire” at 4:30am where he threw seeds and other items into the fire as offerings and he said, “white folks know how to read and analyze books of literature, but do they know how to make a sacred fire to heal the community?” I don’t discount my experiences and I wouldn’t change them. I think I even understood at the time that the point was connection and interconnectedness and love, but the reality is native folks have a shorter life span than all the other people of the world. Native folks fight for social and environmental justice, and white people take yoga classes. Of course, white people fight for environmental and social justice causes as well, but we’re not the leaders of these movements. Rocky looked deeply in my eyes and talked about the orphanage with a passion I could not understand fully at the time. There are different fundamental experiences that make contemplative practices like yoga complicated because while I do yoga, windmills go up and block sacred views, or pipelines go through the earth, and I leave my yoga class feeling enlightened. I heard someone say once that white people talk about nature and native folks talk about social justice. I think it’s true. There’s an important disconnect that shouldn’t be overlooked. This project attempts to scratch the surface at Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing to become a better ally but also to live a better, more grounded life.

My Experience with Contemplative Practice in the Classroom

Some of the things I learned I took with me into the classrooms I worked in in Argentina. I started inviting students to participate in group meditations once I realized it was a welcomed activity for overworked, bored students. I can only assume they were okay with participating in meditation because I did not interview or administer surveys. I believe they felt this way because they voiced interest and excitement when I would suggest meditation, when I would have expected them to shun the activity or in general seem apathetic on the whole as a group, which is how they usually were about most things. I'm sure there were students who could have cared less, and as long as it didn't require work as usual, they were okay with meditation. I worked at several rich, (mostly) white schools, and the students in general had an exceptional amount of privilege, much more even than myself even, a white American teacher. A lot of those teenagers stay at home without their parents for most of their childhoods, or are raised by a nanny, and many of them have everything they could ever want except the love and attention from their parents. At this point in my life, I had been exposed to the meditations I read in books and did as a 16-year-old, those I did in Berkeley on mushrooms in ceremony with friends, and ones I did in ceremony in Argentina, as well as those from in the Merkaba meditation tradition. I usually just picked one I liked from Google, though. I didn't have any formal training, and it didn't occur to me at the time that a formal introduction to contemplative practice and its intentions would have been a good idea. Regardless, the students would all lay on the sandy floor and no one ever treated the exercises as weird or

new-agey that I knew of at least. Once, while we explored *The Giver*, a dystopian novel about a community who has lost the ability to see color, I invited them to do a guided visualization meditation of colors, and afterwards they all huddled around a student who spoke about being able to read auras to watch her in action. If I could redo my experiences in the classroom, I would meditate much more often with the students and we would talk extensively about why we did the meditations and what they felt. We would talk about interconnectedness and spirituality and feelings.

After living in Argentina for 8 years, I moved back to the United States and applied to whichever CSU happened to be in the Redwoods. At HSU, I worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in 2018 and the students and I did mindfulness techniques almost every time we saw each other. I was explicit about the exercises being mindfulness techniques that would bring them into the present moment with the sole purpose of being present. At the time, I didn't realize why exactly I was inspired to do this other than the fact that I wanted to show them what I had come to know over the years - how to write an essay, how not to be stressed out about it, contemplative practice, and freewriting using the inner voice as a tool for content. I really wonder now about how much we really are all connected or maybe I could just sense this quiet revolution happening within higher education, because as the students and I did meditation, even on the other side of the world, Patricia Owen-Smith (2017), Alexandria Peary (2018), and Christy Wenger (2015) were writing and publishing their books. These authors theorize about the importance of reintegrating the contemplative mind back into the Western education system. They argue that the richness of the contemplative mind has been lost in

education in general and has resulted in what Robert Yagelski refers to as the Cartesian mind/body split and argues that this split begins to happen in kindergarten. Their scholarly work provides a framework for the freewriting that James Moffett and Peter Elbow wrote about, and through the lens of spiritual/religious traditions, these scholars argue for a more holistic education.

I'm brought to this work to explore the benefits of meditation in the writing-intensive classroom because I am exploring a contemplative life and want to meet others on this journey. While I was never told that the topic "meditation heals" was irrelevant for academic research, I was questioned by Professor Michael Eldridge as to whether there would indeed exist scholarship to draw from for the purposes of completing a literature review. Turns out there is scholarship, and once Eldridge knew this, he thankfully encouraged me to return to this topic after I had tossed it aside as my final exam for English 600. The fields that I'm drawing from in this research are meditation science and contemplative pedagogy. Most of the contemplative pedagogy reviewed in this project are from white women scholars/professors. It wasn't until I finished reading all of those books that I realized they were all white and saw a problem. At that time, I happened to be reading Simpson's and realized Indigenous contemplative thought is a more holistic perspective from which this work can emerge. For this reason, the discussion section at the end of this project focuses on a few Indigenous scholars who theorize about the use of mindfulness practices to teach interconnectedness to society at large. I draw from social justice work through the intersection of critical whiteness studies, decolonization of the

mind through mindfulness practices, and the curing of the heart disease of racism through mindful race work.

CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION IN CONTEMPLATIVE PEDAGOGY

Through the double pursuit of mindfulness meditation and writing research in an extensive literature review, I explore how present moment awareness can enrich the writing process by integrating contemplative practices into writing pedagogy in higher educational settings. Contemplative pedagogy, or contemplative practices like meditation in the classroom, involves teaching methods designed to cultivate deepened awareness, concentration, insight, compassion, kindness, presence, wisdom and the like. In the writing intensive classroom, these practices might include activities such as silence, reflection, self-inquiry, witnessing or beholding, dialogue, and journaling, each holding mindful attention at its core. The conversation surrounding the transformative powers of mindfulness meditation can be heard in: Robert Yagelski's *Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Nonduality, and the Crisis of Sustainability*, Patricia Owen-Smith's *Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, Christy Wenger's *Yoga Minds, Writing Bodies: Contemplative Writing Pedagogy*, Alexandria Peary's book *Prolific Moment: Theory and Practice of Mindfulness for Writing*, among more. Across these texts, I found the authors point to the central idea that present-moment awareness is missing from writing instruction and policy and that the integration of contemplative practices can be an enriching element to strengthen National Writing Policy. One contemplative practice I wish to explore for the purposes of this project is mindfulness meditation.

Rooted in ancient Buddhist tradition and culture, the practice of mindfulness awakens the self to moment-to-moment experience to foster loving kindness of oneself and all sentient beings. Spiritual teachers like Deepak Chopra provide us with meditations (chopracentermeditation.com) to reflect on experiences with finding happiness in the present moment through a daily meditation practice. Thich Naht Hanh's foundational text, *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (1991), introduces us to how contemplative practices provide ways of situating experiences within the larger frameworks of our daily lives. Eckhart Tolle's, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* (1997), is a guide for day-to-day living and stresses the importance of living in the present moment and transcending thoughts of the past or future. Jon Kabat-Zinn's, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (1994), is another foundational text that explores ancient contemplative practices in modern life. These philosophers, monks and professors remind us to remember our sentience and to not leave it out of discourse.

Scientist and meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn defines *mindfulness* as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (1994). Kabat-Zinn was a student of Zen Buddhist teachers such as Philip Kapleau, Thich Nhat Hanh and Seung Sahn and a founding member of Cambridge Zen Center and his practice of yoga and studies with Buddhist teachers led him to integrate their teachings with scientific findings. Kabat-Zinn brings the ancient contemplative practices of mindfulness to mainstream America and theorizes about the importance of its practice today. He is the founder of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program, designed

for those who suffer from chronic stress and are afflicted with ailments and disease. In *The Healing Power of Mindfulness: A New Way of Being*, Kabat-Zinn states “mindfulness is a new way of being; it’s tender; it's a multi-faceted diamond, each facet being a gateway into our inner beauty” (min. 1:50:00 [audio book](#)). Mindfulness is the “exploring and refining of the sentience” and “an invitation to rotate your consciousness - to step into another planet, another universe, a universe of embodied wholeness” (min. 1:56:00 [audio book](#)). Within this text are studies that report even brief periods (1-2 hours) of mindfulness engagement can change the brain significantly. Studies also show mindfulness practice may relate to healing the body of disease, at least in some part, because of the mind.

The controversies surrounding the mindfulness culture in the west stem from the separation of these practices from their spiritual origins during instruction. Some instructors, like Kabat-Zinn, state it is best to leave them separated as some may confuse the goals of religious practices with the practice of mindfulness. He says mindfulness is about being more aware of the self and the surroundings, which has nothing to do with religion and can be practiced by anyone alongside their religious practices. According to Kabat-Zinn, the way that some people talk about spirituality can cause problems and meditation should be recognized as a discipline of consciousness in general.

In the classroom, mindfulness has been largely separated from its cultural roots and is primarily practiced as a tool to focus on attention. In *Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Nonduality, and the Crisis of Sustainability*, Robert Yagelski examines the role of the contemplative mind, arguing that it is only within this awakening

that we can collectively heal the planet of unsustainable practices and lifestyles. Yagelski argues that taking the contemplative out of education has led to what he calls the Cartesian mind/body split, and that there must be a revolution within K-12 and higher education to undo this split, move toward holistic education, and reconnect us with the earth and public policy in terms of climate change and sustainable practices. In *The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, Patricia Owen-Smith asserts that contemplative practices have the potential to deepen a student's development and understanding of the self as a learner, knower, and citizen of the world. Owen-Smith examines the parallels between contemplative pedagogy and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), arguing that contemplative pedagogy deserves a more prominent role in the SoTL. Throughout her book, however, she makes the case that the contemplative should be removed from its spiritual and religious roots within the classroom and be used as a tool to foster deep learning and connection with the self and others. While her text provides a framework for integrating the contemplative into the SoTL, Owen-Smith's overarching statement that spirituality and religious perspectives be removed from contemplative pedagogy altogether contributes to the conversation surrounding the controversy of the commodification of contemplative practices in western educational settings today.

Alexandria Peary in *Prolific Moment: Theory and Practice of Mindfulness for Writing* argues that mindful writing is realizing that the mind is always running away from the present moment, referred to by the Buddhists as "Monkey Mind". She states this running away is actually us banishing ourselves from the safety of the present moment,

arguing that when writers pay attention, they gain access to writing tools, such as internal talk or monkey mind, impermanence, verbal emptiness, audience, and start to notice preconceptions about writing ability. Peary uses Buddhist teachings to frame her argument, revealing some of the wisdom within these teachings to her readers. However, Peary, like Owen-smith, makes clear to the reader that she is not advocating for Buddhist religion or philosophy to be taught in the classroom, and instead believes professors and instructors should turn to scholarship about social justice to approach contemplative pedagogy in higher educational settings.

Finally, Christy Wenger argues that writers begin to experience their composing bodies through contemplative practice as both rhetorical and real, and as resonant on the page through presence. She proposes that we turn to contemplative education practices that engage student bodies through fusing a traditional curriculum with contemplative practices including yoga, meditation, and the martial arts. Wenger argues for the inclusion of Eastern-influenced contemplative education within writing studies, observing that, although we have “embodied” writing education in general by discussing the rhetorics of racialized, gendered, and disabled bodies, we have done substantially less to address the bodies that occupy the classrooms. Wenger focus throughout her book remains on extracting the benefits of contemplative education to improve the experience of writing, reestablish a connection to the physical body and enhance well-being in higher educational settings, however, like the other writing scholars mentioned above, her exploration of the contemplative remains very inward focused.

In combining contemplative practices and writing theory, I hope to highlight the ways mindfulness meditation can enrich higher education curriculum in the writing intensive classroom and beyond. I argue that contemplative practices should be an integral part of writing instruction curriculum design and policy. I also believe mindfulness practices should be explicitly introduced to students as a learning outcome and tool, be practiced continually throughout the semester, that the instructor be a contemplative practitioner themselves as well as engage in continual dialogue with students about why we need to foster a contemplative mind and reflect on the outcomes of the practices. While there may be a shift happening toward the contemplative mind within higher education settings, instructors could be more transparent about their goals and intentions when they implement mindfulness techniques into the curriculum, as students may miss the opportunity to connect with others and the goals behind the activities. The commodification of these practices has led to them being stripped of their historical roots and the centuries-long development of wisdom embedded within these practices. Without complete transparency about not only the goal of contemplative practices, but about the deep and rich cultural traditions within them, contemplative pedagogy reinforces a commodified, watered-down spirituality that would fail to go beyond helping students notice their internal rhetoric. The removal of contemplative practices from their historical and cultural roots leads to what David Forbes says reinforces an individualistic frame of mind, one that wants an easy solution to dealing with stress and distraction, but fails to embody the original teachings of mindfulness, which is to foster loving kindness and compassion. The integration of the contemplative mind in the SoTL is not only to

enhance focus and concentration and deepen learning; it is a deep feeling of interconnectedness with oneself, others, and the environment, and the cultural traditions are grounded in this wisdom.

CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemplative practices involve breathing, mental imagery, visions, energy portals, moments of insight, awareness of body and mind, muscle and body relaxation, and beyond this, simply living in the most beautiful moment - the now. These practices reach beyond the ability to simply improve the quality of students' work and seek to bring our bare humanity into the classroom in ways that allow education to be more holistic, more fulfilling, and more real for both professors and students. There are many classroom environments, from K-12 to higher education settings, that can benefit from the integration of mindfulness into course curriculum, including philosophy, composition, law, science, sociology, art, debate, gender and women's studies, race work, and more. This project reviews scholars who reflect on the implementation of these practices into their coursework, first through an overview of contemplative pedagogy in higher education in general, and then specifically through more recent scholarship on contemplative pedagogy. Part 2 focuses on mindfulness meditation in general and the benefits and complications in both the writing classroom and beyond. The final discussion portion of this project brings in Indigenous voices to guide suggestions about the field of composition in general, as well as point to the fundamental goals of contemplative practices of increasing our awareness of interconnectedness and our place on the planet.

The scholars you will find in this literature review are primarily white thinkers. This is the case because, historically, the publishing industry has undoubtedly favored

these voices in scholarship. It is also true that within higher education, professors and instructors are majority white people, which we see in places like our homepage of Humboldt State's English department. Furthermore, the research that went into this literature review was guided by myself, a white woman, as well as by two professors of my choosing, also white women. Only when I arrived at the last page of this literature review, and what became my first draft, did I realize this fact while reading a book by an Indigenous thinker who was mentioned already in previous sections - Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. While reading her book, I could sense the obvious difference between the unwavering clarity and vision of her connection with others and the earth, as compared to the scholars I review who argue for the removal of the cultural grounding of these practices in higher education. For this reason, and for personal interests of my own, I turn to Indigenous contemplatives for the discussion section of this project.

Interchapter 1: Indigenous Wisdom and Undoing the Cartesian Mind/Body Split

In an international conference held recently over Facebook, Indigenous voices and environmental and social justice activists around the world sought to educate and increase awareness about the environmental devastation impacting the Amazon rainforest. They believe that of the many ways Indigenous wisdom can help guide us to a more sustainable future, one clear way is in helping to undo the western Cartesian mind. In Robert P. Yagelski's text *Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Non Duality, and the Crisis of Sustainability* we see just how much of an influence our worldview about writing can mean for a sustainable future. In this examination of the nature of

writing, Yagelski demonstrates that the experience of writing, apart from the text that is produced through writing, can be deeply transformative for both individuals and communities. This book presents a way to understand writing as an ontological act at a time of social, education, and environmental change. It describes a way to use the power of writing so that writing instruction can become part of a broader effort to imagine and create a more just and sustainable future.

As a framework for his vision for a sustainable future through writing, Yagelski proposes we attend “much more directly to the *experience* of writing than we do in mainstream writing instruction. Such a theory can illuminate the connections among mainstream writing instruction, formal schooling, and the crisis of sustainability” (emphasis original, 12). He argues throughout his text that in order for a community to function effectively without destroying the resources on which its members depend, “it must define itself not only in terms of the relationships among its human members but also in terms of the relationship between those members and the earth” (16). In examining the role of formal schooling and more specifically writing instruction, Yagelski unpacks the idea of the “Cartesian Self”, or the worldview that characterizes Western culture in such that “the self is understood to be the source of all awareness and therefore all meaning and value, which is to devalue the world/nature into merely that field of activity wherein the self labors to fulfill itself...” (17). In this theory, the rethinking of the self brings us back to the role of schooling: “the Cartesian self gives rise to Cartesian dualities of self-and-other, subject-and-object, and mind-and-body, which form the epistemological foundation of the modern curriculum” (17). According to

Yagelski, as a result of this duality, we promote an idea of community as a collection of “discrete, autonomous individuals rather than a complex network of beings who are inherently interconnected and inextricably part of the ecosystems on which all life depends” (17). Yagelski examines the school environment and how it works to shape us internally, claiming that in school we are taught separateness rather than interconnectedness, and that the basic conventional lesson of schooling is less a matter of learning what is outside us than learning that there is something outside us that we can see, describe, and understand, a something that is fundamentally separate from ourselves.

According to Yagelski, teacher assessment is also problematic because it becomes a process of disembodiment that both reflects and reinforces the Cartesian self. In terms of writing instruction specifically, he breaks down the use of form and content as an evaluation method, stating that standardized writing assessment is based on structure, style and mechanics, yet rarely will anything be found about “addressing an audience, accomplishing a specific purpose with respect to that audience, making a valid point, exploring or presenting a useful or important idea, conveying accurate information, making ethical choices as a writer, or any of the other characteristics that replex the complexities of writing in real-world contexts” (22). In learning to produce “good” writing, writers come to believe that good writing can be accomplished through applying rules and adhering to conventions related to form. Yagelski states that the content of a piece of writing is implicitly defined as separate from the writing itself and, when it comes to learning to write, ultimately less important than form and correctness. Yagelski references Freire’s metaphor about the epistemological and ontological nature of

schooling in the West. Freire compared schooling to a “banking education”, which he argues captures the Cartesian foundations of modern education because implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a “dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others” (29). Yagelski argues that Freire’s model depicts how students are taught to “be *in* rather than *with* the world” and that from this view of instruction, writing is taught as a basic technology for communication to reinforce the dichotomy between self and world, and therefore foster a dualistic way of being in the world.

Yagelski's fundamental question is “How can we teach writing so that we stop destroying ourselves?” (32). He argues for a view of writing that enables us to see it as something other than a dualistic act of communicating a subject matter that is external to the writer, which “can illuminate how the experience of writing shapes our conception of ourselves and our ways of living together on the earth... [a]nd it can help expose the Cartesian dualisms that have defined ways of being in the world that have led to the crisis of sustainability” (33). Yagelski envisions required writing courses as vehicles for social reform rather than as student-centered workshops designed to build students’ confidence and competence as writers. One of his problems with the way writing instruction is handled is that he states the primary purpose of schooling is maintaining a more or less good status quo, which in more concrete terms is “our market-based, consumer-oriented capitalist economic system and its related democratic political system. We may need to make this system fairer and more compassionate, but its foundations - individualism, consumerism, and democracy - are generally assumed to be sound” (48). He argues

against the report for “The Neglected ‘R’: The Need for a Writing Revolution in America’s Schools and Colleges”. In this report, the National Commission on Writing warns that American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom. Yagelski disagrees with the emphasis on the connection between writing instruction and the economy stating that the “NCW’s call for a writing ‘revolution’ seems disingenuous, since it envisions no fundamental change in anything but curriculum and pedagogy - not in the structures or purposes of schooling or in the larger society of which schooling is a part” (49). Yagelski rejects the perspective he claims to be widely shared among educators at all levels - the assumption that schooling is ultimately about preparing students for the job market - stating that this assumption usually is beyond question. He agrees with educators that the condition of the country is “sick”, and he shares their worries about racism, sexism, and global warming (49). He disagrees, however, with the assumption that the classroom is a relatively safe, more-or-less neutral space, within which “students prepare to meet the challenges such ills present within the status quo that seems fundamentally right... ‘Radical’ is not a label most educators I know would willingly embrace” (49). He states that given the role of the required composition course in most colleges and universities, it can be assumed that writing instruction also is structured to serve the interests of the corporate capitalist state.

But how do we undo the Cartesian self? Yagelski states that in recent years, some theorists have begun to map out an alternative to this mainstream Cartesian view of

writing. He advocates for a rhetoric that abandons the Western sophistic tradition of arriving at truth through “conquering and consensus”, and grounds it in a conscious commitment to collaborate with others in seeking the truth. Such a rhetoric imagines ““a construction of self that stakes identity on ... acceptance of an integral relationship with the world”” (56). Yagelski analyzes the current state of writing theory, claiming that the self is conceived of as “primarily an intellectual entity; that is, they understand the self in a fundamentally Cartesian way” (59). However, he rejects the assumption that we exist in the world as intellectual beings separate from other beings. Yagelski, therefore, believes writing instructors must make the nature of writing itself the focus of instruction.

Yagelski’s Buddhist framework

In thinking about the non-Cartesian self, Yagelski references Eihei Dogen (1200-1253), one of the most significant thinkers in the Eastern tradition, a great Zen Buddhist teacher, and highly regarded philosopher. Yagelski states to revise the problem of language and being, language becomes a vehicle for understanding our experience of the phenomenal world as a foundation for truth. For Dogen, the self cannot be purely intellectual because the self is sensed from a oneness that encompasses all beings, both sentient and non-sentient. Dogen rejects the idea of a genuine or metaphysical self as one where the body eventually perishes, arguing that this view is the same as a Western way of thinking. Dogen insists that to attain Buddha-nature, one must transcend ““one’s egocentrism, anthropocentrism, and sentient-being centrism, and thereby ground one’s existence in the most fundamental plane, that is, in the being dimension, which is the dimension of Dogen’s *shitsuu*, that is, whole-being. (50)”” (83).

Dogen does not describe Zen consciousness or enlightened consciousness by excluding ordinary consciousness. Dogen reminds us that, fundamentally, our experience is not different from the Zen master's: "...in the case of the Zen master, what-is-said is simply what-is. In the case of the deluded person, however, the 'what-is' includes his excess conceptual baggage with its addictive components, the deluded ideas about the nature of 'self,' 'thing,' 'time,' and so on that constitute the person's own particular distortion of what actually is. (359-60)" (85). He suggests we abandon the idea that language and writing are essential for truth-seeking and accept Dogen's view that language is "an imperfect tool for truth-seeking rather than the grounds for truth itself" (89). Yagelski says some things are better left to silence and quotes from Crispin Sartwell who argues that what is missing from the analyses offered by post structuralist theorists is "'the moment of silence, the moment of death, the moment of inarticulate orgasm.' (4)" (90) To illustrate, he points to ecstasy, that 'extraordinary experience of letting-go into the divine, or into the lover, or into death.' To this extraordinary experience, Sartwell says, language seems radically insufficient" (91). Sartwell says even writing makes use of the physical and that we should stop thinking of language as something that "distinguishes us from or in the order of nature and start thinking of it as a craft by which we sense our connection to the earth" (96).

Elements of contemplative pedagogy

While contemplative pedagogy stands as a small but growing subfield within composition studies, it is one with a longer history as far back as the 1980s when compositionist James Moffett (1982) drew attention to the ways that meditation could

sustain students' development of somatic awareness and their ability to approach writing as a process of making and not just communicating meaning. This idea of writing as an "organic" process that is an expression of both the collective unconscious, as well as the writer's consciousness, is reflected in Moffett's text, "Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation." Moffett states that "writing and meditating are naturally allied activities," (233) and that the subject matter of student writing should therefore be the writer's own "eye witnessing, memories, interviews, experiments, feelings, reflections, [and] reactions to reading" (234). According to Moffett, the inner voice then projects back into the social world, where "the give-and-take of minds and voices can lift each member beyond where he or she started" (234). Moffett clarifies that he is not suggesting a teacher play the role of a psychiatrist, but that writing has inherent therapeutic benefits. He claims writing done in the classroom, although its goal is not for therapy, has similar goals to those sought after in therapy such as: "clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfying self-expression" (234). The author writes that "self-awareness is the means in both cases, and this requires focusing attention on one's inner speech" (234). Inner speech belongs at the "matrix" of writing, according to Moffett, believing that students need to enjoy and value the benefits of self-expression, communication, therapy, and art.

Moffett argued that what really teaches composition — "putting together - is disorder" (235). He uses a metaphor to illustrate what could be happening when meditation "connects" the writer to their "inner world". The metaphor compares a writer's stream of consciousness to the flowing water of a river, where the writer "sits" at the bank of the river and watches the stream of consciousness float by: "instead of

floating along on this stream and being borne away from the center of the self, one sits on the bank, so to speak, and watches it flow by, staying separate from it, not trying to influence it, but above all not being ‘carried away’ by it.” (235). This type of meditation, the letting go of and the active observance of one’s thoughts, seeks to give the writer the opportunity to search for clarity, according to Moffett, who argues that “even if one rejects this dual aim and dual method, it is a practical fact that people who can suspend discourse think and speak better when they turn it back on” (240). Writing leads to one’s inner world where thoughts, ideas and feelings are “chaotic,” and meditation helps to uncover what those thoughts are and later, find clarity through writing. Moffett argues that writing must be construed in its “highest sense- beyond copying and transcribing, paraphrasing and plagiarizing-as authentic authoring, because inner speech and meditation concern forms of thought, the composing of mind that constitutes the real art and worth of writing. Authoring is working up a final revision, for an audience and a purpose, of those thought forms that have surfaced to the realm of inner speech” (241). Writing is a way to connect to the inner voice and the inner life of the mind and serves not only to illuminate what we hold in our minds, but writing can be a form of meditation that acts as a gateway to our inner world, to knowledge we didn’t know we had and ideas and feelings we hold on a deep subconscious level.

Like Moffett, Peter Elbow also speaks to the contemplative mind in terms of the way we connect with our inner voice for writing purposes. In his work, Elbow writes about theory, practice, and pedagogy, and is one of the pioneers of freewriting. More recent scholarship often references Elbow and relates the theory of mindfulness

meditation in the classroom to Elbow's belief about the power of freewriting. The core principle of Elbow's book *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* (2012) is to reach the liveliness of spoken language through free writing. He argues for taking away all the hard things about writing, like cohesion, correctness, goodness, to be left with the one rule to just write in a completely safe space for writing. Elbow states that the highest priority in the classroom is safety because for learning to happen we need to be safe. He describes creating this safe space through nonjudgement. Elbow strives for writing to be a "human transaction between teacher and writer, and less submission (i.e., submissive)" (min. 7:00). He states that when you give your writing to the reader, you might ask them to tell you the story of what is going on in your mind while you are reading. In asking the reader to be present, it reminds the writer that when they write they are not present but are thinking about the reader's response. He argues that in the world of writing there are very few facts, but what is going on in the reader's mind is a fact that is not arguable. Elbow explains that high school and college composition teachers do not want structure (even though they say they do), but what they do want is something lively that evokes human emotion. He wants to see "garbage" (22:30) on the paper, not an outline with three clear points. Outlining is not about logic, Elbow says, but about storytelling. After storytelling, he states organization is the next most important step. He says topic sentences are the punch line: "How do I say hello?" is a better prompt for a topic sentence; "Why start with the punchline", he asks, "it's boring!"; "You might start with, 'One day... I was walking down the street', as opposed to starting with your main idea in a paragraph. Good writing isn't really logical." (25:30). Elbow tells the story of

writers who feel like they can't write vs. those who do. Those who feel like they can't write explain that they just can't do what the teacher wants them to do. Those who can write explain that they know they're doing it wrong but they're doing it anyway. Elbow believes language should sound like it is spoken.

In the beginning stages of Elbow's career, before he was a professor, he states that he had to abandon the main premise in writing, which is the theory that you get things clear in your mind ahead of time and that you have to know where you're going. Elbow remembers having great difficulties creating outlines in college, even though he was always told to do so. The times he would succeed in writing an outline, he found it a struggle to then write from the outline. Elbow speaks about needing to make a mess and dive into the writing without knowing. Making a mess is what he believes is the greatest premise to writing, and that all of the efforts of trying to make things clear lead us to being lost. Elbow argues that rambling can save time even with all the extra words because it helps to get thoughts out and forge into the unknown through lots of free writing, eventually leading to clarity. He states that one of the main features of a wise person is being able to talk to themselves and carry on a conversation. Private writing is a skill, according to Elbow, of learning to talk to yourself, something he claims is a hard task.

Although the words "spiritual" and "spirituality" can be tricky in academia, their role in our writing lives should not be overlooked. The *spiritual* is a sense we feel when we create space in the body, which is also a feeling, and within it, a way of knowing - a registering of these feelings as intelligence. Regina Foehr, in *The Spiritual Side of*

Writing: Releasing the Learner's Whole Potential, (1997) advocates for the importance of the spiritual side of writing as a threshold to spirit, as opposed to a means to a writing end. Foehr explores what writing means to our spiritual nature, arguing that writing is a way of connecting with the self to uncover things that one wouldn't expect to discover. She claims when attention is immersed in reading, writing, thinking, and creating, "the mind is immersed in the spirit ... perhaps the voice of grace ... [and] the unconscious mind breaks through into the conscious life" (17). Roehr theorizes about what it could mean to be a spiritual person and how writing can be a gateway to making this journey, not through words but through the ideas and feelings discovered when writing. She argues that what is looked for when writing is found when one connects with the "spirit" and that the composition classroom is an appropriate place to encourage students to tap into this power and understand what this journey within can mean in higher education and in their lives. According to the text, this "power" is not discovering grace while writing; it means grace *happens* while writing. Foehr understands this not as the writing one does, but the writing that happens in an "organic way", when the writer is ready to present unoriginal ideas in a new way by connecting with ideas already existing in the collective unconscious and organizing them while connecting with their own consciousness.

Interchapter 2: The (Over)use of Eastern Frameworks in Contemplative Pedagogy

Combining contemplative pedagogy with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

In her book, *The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, Patricia Owen-Smith considers how contemplative practices may find a place in higher education. By creating a bridge between contemplative practices and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), Owen-Smith brings awareness of contemplative pedagogy to a larger audience of college instructors, while also offering classroom models and outlining the ongoing challenges of both defining these practices and assessing their impact in education. Owen-Smith sees SoTL and contemplative pedagogy prioritizing similar interests, including their historical roots, deepening the habits of the mind, the commitment to experiential, and learning as a process. Owen-Smith theorizes about the importance of balancing contemplative and traditional ways of knowing, arguing that within the institution, there is a tendency for contemplative pedagogues to communicate only in circles where the theories and feelings are understood.

Exploring definitions of the contemplative mind

Throughout her book, Owen-Smith works to define what mindfulness is and how it's experienced. She defines contemplative practices in higher education as “metacognitive modes and first-person investigations that nurture inner awareness, concentration, insight, and compassion. Exercises such as silence, reflection, witnessing and beholding, listening, dialogue, journaling, and self-inquiry are prototypical” (19). She

quotes heavily throughout her text from Daniel Barbesat and Mirabai Bush, who define mindful processes as those that “‘support mental stability’ and by necessity allow focus and attention development, inquiry into one’s own interiority, exploration of personal meaning, and the deepening of compassion and connection to others (2014, 11)” (20). She quotes from Mary Rose O’Reilley who asks, “‘What spaces [might we] create in the classroom that will allow students freedom to nourish an inner life?’ (1998, 3),” and Arthur Zajonc, professor of physics and the former director of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, who contemplates whether “‘an education of critical reasoning, writing, speaking, and scientific and quantitative analysis is sufficient. He suggests that ‘the sharpening of our intellects with the systemic cultivation of our hearts [might be] of equal if not greater importance.’ (2006, 2)” (20). Some of the main questions Owen-Smith poses in her book are: How might we balance SoTL and contemplative education? How do we prepare students to cultivate their inner resources of spirit and courage? How do we prepare graduates to make difficult ethical choices in the face of competing pressures? Why does contemplative knowledge continue to be marginalized in institutions of higher education?

There are a few obvious differences between SoTL and contemplative pedagogy, according to Owen-Smith, the first being that contemplative education brings in first-person narrative, and the second is the practice of mindfulness. Owen-Smith emphasizes the overarching importance of the first-person perspective, the inner realm, as well as the inner-outer union, with meditation being the key first-person methodology. All contemplative practices, according to Owen-Smith, have an inward emphasis that affords

both insight and connection. She references Dan Barbezat and Mirabai Bush (2014), who see four major objectives of contemplative pedagogy: “(1) focus and attention building, (2) contemplation and introspection that are unambiguously incorporated into course content, (3) compassion, connection to others, and an abiding sense of both the moral and the spiritual features of education, and (4) inquiry into the nature of the mind and acquisition of personal meaning, creativity, and insight” (5). Owen-Smith argues that the physiological changes that result from contemplative practice, such as ease, calm, and presence, are critical to learning “in that they improve concentration, empathy, perception; lessen stress and anxiety; and increase effective performance” (9). Owen-Smith declares it not only a responsibility but a “necessity and morale mandate for a new world order” for teachers to foster intellectual and affective development in students (9). Owen-Smith laments at the reality that we begin to lose ourselves and our contemplative selves leave us as children when we begin kindergarten, stating that we are no longer given time and space to develop our contemplative minds because of restrictions on contemplation and deep learning in school settings.

Owen-Smith states that both SoTL and contemplative pedagogies have ancient roots despite the belief that they are relatively new. In her overview of the history of contemplative education, she references those who started the education school system who emphasized inspiration as a major dimension of learning. She explains that the Buddhist goals of “empowerment and liberating transformation” within education have been preserved in the mountains of Tibet and in villages of Southeast Asia today. Contemplative practice became the domain of monastic and religious life after the

Renaissance and separated from the university as contemplation as an “important dimension of inquiry and knowing was considered to be a threat to the integrity of the modern university” (13). Owen-Smith quotes Mirabai Bush who refers to this split as producing ““a compartmentalized, fragmented way of learning and teaching, a dualistic alienation of body from mind, emotion from intellect, humans from nature, and art from science’ (2011a, 223-224)” (14).

Owen-Smith states that the shift back to the contemplative is reflected in the notion of the mind offering an ““alternate language of imagination, intuition, dreams, inspiration, awareness, empathy, and transcendence (2000, 229)” (18). The shift to attention on the whole student as a learner and knower is well established in higher education, but many of the classroom practices are not carried out as they could be. Owen-Smith gives service-learning courses as an example of pedagogy that should deepen learning and can be a contemplative practice when well-executed. She states that service-learning students may miss the experience of understanding the self and other when the “requisites of time, reflection, and mindfulness” are missing or partially constructed in the service-learning classroom, “thus a reification of stereotypes, a poorly articulated understanding of social issues, and an exacerbation of power differentials among groups can result (Furco 2011)” (19). The following is a brief overview of the contemplative focuses Owen-Smith summarizes in her book.

States of mindfulness can be achieved through meditation techniques but also through activities that involve movement, such as yoga. In *Yoga Minds, Writing Bodies: Contemplative Writing Pedagogy*, Christy I. Wenger integrates the practices of yoga and

yogic breathing into first-year composition courses to foster “mindfulness of the body”, helping students gain metacognitive skills about rhetoric and process (11). In her book, she proposes we turn to contemplative education practices that engage student bodies by combining a traditional curriculum with contemplative practices including yoga, meditation, and the martial arts to work toward undoing the binary of interior/exterior or self/social. She draws from feminist theorist Donna Harraway and yoga pioneer BKS Iyengar to integrate the body, heart, and mind to flow and create meaning together. According to Wenger, “mindfulness is an ‘embodied intervention that creates a rich source of practice and theory which can be used to transform the work completed in our college writing classrooms and the ways that work is transferred to other writing environments” (5). Wenger’s work presents contemplative pedagogy as a means of teaching students mindfulness of their writing in ways that promote the academic, rhetorical work as well as the writer’s physical and emotional well-being. She introduces the term “embodied imagination” or “the faculty by which body, heart, and mind work together to bring meaning and understanding to writing” (21). As we can see from this quotation, although Wenger speaks to how the heart, mind and body are aligned through meditation, she is focused inwardly on the writing students produce and on how mindfulness can enhance students’ metacognitive skills about rhetoric.

Wenger argues that work linking writing and meditation remains on the peripheries of the discipline. In “*Teaching Attention Literacy: A Case for Mindfulness in the Composition Classroom*”, she explains that her role as both a writing teacher and a committed yogi have shown her how embodied experiences have helped her develop a

contemplative writing pedagogy based in the Eastern practices of yoga. Wenger states that she was encouraged by her yoga teacher to begin to combine yoga practice and philosophy, the history and the contemporary science of mindfulness and her studies of writing: “The lines between writing and yoga began to blur, and I started mixing practices, moving seamlessly between my mat, now always open on my office floor, and my computer” (54). In the classroom, writing students practice deep breathing techniques, yoga postures, or simple meditations as often as she asks them to write in class. Wenger has students read from *The Journal of Contemplative Practice* to help them begin to awaken into writers “aware of and present for their writing. It also became a tool for creatively approaching life outside the classroom—that is, for thinking and behaving beyond habit in how they ate, exercised, talked to their roommate, or did homework for other classes” (59). She states that practicing mindfulness shifts students and teachers away from fixed and narrow understandings of attention to more “expansive, flexible, and bodily oriented attunements” with their writing environments (60). She theorizes that, through the practice of mindfulness techniques, practitioners may begin to create a distance between the thoughts and feelings that come up as a space that allows for eventual, intentional response as opposed to automatic and unthinking reaction. In the article, Wenger extends the conversation surrounding contemplative rhetorics and attention, stating that contemplative rhetorics approach attention as a skill that can be developed just like other rhetorical means, and that one way of developing attention is by practicing contemplative exercises that teach mindfulness. According to Wenger, however, attention “achieved through the practice of mindfulness takes into account how

our available means of persuasion always includes our bodies. Discussions of attention often lack this embodied focus” (65). Wenger states that a focus on attention within the writing classroom provides a framework for examining the work writers do by engaging students in the development of rhetorical awareness of “the embodied and ecological aspects of composing” and to provide opportunities for students to critically examine texts “as situated in a specific rhetorical context and as embedded within and formative of material relationships” (55). The ability for students to own their own levels of engagement is important rather than blaming an assignment or instructor for their feelings is what Wenger calls “changing the grammar of our thoughts” (59). When students reclaim the ownership of their writing by recognizing their own and others’ presence, they exhibit what compositionist Kurt Spellmeyer calls “attunement,” or a “felt sense of being at home in the world. (1996: 905)” (65). The potential Wenger sees in Spellmeyer’s term is the conscious awareness of attending to felt experience in order to engage with it and compose with it so that “they might take up mindful, embodied positions within their writing and invite embodied relationships with their readers. In both rhetoric and yoga, we can attune through a practice of mindfulness” (65).

Throughout her work, Wenger brings in elements of mindfulness that are focused on the goals of compassion and kindness, like the importance of well-being. It could be argued, however, that Forbes’ theory of McMindfulness applies to the work Wenger puts forth in that her book integrates contemplative practices largely with the purposes of enhancing the writing students produce as well as their experience of writing. How does Wenger’s work surrounding embodiment and rhetoric bump up against Yagelski’s claim

that required writing courses should serve as vehicles for social reform rather than as student-centered workshops designed to build students' confidence and competence as writers? Wenger's theory does not circle us around to the ways mindfulness points us in the direction of healing on a global level and how contemplative practices contribute to living a sustainable life. When these connections aren't made, and when the spiritual roots of mindfulness practices aren't there through the use of the contemplative solely to better one's life in some particular way, there can still be value in the work and the experiences, however, there is a silencing of the larger structural changes that need to take place in the education system, not just of national writing policy. When literature about mindfulness and writing brings readers inward through a journey of embodied cognition but doesn't address raw or difficult emotions, the outer, the institution, the other and othering, the environmental and the natural, the earth, and sustainability, it is like being engaged in a deep meditative state, and when the meditation ends, you suddenly open your eyes, quickly stand up, brush off your hands and walk out the door into the sunlight to carry on with your day. Meditation or savasana, however, should end slowly, bringing us back first by moving our fingers or toes, opening the eyes slowly, moving slowly afterwards onto our next destination, all of which are symbolic of the state experienced during and right after meditation having a real and concrete possibility of carry over into our daily lives. Our day has new potential to devote ourselves to kindness and compassion that makes a ripple effect on those around us. Meditation is a fostering of a state of kindness and universal love for all beings - it is apparent in the state obtained after meditation, and although this state can make the writing process less dramatic, the

important work doesn't happen when we write or what we write or how much we understand the concept of embodied cognition - it's really in the daily grind of working toward becoming a kinder, more compassionate being in the world. Therefore, although Wenger's style of teaching may increase students' ability to engage with their writing bodies, it doesn't offer this same metacognition for how mindfulness fosters universal love and compassion and the implications of this in the writing class.

How is the Cartesian mind upheld still through new theories of the rhetorical situation? How does introducing students to the contemplative mind in this way hinder or foster universal love and interconnectedness? Can we assume feelings of universal love happen no matter what when we meditate and that this does not need to be addressed in the writing classroom? In *Prolific Moment: Theory and Practice of Mindfulness for Writing* Alexandria Peary argues that a theory of mindful writing can improve how students write and how they experience writing. She offers a new view of the rhetorical situation and the writing process by focusing on the present moment to bring forth intrapersonal rhetoric, moments of non-writing, and moments before and after thought, as central to the writing process and instruction. Peary sees mindfulness as an approach that can help students' writing "struggle and stress and diminish aversion to writing while bolstering interest, confidence, and fluency" (1). She states that, for the most part, students' success is linked specifically to their relation to the present moment while writing. Peary's research explores the following questions: "What is overlooked about writing when we are heedless of the present? What could be the consequences of that oversight? Conversely, what are the benefits of mindfulness for our first-year writing

students? How can a first-year writing curriculum help students become more aware of the present for their writing?" (3).

Peary examines mindfulness as a metacognitive practice and turns to Buddhist concepts of no-self, emptiness, impermanence, and detachment for methods for observing the moment in the writing classroom. This turning to Buddhist concepts happens throughout all of the texts that explore mindfulness and writing. We will see later in the discussion section of this project that Indigenous scholar Yuria Celidwen critiques the overly emphasized Buddhist uptake of mindfulness practices, claiming that this approach shows the westernization of Buddhist culture and religion. Peary sees Buddhism as helpful to the development of a healthy relationship with thoughts through detachment. Peary states that the first challenge of mindfulness is to remember to notice the present moment, a skill, which needs to be taught. She says this can be seen in Buddhist monasteries where there is a bell that goes off periodically as a reminder to bring practitioners back to the present moment. If these scholars are not Buddhists, why would they use Buddhism to think more deeply about writing other than as a means to an end?

Peary sees the notion of the rhetorical situation as lacking the direct metacognition of mindfulness in which student writers track and analyze their thinking. She uses the metaphor of a bell to describe this process: "Moment by moment, a prolific bell is to be struck", which she states "resembles the process of mindful writing or that which allows our students to write prolifically, fluently, contentedly, and effectively. Trumpets announce and pianos make complex arguments, but the bell, the bell hinges us to time. A bell says here we are, here you are" (22). Peary sees the bell as symbolizing

the students need to look again and again into the contents of their intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intertextual selves to release writing suffering. The Buddhist sutra that teaches present metacognition instruction, according to Peary, is the *Satipatthana Sutra*, or “The Foundations of Mindfulness”, offered circa 544 BC by the First Council of Monks near Delhi. This sutra is said to provide the most direct path to enlightenment. Peary states the Buddha describes in this sutra the development of “*citta*, or consciousness”, a thinking about thinking, a teaching that helps us detach from our thoughts. Peary references Tobin Hart, who states that mindfulness allows students to think critically about what might otherwise be assumed, to be aware of the content of our consciousnesses, mature emotionally, and self-reflect to ““deconstruct positions of role, belief, culture, and so forth to see more deeply or from multiple perspectives’ (33)” (30). The *Satipatthana Sutra* provides guidance on how to develop a metacognitive stance that incorporates ideas and feelings as well as the body. Although Peary seeks this wisdom from sutra, however, she also states students should not necessarily be reading traditional scripture. How is she transmitting this wisdom to students without referencing the scripture and what are the ways Indigenous voices can transmit this same wisdom through storytelling and narrative without turning to scripture?

Intrapersonal rhetoric and Monkey Mind

Intrapersonal rhetoric is the discontinuous stream of internal monologue or the movie going on in your head. According to Peary, intrapersonal rhetoric is comprised of “intertextual, socially inflected instances of language that nevertheless occur in solitude as the student writes ... the material of the intrapersonal - its bits of voice, phrases,

sentences - is intertextuality informed by the language of others..." (38). She argues composition students can be trained to pay extra attention to the arising intrapersonal messages to analyze them for writing insights. The influence of intrapersonal communication is captured in the Buddhist notion of "'monkey mind' or our non-stop tendency to sort and evaluate experiences in our heads" (54). Peary speaks about Mara, the writing demon, who disrupts the writing process and haunts our minds and tells us that we aren't good enough to write. Peary explains that her "Mara" was her worries, her student loans, and her other classmates and professors. She tells us that the Buddha calms Mara through the breath by breathing in and out to focus on what is happening right now so that writing can occur.

She describes the process by which we transform Mara as a three-step process, including a demon, monkey, and a river. The first step is to downgrade Mara to just a bunch of smoke and self-talk. Peary calls Mara "the imaginary reader that is highly critical and wants writing perfection - now!" (min. 9:00) Once Mara is downgraded, Peary talks about attaining the Buddhist state of "Monkey Mindlessness", which is our human default state, or what Michael Yellow Bird calls our "birthright". She quotes from William James who states that we can only focus our minds on the present moment for no more than 5-12 seconds. Through the breath, though, we can deal with the monkey and control the thoughts. Once the monkey is tamed, the third state of mind is compared to a river that has a bunch of raw, constant, neutral, language production - inside all of us is a river of content: "I like to think of it as non-stop writing. Every breath is covered in language. There are no blank moments. There is no writer's block if we can perceive the

moment mindfully. Something is always arising on the surface of our mind due to impermanence. A sentence. A phrase. An image. A fragment. And if we watch, everything changes. Writing inability becomes ability. Word. No word. Word.” (min. 12:10). Peary speaks about somaesthetics, which is the study of how we experience the body as a “site of sensory appreciation (aesthetics) and creative self-fashioning...” (41). She theorizes about the concept of training individuals to progress through the different levels of consciousness, ending with one that is consciousness itself with the goal being to notice the false dualism of the mind/body split, and according to Peary, provide insight into the writing process and content for drafts. Sondra Perl’s *felt sense* engages similar praxis. This idea of the mind/body split is also connected to Yagelski’s Cartesian mind-body dualism. Conscious breathing is an embodied meditation that brings awareness to this construct and can unknot these dualities.

The Heart Sutra - Form and Formlessness

Peary makes the claim that our gaps in consciousness reflect the Buddhist teaching of form and formlessness. *The Heart Sutra* Series of texts from India teach the idea that form comes from formlessness and formlessness comes from form. The wisdom of this sutra is in the understanding of this balance and riding this wave of balance. What is left without the binary of mind/body, self/non-existent self? Between form and formlessness is the Buddhist “middle way”, which is taught through the foundational Buddhist text *The Heart Sutra*: “The mindful writer watching her in-breath asks a question of the moment, and the mindful writer watching her out-breath waits for the moment’s answer. The mindful writer doesn’t pursue language, doesn’t fish in her

discursivity, is not attached to produced words, doesn't sort inner words, but lets go of them like a catch and release, recording the words but suspending judgement. Stock your voice as you would an ornamental fishpond with phrases" (74). Peary believes the notion of emptiness, or the nonverbal moments before writing, are rarely discussed, or are discussed in terms of freewriting stages of the writing process. She states to overvalue one stage of the "writing process or one genre over another, or form over formlessness, is to risk writing suffering, since in so doing a writer is craving a particular product and overlooking his or her present rhetorical situation" (86).

Alleviating the cycle of suffering for writers

Those of us interested in reducing the cycle of suffering from writing instruction are on the path to becoming a *bodhisattva* of writing, according to Alexandria Peary. She explains that *Bodhisattva* respond to the "call to realign themselves to the present moment and to renounce types of instruction that obstruct, ignore, or diminish present awareness" (166). Peary uses the concept in traditional Indian Buddhism where there are three paths to enlightenment. The first is to become *Śrāvaka* or a disciple who follows the teachings of the Buddha and can possibly end the cycle of suffering. The second path to enlightenment is to become a *pratyekabuddha*, a monk who practices alone but was never exposed to the teachings of the Buddha. The third path is to become a *bodhisattva*, who is a person that becomes enlightened but delays their release from suffering into nirvana to help others. The "bodhisattva-warrior", according to Peary, makes a vow to wake up to help all beings. This kind of person has the mind of a *bodhicitta*, or enlightened mind, which is a mind that seeks awakening to be able to help other people leave the cycle of

suffering. Peary claims that the field of composition studies in the United States is headed in this direction.

Mind “waves and weeds”

Peary uses the Buddhist concept of *mind waves* and *mind weeds* as a framework for providing a spectrum for discursive and non-discursive writing moments. Peary categorizes waves and weeds “as affect, as forms of underrecognized self-pathos that are both verbal and nonverbal, to highlight their role in intrapersonal rhetoric focused on writing and needing to write” (118). In other words, she is focused on the emotions, or waves, that come up related to writing, or negative emotions categorized as weeds, stating that the goal of mindfulness is to build positive emotions surrounding writing and pluck out the weeds that are often at the corners of the mind. The problem with downplaying emotion, according to Peary, is that emotion is left out of composing too often, diminishing the social context of those emotions, and that it perpetuates a dichotomy of reason v. emotion. Not all emotion is bad, however, and contemplative pedagogies help us sit with difficult emotions by “watching the emotions almost like a fire in a fireplace for their fluctuations in energy and imagery, without succumbing to the temptation of running off into the emotion’s storylines” (125). Again, in this analysis of emotion Peary does not address the emotions associated with meditation, interconnectedness, or universal love, and remains focused on the inner world.

Again, Peary turns to Buddhism to undo dichotomies surrounding emotional states, stating that Buddhism doesn’t distinguish between reason and emotions. This dichotomy does not exist. Peary quotes Laura Micciche’s notion of “emotion as

emerging relationally, in encounters between people, so that emotion takes form *between* bodies rather than residing *in* them' (13)" (125). Mind waves and weeds, however, track more than just feelings, emotions or even intuition, according to Peary - mind waves and weeds track *subtle energies*. Neutrality, according to Peary, is a mental balance that "comes with conscious work and critical perspective, arising from recognizing rather than denying the range of emotions students regularly experience because of writing, and then returning to bare awareness" (136). I love the idea that emotions take form between bodies rather than residing in them because this draws our attention to the reality of interconnectedness between beings and it also shines light on the fleeting nature of emotions as well as the ways in which emotions are there to help us evolve the way we live and see the world. Peary's mind waves and weeds move us into the fascinating realm of the more subtle energies we can't see but can sense. Her analysis takes us into the corners of the mind, breaking down dichotomies between emotion and reason, but doesn't circle around to our interconnectedness or connection with our environment. Peary's look at traditional Buddhist teachings is thoroughly woven throughout her book, which provides great insight to readers about the wisdom inherent in Buddhist scripture, but also portrays the ways in which scholars can lose sight of the goals of kindness and compassion as the primary outcomes of mindful work and a mindful life, and not the intrapersonal rhetoric we become aware of in practicing mindfulness. What is it about the traditionally secular classroom environment that lends itself so well to Buddhist teachings as opposed to other religious traditions, and what does this say about the need to desecularize academic spaces? Mindfulness culture is stronger in academic scholarship

than I could have thought possible when I first began this project. I've been taken aback in finding Buddhist scripture woven so intricately throughout these texts on composition theory, hearing almost no mention at all to me recollection of mindfulness practices during my studies as an undergraduate studying Buddhism fifteen years ago or as an English studies graduate student. How can mindfulness practices be incorporated into the writing classroom and avoid the mis-teachings of focusing too heavily on Buddhist philosophy, avoiding cultural appropriation and the reduction of mindfulness to relaxation and stress relief methods, and move toward incorporating interconnectedness and universal love into composition praxis?

Some contemplative approaches

Silence - Owen-Smith states that silence is often treated as a form of student resistance, oral incompetence, or boredom. These understandings of silence are not the same for all cultures, however. Silence in the Philippines shows cognitive activity, agency and wisdom. For First Nation peoples, silence is “superior to words, the single most important venue for learning, and ‘the sign of perfect equilibrium... the absolute balance of body, mind, and spirit’ (Ohiyesa 2001, 7)” (29). In Japan, talk and silence are valued collectively and are thought to create balance in the classroom. Owen-Smith believes “silence is the wellspring for all other contemplative practices” (29). She quotes from Cheryl Glenn, professor of English at Penn State, who says silence is a “‘rhetorical art ... a creative or ethical resource within the college classroom and for college writers’ (2014, xiii)” (30). A professor of accounting and management uses a bell to introduce silence. Students report the sound of the bell rung three times at the beginning of class helps to

reduce stress and helps them focus. Silence can also be multimodal, including writing in silence while hearing and recording the inner voice, using visual images without talking, and giving space by removing the teacher's presence entirely when approaching something new.

Intentional listening - Contemplative listening is a concentration on listening to the self and to others. This practice “brings a conscious lucidity. In listening we honor and care for ourselves and one another” (42). Mary Rose O’Reilley suggests the possibility of “listening someone into existence” (42). Teachers can also guide students into deep listening through exercises that facilitate a careful consideration of a passage or a viewing of a piece of art.

Waiting - Wait time in the classroom is a way to foster the contemplative mind, including waiting at least five seconds after asking a question or reviewing a comment before responding to it. Owen-Smith states this method increases “student teacher interactions, more complex information processing, and improvement in academic achievement scores” (45). According to Thich Knat Hahn, waiting is also a great opportunity for mindfulness and can be done at red lights, in line at the store, or anywhere else we usually think waiting is a waste of time or we think we do not have time to wait.

Contemplative reading - Owen-Smith adapts the traditional “scriptural approach” to one that is centered on social justice readings (45). While I see this as a potentially logical way to incorporate contemplative practices in higher education, as well as an interesting starting point for the conversation about creating a nationwide and worldwide network of

contemplative practitioners and professionals, ultimately, I see this as one of the ways in which scholars divorce the contemplative from its cultural roots and wisdom. In their attempts to avoid traditional scriptures and anything that connects the contemplative directly to spirituality, Owen-Smith moves us into the realm of McMindfulness in her clear attempts to avoid any complications as related to the religious and spiritual traditions mindfulness is connected to.

Space - Creating space and slowing down in the classroom and in life in general. In my personal experience, yoga has been a great way for me to feel space in my body, and in particular *Bhujangasana*, or Cobra Pose, has been one of the ways I've experienced this space.

Some challenges to contemplative pedagogy

Owen-Smith states that most of these practices should be removed from their religious traditions. This statement reveals how western mindfulness culture has been integrated into academic curriculum in the west, and poses the risk of separating mindfulness from the wisdom of its ancient roots. Owen-Smith speaks about interacting with a student who needs more professional counseling, basically saying to not fret because these moments already happen in the classroom at some point during the semester, and when a student does need more support, teachers should be ready with federal resources. She speaks about teachers needing to be ok with “holding uncomfortable spaces in an atmosphere of inquiry and loving kindness” (64). The challenge lies in the risk of divorcing contemplative practices from their contexts - “such that ‘mindfulness’ becomes popularized as mere relaxation...” (67). While she

acknowledges some of the risks of cultural appropriation, and notes that mindfulness has been popularized as relaxation and stress relief, she encourages instructors to divorce mindfulness instruction from its religious roots, which risks also separating it from its ancient wisdom.

Another concern is the lack of a structured teacher training agenda. Barbezat and Bush (2014) argue that although many contemplative practices are simple, they necessitate an ongoing practice of one's own and familiarity with the consequences of these practices. Owen-Smith quotes from Beth Berila (2014, 65-67), who offers support for teachers who worry about the emotional involvement (assuming a teacher's role is completely separate from dealing with emotions) of contemplative practices giving us five principles: "1) Assume that someone in the room has suffered trauma and behave with the requisite compassion and calm. 2) Prepare the students for possible reactions beforehand. 3) Offer the option of opting out. 4) Provide support resources. 5) Hold the space." (64). I see a risk here of assuming that mindfulness practices are somehow not natural - that the state of being mindful, and having negative or traumatic emotions come up, poses a potential threat to the classroom environment, that the state of being vulnerable doesn't also help other people to be more vulnerable, and that we are not all connected. Somehow mindfulness practices can be connected to students' inner world for the purpose of extracting writing content, exploring some rhetorical situation, or the like, but when mindfulness opens us up to other more complicated emotions, that the classroom is not a safe space for this to happen. While I do not see it as a teacher's role to know exactly how to deal with another person's emotions, it seems worrisome to think

that mindfulness in the classroom isn't also an opportunity to lean into negative emotions and explore them as teachers, as gateways to transformation, especially through writing. Teachers should be equipped with additional resources when needed, but mindfulness in the classroom is not about emotional control or suppressing anger, as stated by David Forbes. I see a risk in teacher training agendas in wanting to make a clear distinction between a teacher's role and a psychologist's role because sometimes the lines are blurred.

Another challenge is that contemplative methods are not for all students. One of Owen-Smith's students asks, "who wants to actually look at their life? This is a scary prospect..." (69). In Burack (2014) "some students report an agitation and anxiety in dealing with difficult emotions and paying attention to and hearing the sound of their inner voice. However, Owen-Smith states that it is often in these moments that a "portal opens and that the most profound personal and academic transformations take place" (69). I personally love to hear professionals talk about portals opening. Scholars like Michael Yellow Bird believe that it is through difficult emotions that evolution of our consciousness happens, and that suppressing these emotions is a result of the Cartesian mind. Mindfulness practices not only connect us with ourselves and others and our environment, but they connect us to our hearts. One writing prompt I like is: how do difficult emotions challenge our way of living? What are they trying to teach us? Why do the same emotions occur over and over? What are we not hearing them say? Even in Owen-Smith's presentation of "challenges of contemplative practices" seems strange. How can a practice that is supposed to enlighten through present moment awareness and

connect somehow lead to a challenge when what we see is not easy to deal with? How can the “challenge” of encountering a student with very difficult emotions be seen as an opportunity for cultural transformation in the classroom, instead of a problem that needs addressing by a therapist. How are we separating meditation from ceremony in the classroom?

Finally, funding is crucial to advancing contemplative studies, but Owen-Smith urges individuals to take steps toward integrating the contemplative into the curriculum without funding through “workshops, reading and discussion groups, new-faculty orientation meetings, and even brief but consistent conversation about contemplative dimensions in faculty and department meetings...” (117). She argues that the implementation of contemplative practices in interdisciplinary courses is a great approach for introducing others to these practices.

Another author that speaks to teacher training is Philosophy Professor David Kahane. In, “Learning About Obligation, Compassion, and Global Justice: The Place of Contemplative Pedagogy”, Kahane argues that student reactions to mindfulness in his classes made it clear that they had a “thirst for courses that allow them to engage with their own experiences in rigorous and reflective ways, and to think carefully about questions of meaning, morality, and spirituality in their lives (57). Kahane argues for the distinction between contemplative pedagogies and holistic education, “which can more easily invite students to tell their habitual stories about themselves, rather than directing mindful attention to what is beneath these stories” (57). In the surveys he collected from students about the daily use of mindfulness techniques in his classes, Kahane states that

students commented on the difference between the “kind of personal perspective they were encouraged to develop in this course, [as opposed to the] invitation in other courses to ‘share their feelings’ or ‘speak from their perspective’ (which some of them described as irrelevant and/or infantilizing)” (57). Kahane states that there are distinctive issues that arise with contemplative pedagogies such as the question of the legitimacy or even permissibility of bringing spiritual practices into the classroom. However, he believes that meditation is increasingly accepted as a secular practice and that in the contemplative pedagogy community specifically, meditation techniques have their roots in Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish and Christian tradition, and that “there might be a loss in stripping away these spiritual contexts to popularize contemplation, including as a pedagogy” (58). He states he faces questions as to whether he is prepared and well versed enough in implementing contemplative practices in his classes. He admits to having difficulties in introducing simple mindfulness techniques and continues to do so when experimenting with *metta*, loving kindness meditation. His response has been to embrace his newness with the content and to allow students to see the results for themselves, regardless of his experience with the practice. Kahane believes that what is important above all else is that he be engaged in contemplative practice alongside his students, rather than doing something else while his students meditate. Finally, he states that there is a distinction between using contemplative pedagogy and being a spiritual teacher and that within the academy, one must remember that the goal is not to be a spiritual teacher.

Interchapter 3: Mindfulness Meditation and Healing the Nervous System

Elements of McMindfulness and the commodification of mindfulness are readily apparent in the scholarship on contemplative pedagogy. Regardless, there are ways that an individualized focus on well-being can bleed into social realms and our collective experiences. This chapter looks at some of the benefits of mindfulness and the ways in which it can enhance our lives on an individual level, arguing that this spills over onto the societal level, and that we can make subtle neural network changes now that subsequent generations would heal from and inherent through a more compassionate and interconnected society. While it would be logical to reduce mindfulness culture in terms of stress reduction to Forbes' argument of neoliberalism and McMindfulness, nevertheless, there are scientifically proven benefits of meditation that show that mindfulness and meditation lead to the healing of the nervous system.

Mindfulness practices are a way to heal the nervous system. This healing is described by Tobin Hart (2004), who argues that the effects of contemplation on physiology have significant implications for learning, specifically in terms of emotional response and cognition. Through mindfulness techniques, Hart explains “‘physiological coherence’, whereby the brain, body, and nervous system operate with efficient synchronization and balance, leading to enhanced cognitive performance” (Owen-Smith 31). Owen-Smith quotes from Richard Davidson and colleagues (2012) who theorize about the “‘synergetic collaboration’ between the scientific assessment of contemplative practices, stating that the relationship between scientific and educational communities

“has been observed most explicitly in the assessment of student mental health symptoms, such as levels of stress, anxiety, and depression... and increases in psychological well-being, such as empathy and mood” (78). According to Owen-Smith, more recent studies target developmental changes in the brain that affect emotional and cognitive development. Most of these studies were done on elementary aged students, but they provide a framework for further research in middle and secondary schools and higher education institutions.

Mindfulness-based awareness is scientifically measurable and brain scans show that meditative practices can influence psychological and mental changes. Studies have been conducted in neuroplasticity, psychoneuroimmunology, neuroscience, and grounded cognition, and according to Patricia Owen-Smith, support a new view of the mind-body connection: “These studies find that contemplative practices significantly promote health, alleviate symptoms to lift, reduce stress and anxiety, and increase longevity” (70). Owen-Smith quotes from Doug Oman and colleagues (2008), who evaluated stress on college students by gathering student self-report data and found that meditation-based stress management practices decreased anxiety among college undergraduates. Astins and colleagues discussed above also examine studies on mindfulness training and report a decrease in stress and negative emotion and an increase in positive psychological states in college students.

Mindfulness and technology addiction

Contemplative practices quiet the mind in the service of deep concentration and learning. According to Owen-Smith, recent research finds that these practices interrupt

habits of inattention associated with text messaging, emailing, viewing slides in presentation software, and even note-taking on iPads and laptops. Owen-Smith speaks about the importance of taking breaks while using technology in the classroom to practice quiet attention. She quotes the book *The Slow Professor* by Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber who argue against our fast-paced culture in the academy. Berg and Seeber speak about a “slow technology” where professors incorporate breaks and moments of silence to combat technology overload. Berg and Seeber suggest teaching deep breathing practices before writing an email to “collect your thoughts, visualize the person who will receive the email, and clarify the purpose of the email, asking if it is true, necessary, kind, and the best way to deliver the message” (112). Even just one minute of quiet, concentrated deep breathing can reset you for a number of hours, and is a good way to reset the energy and start class. While this analysis seems sound, its outcomes are potentially more neoliberal in liberating in the sense that in using mindfulness to enhance attention, we place the blame of attention onto students and lift the responsibility from the teachers and other structures like technology developers who create technology that’s addicting. Using mindfulness to cure ourselves of our addiction to technology, or any addiction for that matter, seems like putting a band aid on an infected boil. Mindfulness practices, especially as intervention methods in education settings, can lead to neoliberal outcomes instead of liberating ones when we do not approach contemplative practices with a critique, and believe that simply by practicing them, we can solve problems that may have deeper structural issues that require change and collective transformation. It’s like pretending crack cocaine will be less addictive simply by doing some mindfulness

breathing techniques every morning. Crack will feel just as addictive, even if we control the urge to use. There are always deeper issues at play behind addiction and the hard look at why we give technology to kids in the first place is probably a better place to start, rather than expecting students to be responsible for their addictive behaviors.

Christine Wenger states that, while many instructors complain of their students' inabilities to read or write anything longer than a Facebook post, "few explicitly address the subject with students, and almost none actively teach attentional strategies and skills, seeing such instruction as somehow beyond the scope of the composition classroom" (53). Wenger believes contemplative practice affords students the possibility of becoming more responsible for their feelings of boredom, disinterest and confusion surrounding their writing, providing them the opportunity to direct these feelings away from the teacher and onto themselves and the output they put forth during the composing process. However, this argument can be critiqued in that there is an overarching epistemic silencing of non-white voices in the education system that is not addressed here. Confusion surrounding writing is often a result of not having enough confidence. It results from being told someone is not a good enough writer in all the many ways this is transmitted to students. Boredom and disinterest surrounding writing is also a result of the inability to feel connected in the classroom, with others and with professors and teachers. It's a general disconnect between what students write and what is important to them in real life. It's the formality of writing and the way genre theory is left out of K-12 settings and what in its place is a rigid way of understanding and expressing oneself in writing. The use of mindfulness with the goal of directing feelings of boredom from one

place to another hardly seems like it engages with the themes of interconnectedness, compassion and the environment in which this boredom is taking place. How can we lean into boredom as a team to explore new ways of interacting with and demonstrating our learning? Instead of directing boredom and wanting to relieve oneself of these feelings, mindfulness theory would encourage us to lean into and embrace feelings of boredom. After all, boredom can be a portal to creativity and invention.

Examples of mindfulness practices

The following section includes examples of mindfulness practices that could be included in the writing classroom taken from Iowa State University's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning [website](#). Iowa State is one of the universities that has integrated mindfulness practices into university policy as an overarching learning outcome on an institutional level. Their website states some of the contemplative practices that could be carried out in the classroom might include: in class contemplation, online contemplation, guided meditation on a raisin, listening to difficult conversations, beholding, journaling, reading and silence. Online contemplation here means thinking and writing about some of the contemplative practices they see on the tree of contemplative practices. Their website also states that online spaces allow for quiet, private time for reflection that is often not possible in the face-to-face classroom: "Students can engage and reflect in their way, not hindered by the time constraints of the classroom, and make connections with their own experiences." Students are invited to experiment with the contemplative practice that calls most to them.

“Beholding” is an exercise from this website taken from Deborah Haynes, a Professor of Art (also mentioned in the first chapter of this paper), in which you stand in front of an art piece or hold it in your hands which “leads to another kind of encounter.” The journaling activity from Michael Heller, Professor of English, Roanoke College, Case Studies, *The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society*, includes journaling for a few minutes at the beginning of class everyday. The three fundamental things written about are, “What matters here?”, “Where are you at with your feelings and where are you spiritually?”, and “What do you know now?”. This question is related to the research done in class and the texts and theories studied. Students are asked to think about knowing on different levels, not just intellectual. They are encouraged to write from and value their own experience. The reading exercises in this journal encourage professors to assign less reading and to read books “more intentionally and contemplatively” and facilitate “students entering into texts in profound and transformative ways rather than *using* the documents for their information alone.”

Another way to incorporate mindfulness practices into the classroom is through silence. The idea of silence bumps up against what students or teachers expect of the classroom space in the sense that silence is seen as a lack of words, understanding, or as resistance. Contemplative silence, however, helps to balance out the energies of the classroom space as it disrupts people who talk too much in class, as well as those who talk too little. Silence invites students to respond from a place of mindfulness and creates sacred space in the classroom. It brings the teacher into presence as well as it sets the tone and pace for class time and pushes the energy of the room into the contemplative. Silence

takes the pressure of knowing and of being all-knowing away. It invites different ways of knowing into the space and takes the pressure off of the teacher in having to take the position of authority. Contemplative silence is connected to Krista Ratcliffe's concept of the "in-between space" in which we can pause to listen deeper, from a space that is meditative and looking for patterns, intersections and guidance for life's deeper questions and complexities. It is a teacher that invites us to lean into the body and the corners of the mind and creates balance in the classroom.

Silence can be incorporated into the classroom in a variety of ways. In an article titled, "*The Fruit of Silence*", Marilyn Nelson describes working in the U.S. Academy of West Point where she would have cadets meditate for the first 15 minutes of class. She notes finding regular undisciplined civilians less willing to meditate and would make her think "asking them to meditate is a symptom of madness" (1). The incorporation of mindfulness into her classes was not to strive to teach technique, but rather to develop a contemplative attitude. Nelson's background in contemplative practice comes from her interest in contemplative prayer where she began to develop awareness of contemplative feelings while in the silence of lighting a candle with a match. She describes another silent prayer technique from a hermit nun who suggests "the power of the loving gaze" (1). Nelson writes about prayer and religious practices but states that she does not try to have students grapple with theology. She only seeks to help them understand that "there is something valuable, something important, to be found in silence. I try to teach them some ways they can listen to silence" (2).

When someone meditates, Nelson believes there is a relationship between meditating and peace-making. She wonders “when do young Americans ever experience silence?” (2). One of the essays she uses in her classes is written by Kathleen Shaughnessy Jambeck, Ph.D., a medievalist and one of the founders of the Connecticut Writing Project and the Institute of Writing at the University of Connecticut. The essay introduces students to the major contemplative traditions and discusses writing strategies that “mimic our internal meditative experience” (3). Nelson argues that students are often not asked to wonder about things or to “muse,” or what Tobin Hart calls the practice of the “Art of Pondering” (4). Two examples of “musings” or “pondering” Nelson gives in the article are the questions, “Does Just War Theory depend on belief in a Supreme Being? Is it realistically possible to have a just war? Is pre-emptive war unjust? Do non-Christian religions subscribe to the definition of a just war?” and “Is there a war on the environment?” (4-5). In this course, she states she only offers “rudimentary instruction in meditation”, including sitting up straight with the eyes closed, in a comfortable position, looking toward the third eye, counting with the breath up to five, and then over and over again, watching the breath and thinking about the here and now. (5) One of the students described the meditation students are asked to do everyday outside of class like a snow globe. He meditates before the morning commute as he sits in his car and waits for it to heat up: “his mind is like a snow-globe that’s being constantly shaken (he’s married, and they have a toddler); meditation stills it and lets the snow settle so he can see what he needs to do in the coming day” (6). Nelson tells about her students who were later deployed to Iraq and have continued to meditate. Of course, there are obvious problems

with neoliberalism here in that this mindfulness instructor would see soldiers in Iraq meditating before they kill someone as a good thing. However, there is a richness to her imagination in bringing our attention to “an image to conjure: armies meditating together. World leaders sitting for fifteen minutes of shared silence. Just think of the fruit that could bear. Mother Theresa said, ‘The fruit of silence is prayer. The fruit of prayer is faith. The fruit of faith is love. The fruit of love is service. The fruit of service is peace’” (11).

Movement toward a “sacred-appreciating, non-dualistic society”

In “*Catalyzing Movement Towards a More Contemplative/ Sacred-Appreciating/ Non-Dualistic Society*”, Jon Kabat-Zinn describes the transformative effects on society of large numbers of people that cultivates a more mindful and contemplative life. He states the potential in such a transformation would be as powerful or more so than technological advances in power and connectivity and the capabilities they give rise to” (1). Yet, Kabat-Zinn states society hasn’t come to grips with the implications of technological changes and their effects on “the pace of life, the rate, amount and quality of information and images that human beings, even children, have to ‘process’ in a day, the quality of our individual and family lives, the meaning and quality of our work lives and environments, and our greater political and cultural goals and social values to say nothing of our tremendous capacity for self and eco-destruction. All this technology, although itself potentially enhancing of connectivity and communication, is also alienating, intrusive, and isolating” (1).

He advocates for an “inner technology” where meditation in its most basic form, “mindfulness”, is the “cardinal element” and has the ability to remedy the challenges posed by technological advances and “harness them, as well as the power of the mind, for the greater good and harmony of all people and the planet. This capacity is built into a universal grammar of human psychology, I believe, just as our capacity for speech is built into our brain structure through a universal grammar/language instinct” (2). Kabat-Zinn sees this inner process as an expanding view of what it means to be fully human, “a planetary adult”, on an individual and within the network or collective consciousness of society. He argues that the desire for well-being stems directly from technological advancement in the twenty-first century and that this desire should not be overlooked or undervalued. Kabat-Zinn states transformational change in terms of “awareness and nonself-oriented, ecological motivation” is possible, according to religious teachings, but that it takes a certain kind of inner work, which involves training and, in some ways, taming the mind through the systematic cultivation of awareness and compassion” (5).

Interchapter 4: Mindfulness Meditation to Heal the Community

Rooted in ancient traditions, mindfulness meditation has traditionally been a way to develop a more compassionate and caring heart through the means of attention and awareness. The traditional practice of mindfulness from Buddhist teaching overlaps contemplative practices in many other traditions and is now being researched in departments from science to psychology. Scholar-Philosophy Professor Arthur Ledoux’s work has been read in higher education classrooms as foundational for the introduction of

mindfulness practice. He defines mindfulness as a practice that begins by “paying clear, steady, non-reactive attention to the sensations of one’s own breathing and then extending this wise and compassionate attention to embrace all bodily sensations and then feelings, moods, thoughts, and intentions.” Fundamental to Ledoux’s research on mindfulness is the basic assumption that we do not have a “certain stock” of attention (Goldhaber), but rather that an awareness of our attention becomes more flexible, creative, compassionate and caring through contemplative practice.

Within higher education itself, the interest in mindfulness has become increasingly widespread, according to contemplative educator and director of the Mind and Life Institute, Arthur Zajonc. Zajonc speaks about there being a “quiet pedagogical revolution” taking place in colleges, universities and community colleges across the country. (2010) Zajonc describes this revolution as the increase in the integration of contemplative pedagogies, which he defines as “a wide range of educational methods that support the development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior, while also providing new pedagogical techniques that support creativity and the learning of course content” (83). He says knowledge isn’t something that you acquire and provide to the human mind - it is an epiphany moment. For Zajonc, the contemplative mind is not only focus and attention for higher education - it is a mode of knowing. There are obvious benefits to the incorporation of mindfulness into the writing process, but it is necessary to critically examine the ways in which curricula incorporates the fundamental goals of the contemplative mind which is a caring,

compassionate mind connected to the body and the heart. One way to incorporate mindfulness with movement toward universal love in the academy is through race work.

Mindfulness as healing on a collective level

So, can mindfulness be a framework for reconnection with our bodies, our families, our work, our community, and our society? Astin et al. that the power of inclusivity and its importance on the student body and the curriculum should be evident in the institutional social justice agenda of the university. According to the authors, a university whose students are more self-aware increases social justice on campus and establishes a feeling of inclusivity across the student body, faculty and organizations of campus. Data from this study revealed that meditation enhances cognitive and academic performance, assists in the management of academic-related stress, and contributes to the development of the whole person. Researchers find that encouraging students to engage in contemplation and meditation through journaling in class exposes them to the power of these techniques and related processes in their everyday life, thus increasing “students’ feelings of interconnectedness with others, and caring about and for others and for oneself”. (92) Astin et al. claim that contemplation and meditation through journaling is an integral part of creating this feeling within each student and across the student body, and that the freshman composition classroom is an appropriate place to engage students in this type of journaling, whether it is directly responding to their own experience or topics in social justice that students encounter in college.

One way I see mindfulness being integrated in a critically meaningful way in academia is when contemplative techniques are used to address white supremacy and

racism through writing. There is an array of recent scholarship that explores how contemplative practices in higher education help students studying race and working through the difficulties and complexities of the emotions surrounding difference. In *My Grandmother's Hands*, Resmaa Menakem, a therapist who specializes in trauma, body-centered psychotherapy, and violence prevention, shows us how mindfulness can help students more compassionately and effectively examine internalized oppression. In his book, Menakem examines the damage caused by racism in America from the perspective of trauma and body-centered psychology. Menakem argues this destruction will continue until Americans learn to heal the generational anguish of white supremacy, which is deeply embedded in all our bodies. He believes mindfulness can minimize the effects of PTSD and trauma and can potentially be used as a tool to aid in and track healing across generations. This book offers a perspective on how white supremacy is in our blood and nervous system and gives us mindfulness techniques based on neuroscience and somatic healing methods with which to understand and feel how racism exists not only in our minds, but within our bodies.

In *Integrating Mindfulness into Anti-Oppression Pedagogy: Social Justice in Higher Education*, Beth Berila describes a tool directed specifically towards social justice instructors, but which can be used by any instructors interested in incorporating mindfulness practices in their classrooms. After tenure, Berila enrolled in a 200-hour Yoga Teacher Training Program and began teaching yoga sporadically. She states the experience deepened her yoga practice immensely and allowed her to begin “bringing the gifts of yoga to my community. Over the next several years, the two realms of my

work—yoga and Women’s Studies—continued to gravitate toward one another like two parts of a magnet” (10). In her book, Berila presents mindfulness practices as a tool for students to embody knowledge and as a solution to the Cartesian worldview. She uses the metaphor of a dandelion to explain that theories can pull out the weed, but that full embodiment will fight oppressive structures. Berila urges teachers to adjust their perspectives of students’ reactions to social justice issues in the classroom to be more open in considering undesirable or negative reactions to social justice issues as the result of “mindful dissonance” and a reflection of where students are at in their identity development. Berila presents mindfulness as the necessary tool needed to take a conceptual anti-oppression conversation to a full embodiment of knowledge.

Rhonda V. Magee, professor of law and mindfulness teacher, also speaks about how mindfulness can act as a support for dealing with issues of race and justice. In a conversation with Jon Kabat-Zinn, Magee states mindfulness practice can help in doing work to create equality in the institutions as she feels mindfulness reduces bias. Kabat-Zinn agrees that there is the potential in mindfulness to “not be blind to implicit mental models and that teaching mindfulness helps to wake up in the community: Mindfulness is the befriending of one’s own true nature. It is the DNA of well-being and happiness on the level of the individual and on the level of the body politic” (min. 2:07). Magee states that mindfulness can help us wake up and realize the interconnectedness of all of us, to restructure society, and transform the world in the direction of maximizing wellbeing and minimizing harm. Both Magee and Kabat-Zinn believe that if we live as if social justice is our top priority, we will generate the kind of vibrational energies that we are the

vectors of the transformations we want to see - a sort of portal for equity that unfolds in the classroom.

In *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation*, Rev. angel Kyodo Williams and Lama Rod Owens, with Jasmine Syedullah, invite readers fully into the mess of love, liberation, justice, freedom, racism, homophobia, and capitalism. *Radical Dharma* challenges introspective Buddhists (especially white Buddhists who are privileged by their whiteness) to understand that personal liberation requires social liberation; it challenges activists to understand that social liberation requires personal liberation: “Love and Justice are not two. Without inner change, there can be no outer change. Without collective change, no change matters” (209). In this book, the authors examine how the legacy of racial injustice and white supremacy plays out in society at large and Buddhist communities in particular, outlining a new dharma that takes into account the ways that racism and privilege prevent our collective awakening. The authors traveled around the country to spark an open conversation that brings together the Black prophetic tradition and the wisdom of the Dharma. This book urges a compassionate response to the systemic, state-sanctioned violence and oppression that has persisted against black people in the United States and scholars demonstrate how social transformation and personal, spiritual liberation must be articulated and inextricably linked. These authors ask how teachings that transcend color, class, and caste are hindered by discrimination and the dynamics of power, shame, and ignorance. Their argument offers a new concept of engaged spirituality, social transformation, inclusiveness, and healing.

Similarly, in *Love and Rage*, Lama Rod Owens roots his work in Buddhist wisdom and the human experience to explore how in the face of systemic racism and state-sanctioned violence we can metabolize our anger into a force for liberation. Owens examines how white supremacy in the United States has long necessitated that Black rage be suppressed, repressed, or denied, often as a means of survival, a literal matter of life and death. In his book, Owen shows how this unmetabolized anger--and the grief, hurt, and transhistorical trauma beneath it--needs to be explored, respected, and fully embodied to heal from heartbreak and walk the path of liberation.

Ruth King offers a “Mindfulness of Race” online training and insights in her book *Mindful of Race: Transforming Racism from the Inside Out*. She claims that understanding that we have been conditioned to think and react is at the root of both racial distress and racial healing. In an interview King did, she tells us that by the time she was 27 years old she had spent years dealing with hyperactive thyroidism, and eventually underwent open-heart surgery because of it. She believes that through the surgical procedure she saw that there was a need for her to deal with matters of the heart differently. King states she realized while lying in her hospital bed that she had really been running from life and running from a rage that had been waiting for her to pay attention to this “being-on-fire” part of her that had been so neglected for so many years. (*Sounds True recording*)

It was in the stillness of her recovery that she could reflect on the rage she embodied and notice for the first time that anger, on the one hand, has an energy that rises and passes, “[b]ut, rage—[which] I started to notice in my own mind and body—had

this lingering, very gripped, older feeling to it. There was a shame and vulnerability associated with rage more than with anger. Anger was something I could feel—very hot. But I seemed to be able to let go of it quicker. But rage had a deeper story, [and] it seemed like it was an older story, a more vulnerable story, and a recurring story. I started to notice the tattoo of it or the constellation of it.” (*Sounds True recording*) King’s noticing of her rage began her journey of mindfulness meditation. She describes this process similar to Peary’s discussion of the wisdom of the Heart Sutra, which step-by-step, uncovers the different levels of consciousness. Once King was conscious of and could notice the rage arising, she could also see that when she started adding to the thoughts she fueled and prolonged the story itself: “I was dancing with it. I was proliferating... But, there was that moment when the thought was just arising, and that wasn’t necessarily me making that happen. First, you can really see how thoughts arise—then the feelings of sadness and beyond are fused to the thought” and “the more we reinforce that, it forms a view of a solid self that we believe is, in fact, solid” (*Sounds True Recording*). King speaks about forgetting about wanting to stop rage, and beginning to experience it as a “thaw[ing] out, when we come back into the body, when we recognize how sore and hurt we are because we’ve had to tighten ourselves in that defense of rage—which really contracts the body—what we recognize in those moments that we’re really suffering, then metta becomes a gentle and kind way of attending and of loving these parts of ourselves that are hurting”. Mindfulness can be key to leaning into and examining the origins of feelings that might otherwise be repressed because of guilt

or shame, especially feelings of discrimination, racism, and the white supremacist structures of the mind and heart embedded deep within us.

King argues that this is the kind of heart space we need to face racism and suffering, as she believes racism is a heart disease and can be cured. She suggests we tend first to our suffering and listen to what it is trying to teach us to direct its energies most for change. She invites us to explore through mindfulness the power of paying attention to our difficult emotions to perceive the wisdom they hold to understand and engage with racial tension. She is committed to the feeling that these tumultuous emotions are more than just pain on an individual level, but that they represent the generational constellations of racial rage and ignorance and how to work with them.

Mindfulness, trauma, and intergenerational trauma

When mindfulness techniques are implemented in the classroom, there is almost always someone in the room who has suffered from trauma. In the article “The Role of Mindfulness in Reducing the Adverse Effects of Childhood Stress and Trauma”, Robin Ortiz and Erica M. Sibinga’s research on veteran populations and those exposed to war and bereavement suggests that mindfulness eases the consequences of toxic stress. Ortiz and Sibinga report that veterans showed improved symptoms of PTSD, a decrease in cortisol levels and quality of sleep improvement over an 8-week period in which they participated in an intensive course in mindfulness training. Studies with other groups reveal similar findings, suggesting that mindfulness may have the same effects throughout different groups. Research suggests “these underlying influences of

mindfulness may mitigate mental health outcomes, enhance quality of life, and reduce somatic symptoms” (1).

In another study, Ortiz and Sibinga examine undergraduates ages 18–36 who participated in a mindfulness activity connected to writing exercises about a past stress or trauma. Researchers report decreased “physical symptoms, poor sleep, and negative affect; with beneficial findings apparently linked to the mindfulness component, given expressive writing alone was not predictive of improvement.” Research also shows that the positive effects of mindfulness could be generalizable to healthy populations, regardless of known exposure to stress and trauma. The article references a large meta-analysis that showed a reduction in stress, anxiety, depression and pain in healthy adults. Some mindfulness programs have found effect with as few as 12 hours of instruction. The article quotes from Kalmanowitz et al., who demonstrated that even a 4-day long intensive program yielded positive results. One point the authors make is that mindfulness training varies and that it is a challenge to find instructors as well as practitioners that have completed both stress reduction mindfulness-based training and trauma-informed training, and rarely with specific qualifications to work with youth.

The authors conclude that research suggests there is promise in preventing the poor health outcomes associated with trauma exposure in childhood and that future work should aim to optimize high-quality mindfulness programs for youth as well as investigate the benefits of the long-term outcomes of mindfulness interventions in childhood into adulthood, as well as outcomes in offspring.

Interchapter 5: Indigenous Contemplatives

The western concept of separation the dominant western worldview suffers from has caused us to become separated from our relationship to nature. This is the product of centuries in western thinking of spirit opposed to matter, nature opposed to matter, or the colonial paradigm where we think we can go out and conquer and extract resources, effectively forgetting we are completely interdependent on the world around us. Indigenous cultures are completely embedded in and can teach us about this relationship to our environment, the nature of interconnectedness and offer a way out of separation. Legal experts need to have this perspective presented to them to bring about new laws that protect nature. There is an enormous amount to learn about from biodiversity and by seeking key Indigenous voices we can have those perspectives in view. There is a lot Indigenous communities have to teach us but we are destroying their homes and land. Indigenous communities alone cannot stop deforestation and destruction of homes and communities, nor can they stop not thinking about Indigenous well-being and homes. We all have a duty to do something and to work together through alliance. It takes persistence and patience to make changes on a global scale. We are at risk of losing the Amazon rainforest to deforestation and destruction.

An Indigenous scholar who taught mindfulness in the social work department and was dean at Humboldt State, Michael Yellowbird, defines mindfulness as our “birthright.” Yellow Bird reminds us that mindfulness practices are older than we can imagine. He speaks about carvings of caves in Tibet of images of people sitting in caves

in the lotus position in meditation. Meditation and mindfulness are something cultures have always done, according to Yellow Bird. The Buddha always said to engage in meditation in a way that allows your inherent nature to come through, and although the Eight-Fold path is outlined in Buddhist philosophy of mindfulness meditation, Yellow Bird stresses the importance of engaging in a way that allows our inherent nature to be revealed to us so that we live the truth and authenticity of our own lives. He says that's part of what mindfulness really is.

Yellow Bird speaks about the current state of society, stating that first world societies have “mismatched” diseases like cancers, hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, depression, and anxiety. He says we came to have these diseases through high levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, which zaps us of our energy. Once we're in the state of shock, or fear, or running from stress, the first thing the brain does once cortisol levels are too high, is go into calorie dense foods mode and consume foods like french fries and fats, sugary drinks, fried foods. Yellow Bird states this has led to a health crisis throughout the world.

However, the ancestors were hunter gatherers, horticulture people, who ate much healthier food, and they only drank primarily water. Yellow Bird also states our bodies evolved to fast and that fasting has been part of all people's ceremonial life. He references Daniel Liberman, an evolutionary biologist, who says mismatched diseases occur because our bodies are poorly adapted to the more modern environment because we don't live the way our bodies have adapted to live. Yellow Bird speaks about “tools” we have in our brains that equip us with the ability to stare at stars for hours, stair

into the fire, meditate, etc., but in a modern world we live with these diseases and then we do fall into overeating, then getting depressed, and going to doctor who rarely prescribed meditation, or getting out to go look at the stars.

Mindfulness can be any activity from sitting meditation to walking mindfulness - the definition of mindfulness is paying attention on purpose; however, Yellow Bird says we pay attention accidentally when we see something beautiful and that being mindful is the way we have evolved as humans. Yellow Bird states we have evolved to have the genes we need to contemplate and to have the neurological tools to do meditation. He says that we don't have to wake up and declare each morning that we're going to pay attention on purpose. He suggests that if suddenly something moves you and you're paying attention, that that could be an accidental way of being mindful and presents an opportunity to absorb it completely, use it, immerse yourself in sound, sight, and that this is how we combat the diseases of civilization of mismatched diseases.

Yellow Bird suggests getting grants to bring mindfulness into schools to have resources and giving administrators the information of neuroscience related to mindfulness. He argues that to have people begin to have a sense of connection with each other to move in the direction of decolonization. He recommends using the book *Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness* by Fabricio Didonna, which he used in his class at Humboldt State when he taught mindfulness to get students to begin to engage in learning the practices and eventually bringing it to their agencies. He also recommends looking online for mindfulness resources and says many of the great teachers are offering free training.

He says becoming more mindful is something that is done little by little to build neural networks.

Yellow Bird says Indigenous cultures had many mindfulness practices, but the reason Eastern practices were imported to the U.S. is because Indigenous cultures were killed off and banned. Indigenous mindfulness practices were seen when people had rites of passage where people went out on the hill and fasted and prayed for days, and once they came out, they continued to create time in their day or night where they would focus on a prayer or a story and so on. Another way Yellow Bird sees mindfulness is walking through the woods and being aware of the forest, the water and trees, which is a sense of mindfulness that is very much a part of indigeneity. Different tribes had different ceremonies to represent what was going on in their brains. They would pray to a tree and know what's going on in the community, according to Yellow Bird.

To decolonize the mind is to decrease the distance between you and another being, says Yellow Bird. He claims doing these things that are very Indigenous based puts healthy productive thoughts into the brain using these different kinds of things in nature and through the relationships between people and between things. Mindfulness is not something you need to buy, according to Yellow Bird. It's an investment in yourself, but it's sold in today's world just like selling bottled water, he says, and it doesn't make sense. Mindfulness changes the plasticity of the brain and helps the dopamine levels to go up, which is the love chemical. If we have that connection with our kids, our family, the mountains, the stars, then our oxytocin levels go up. Mindful or neuro-decolonization, according to Yellow Bird, is when Indigenous culture begins to include things that are

powerful from their culture, like participating in ceremony, thinking, speaking their language, and that these things are all part of mindfully decolonizing ourselves from the diseases of the modern world.

Yellow Bird states that the protective factors in society that make people strong is maintaining a collectivist approach to life, through caring for one another, especially those who need help, and that after a while, it is seeing happiness in other people in the community that raises the insula in the brain. He says this stems from social and emotional needs someone has mentally just looking at someone, and that through caring for one another cultures ultimately survive. Colonialism made life all about production, work, seriousness, and fearful god, and Yellow Bird argues we return to having fun and playing, which have been pushed out in terms of progress and production, which contributes to the rise in depression, and other diseases from the modern day. Yellow Bird states that we should not only talk about historical pain and trauma, but that there should always be a lot of laughter and humor to have control over the situation and be able to laugh at the oppression one suffers from. He says it is a declaration of taking one's agency and power back and making sure to take care to react in the best way possible for our bodies.

Contemplative scholar of Nahua and Mayan descent Yuria Celidwen was born into a family of mystics, healers, poets, and explorers from the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. As a child, her elders' songs and stories enhanced her mythic imagination and emotional intuition. Her scholarly research focuses on the intersection of Indigenous studies, cultural psychology, and contemplative science. She explores interdisciplinary

approaches to how the experience of “self-transcendence is embodied and enhances prosocial behavior (ethics and compassion) across ecstatic traditions.” She focuses on Indigenous contemplative practices from Tibet to Mexico and finding their place in contemplative studies.

From my work on Indigenous contemplative science, Celidwen developed her thesis on the earth-based experience of the “Ethics of Belonging”. In *Indigenous Contemplative Science: An Ethics of Belonging and Reconnection*, Celidwen argues that contemplative practices help us to understand the stories we are following, at the individual and collective levels, to see the stories we live by and the impact these stories have in our bodies and in our psychologies, and from here there, she argues, we can develop ethical awareness. She argues that this ethos increases conscious social responsibility for self, community, and environment: “It implies a renewed sense of order (cosmos) through a system of integration of ecological and ethical awareness of individual and collective, material and subtle, adaptive and interactive, and meaningful relational purpose within a community.” She emphasizes cultivating a sense of reverence and ecological belonging, raising awareness of social and environmental justice and community-engaged practices. Celidwen promotes revitalizing Indigenous languages, traditional healing practices, clean energy, and conservation. This work is grounded in an ecological belonging self and Spirit, which conveys a profound sense of self-as-others committed to interrelationships. I am committed to the reclamation, revitalization, and transmission of our Indigenous wisdom, and the advancement of our Indigenous rights and the rights of the Earth for social and environmental justice.

Celidwen gives a few concerns of mindfulness culture in the U.S. She states that contemplative practices have been secularized and decontextualized, and that they were brought out of the collective experience, to the individualist experience. or used for medical intervention. This has created what Jen Wellwood calls a spiritual bypass of getting involved in society and in our own responsibility. U.S. Mindfulness culture reflects McM mindfulness in the sense that people use mindfulness as an easy feeling but with very little profound nourishment. Celidwen also critiques the centrality of Buddhist practices in mindfulness culture in the U.S. She also states that these practices have privileged the “WEIRD groups” or the Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and of Democratic origin, like the U.S., that emphasize race and class. She critiques the fact that these practices have traditionally been mostly for white middle and upper class, which create “breaches” rather than “bridges” of access to these practices, according to Celidwen. She references Harrell Roth and Louie Kanjani who speak about cognitive imperialism and spiritual colonialism, stating that this interpretation of mindfulness as individualistic just perpetuates the same systems. She believes spiritual consumerism is finding different experiences and using them as commodities, until they become corporatized, which is what happened with the mindfulness industry, a now 2-billion-dollar industry. Celidwen states it’s necessary to consider and take the impacts into account of the cultural appropriation already done and to move forward and create fields that become inclusive and diverse.

Celidwen argues that Indigenous science can enrich our experience to become much more diverse and inclusive fields. She describes Indigenous science as paying

attention to the unusual aspects of phenomena, as opposed to western science that pays attention to repeated and tested hypotheses. Indigenous science goes more into the unusual on repeated phenomena and develops metaphorical symbolic meaning from these phenomena, like narratives, usually pedagogical and interpretive narratives, to understand and explain these phenomena. She states it's a very ecological way of knowing in that it includes all members of the community including all human and non-human beings and geographical regions as well. The human mind is an extension of nature, and as the creator of story, becomes the fertile ground where myth, science and our human perception of reality meet (Cajete 2000). Indigenous science is a way of observation of the process of creation, destruction and regeneration that are in constant dynamic transformation with the natural forces and cycles of nature. It is a system that is intersubjective and that pays attention to how we respond and how we are influenced by our environment. Celidwen says that Indigenous traditions make sense of these responses by creating narrative in the form of storytelling or embodied narratives like rituals, or social ceremonies that divination or healing, and that Indigenous cultures use these narratives as vessels to transmit traditional wisdom.

These practices also create a sense of responsibility and reverence and belonging to land as a sacred space. Her thesis: "ethics of belonging" is a system of integration that implies a sense of order, and renewed purpose and belonging to a community. It's an ethics of interrelating in which organisms are flexible characters that belong and interact within a larger system. She says this evokes a social ecological responsibility to self, community and environment and that Indigenous cultures are deep seated in a

commitment to interrelationships in which inclusive, interactive, material, and subtle, body, mind, heart and spiritual experiences arise. Celidwen works at the intersection of cultural psychology and Indigenous contemplative studies to reclaim and revitalize voices of Indigenous relatives of the world and validate Indigenous traditions as equal holders of sophisticated contemplative traditions. She wants to include other kinds of wisdom - not just information - but from the heart, and from the heart of the earth, wisdom that cannot be measured but can be sensed as a mysterious knowledge. She believes in a diverse community and that we will be able to adapt but that we must be sustained by a strong web of loving relationships to create a thriving environment.

Contemplative experience is sensory, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual. Celidwen says it critically inquiries about what the individual is in relation to the collective, what is the story of the social aspects of the story we tell, what is the culture and what are the aspects in the body? Through contemplative practices, they aim to transform these identities to ones that are empowered and beneficial that results in compassionate living, caring, and belonging for the whole members of the community and caretakers of the ecosystem. Celidwen asks how we can become more inclusive to consider the whole planet, animal, human, and elemental. She says contemplative practices are about a planetary caring experience. She states the whole process is like that of birth and death in that whatever ideas need to be decomposed that don't serve the collective identity, can later be used that to create the new ideas that are conscientiously being sewn to create more profoundly connected, truly embodied, beings that are loving kind and purposeful.

DISCUSSION

The initial purpose of this project was to join the conversation concerning the lack of connection we often have to our mind-body-heart, others, and the world around us. As someone who works with students, my personal interests concerned exploring and fostering a contemplative mind through writing, learning about tools to mitigate the effects of trauma, and developing skills to avoid retraumatizing students and possibly even create a healing space in whatever classroom I might find myself in. Although there are many ways mindfulness practices are being used for healing, the tendency to remove these ways of knowing from their historical roots has led to problems in the western contemplative mind.

Historically, mindfulness practices have been about coming together in ceremony to remember the sacred in our daily interactions and lives. In the writing classroom, however, contemplative pedagogies are presented as tools to help writers engage with their breath, mind, and body, and are not necessarily taught as a way to develop a sense of interconnectedness. Throughout the course of this project, I began to bump up against these individualistic goals in contemplative writing pedagogy when I was introduced to Indigenous theory and contemplative Indigenous practice. Indigenous wisdom places the needs of the community at the center of a mindful life, which also includes the health and well-being of the planet that sustains us. Mindfulness practices have traditionally been about developing a compassionate mind and kind heart, not necessarily about releasing us of difficult emotions. The contemplative mind leans into difficult and painful emotions,

in fact, knowing they are there for a reason. Indigenous wisdom teaches us that we hold certain truths inside ourselves that the western mind has lost touch of entirely. Westerners are guided by productivity, capitalist success, and logic and reason, and emotions are almost completely removed from secular environments. This project is a call to awaken to how this dichotomy leads us to be removed from certain central aspects of our being, and rather than make us more productive or intelligent, actually cause us great psychological, physiological, emotional, societal and environmental harm.

Therefore, there is an important shift in our consciousness that needs to happen. I saw a meme today that read: “The single biggest thing I learned was from an Indigenous elder of Cherokee descent, Stan Rushworth, who reminded me of the difference between western settler mindset of ‘I have rights’ and an Indigenous mindset of ‘I have obligations.’ Instead of thinking that I am born with rights, I choose to think I am born with obligations to serve past, present, and future generations, and the planet herself.” Where the westerner demands his rights as a citizen, Indigenous tradition is focused on social responsibility. There is an important, and not so subtle, shift in our thinking that must be fostered. Just like the earth is a living being, so too is the building and the classroom in which writing is taught.

Some of the questions this project attempts to answer are: How are we considering, in our writing, not just equity and our place in society, but also our place on and the healing of our planet? Can we push our writing in this direction in relevant ways and how can mindfulness practices help us do this? What ways of knowing do contemplative practices foster? What is lost when we remove contemplative practices

from their historical context and roots? How can a mindful awareness connect us with our intrapersonal rhetoric for writing content? What are some of the ways to bring mindfulness practices into the writing classroom? How does mindfulness foster loving kindness and universal love, and where are these missing from higher education policy and praxis? Where are these missing from our professors' lives and how does this bleed over into the classroom? How can mindfulness practices contribute to educational settings that are focused on healing, non-violence, well-being, and connection with others? When was the first time you learned about mindfulness and how would your life be different if you had never been introduced to these practices? How do mindfulness practices help us bridge the immense gap between the secular and spiritual in higher education? What does Indigenous wisdom contribute to this conversation and what does it look like without this guidance? What do we lose sight of with the overuse of Buddhist frameworks? How has the commodification of mindfulness practices reinforced an individualistic and egocentric agenda? How does our writing embody loving kindness and compassion in subtle ways, and where are there opportunities to extend our research outward to encompass global sustainability and life on this planet in general?

Although it is argued that mindfulness culture in the west has led to the perpetuation of individualism, there are ways we have adopted these practices for the collective good. This can be seen in the race work people are doing using a mindfulness approach. Mindfulness practices help people understand and process internalized racism and sense the ways in which we embody white supremacy and racial injustices unknowingly. A lot of this work is already being done in higher education and instructors

guiding this process might consider integrating mindfulness practices into the curricula. Mindfulness in the classroom can also help in other important ways, such as offering awareness and tools to mitigate the effects of trauma. Contemplative pedagogies teach about self-care and compassion and transmit healing. They may make class time feel more connected through stillness. The contemplative mind *feels* connected and is interconnected. It provides a fertile foundation for manifesting a new world order through scholarship and praxis, for activists to sense their next move on paper, and for sensing our mission in this realm of existence currently in history.

This literature review highlights some important things to consider moving forward. The first is that mindfulness practices in writing curricula bring in the inner voice that is missing in current national writing policy and praxis. As Robert Yagelski argues, contemplative pedagogies work to undo the Cartesian mind inherent in writing composition praxis. Noticing our intrapersonal rhetoric means more than developing just writing skill - it is an understanding that our internal world includes communication with one's self, acts of imagination and visualization, and even recall and memory.

Contemplative pedagogies also give us a framework for practicing spirituality in higher education settings. The thought of teaching this to students is exciting.

The second thing this literature review uncovered was the overuse of Buddhist frameworks in contemplative pedagogy. This overuse is connected to the concept of McMindfulness and the commodification of these practices in the west. It seems that there is a tendency to turn toward Buddhist frameworks because Buddhism is what is most readily available and easily lifted from its context, as its roots are in other places in

the world, making it easy to overlook and forget them. This is also a result of the mass genocide of Indigenous peoples and cultures in the west, which has divided us and removed us almost entirely from Indigenous ways of knowing. Buddhism, on the other hand, is a tradition that has been commodified for a long time in the U.S. and its philosophical essence has proved tempting in secular, academic spaces. Symptoms of western mindfulness culture play out in writing theory in our attempts to improve individual experiences surrounding writing and in the mining for writing content. Writing scholars lead us inward for greater rhetorical embodiedness but have not directed this awareness outward toward our environment in explicit ways that address our interconnectedness, including sustainable, healthy lifestyles and lives. While current contemplative writing pedagogy does engage readers with a holistic outlook, theory does not bring us back to the fact that mindfulness practices have been practiced for centuries to connect us to the community and our environment. This connection is not explicitly made in the texts by Alexandria Peary, Patricia Owen-Smith or Christy Wenger, as they argue for reconnection with our inner world, but for the purposes of our individual writing experience.

There are some things this project does not address regarding the writing classroom. I do not consider some of the inherent similarities and differences between Buddhist mindfulness practices and Indigenous practices, such as engaging in ceremonial dances. I also do not make any solid claims about how we might incorporate Indigenous worldview into writing curricula development. How is our sense of present-moment awareness limited by our overuse of Buddhist frameworks? How does our view of the

contemplative mind change when we consider the thousands and thousands of ancient Indigenous ways of fostering mindfulness? What in the world are the ways Indigenous peoples practice and have practiced mindfulness, and which of these practices would give back to the students in the writing classroom? How can we give back to Indigenous students some of the things that were taken away from them? How much sitting meditation, if any, is necessary for a mindful life?

Some of the limitations of this project include the length of study it would require examining these moments of “awakening”. After all, these studies could be tracked over generations. Because of quarantine, the potential scope of this project was also limited. I could have conducted surveys about meditations I guided online for students. However, most, if not all, of the meditations I guided were not framed beforehand with my new understanding of mindfulness as Indigenous spirituality and ways of knowing. Another limitation to this project comes from the fact that there are only a few Indigenous scholars included and further research might focus on the diverse array of mindfulness practices that come from these cultures. This project was also limited by my whiteness, as I did not put this at the forefront of my mind from the start, and I’m finding the depth of this literature review falls short because of it. My reading list from the very beginning included mostly white authors and I might have noticed this red flag from the beginning. This limitation is also because there aren’t as many Indigenous scholars producing writing theory as there are white scholars, a problem with the publishing industry, among others.

The next steps for research could involve studies that track students' experience with mindfulness meditation in the writing classroom. I would be interested in reading more written reports of students' experiences with visualization, dream programming, meditation, the imagination, and manifestation, and how students become aware of these different ways of knowing for the first time. I'm also interested in seeing how mindfulness meditation can translate to activism in our writing. Finally, next research steps might look at how other writing instructors were introduced to a contemplative life, whether they are grounded in these moments of insight and intuitive sense, and how it plays out in the work they do, including their writing lives.

Right as Covid 19 hit the news, I had just finished working as an Instructional Student Assistant (I.S.A.) in a freshman composition classroom at HSU. The feeling I experienced in this classroom throughout the semester was ... rushed. There was never enough time in the class, the week, or the semester for the professor to feel she had covered everything. In my opinion, this feeling permeated the course from start to finish. At one point during the semester, the students in this class felt it was arguable that they were a cohort, and much less a "community". It was determined that the word community must be defined. Then Covid hit and the pace slowed down. How is the dichotomy of the spiritual and the secular played out in the writing classroom in obvious and more subtle ways? What do students gain with this packed curriculum and what do they lose? Where can we slow down and how are we reconstructing burnout culture in the writing classroom? Where can assigned readings be cut out of the curriculum to provide students with more space to contemplate what is in front of them? Contemplative pedagogy

invites us to slow down in many ways - slow down our response time, give more time with each reading, and even assign less reading. It creates space for stillness and silence. How would freshman composition courses change if we created five minutes for silence and connection at the beginning of our classes? How would it create a sense of community without having to debate the definition of that word? How are we transmitting knowledge to students that doesn't rely on John Swales' Creating a Research Space (C.A.R.S.) model simply by creating a sense of connection? We are rushing to transmit the C.A.R.S. model to students when this model seems to have colonialist traits as it encourages them to discover and conquer territory. Why the rush? Maybe we don't start the conversation talking about sustainability and the earth as a living being that we have an obligation to protect, but we can start by talking about well-being and a healthy mind and encourage students to grapple with different ways of knowing in their writing assignments.

I see writing as something that is not coming from outside ourselves as it is understood in the western world, but as something inherently spiritual and intimately interconnected with everything around us. Writing is like a superpower - it can be used as magic to make spiritual connections and manifest new ways of theorizing about and structuring society. Currently, societal pressures brainwash us into thinking that we are not successful until we accomplish something. There are many things around us that influence how we think about ourselves. The external pressures that shape what we think success looks like rob us not only of the present moment, but of years, decades, and entire lifetimes. Only when we meet society's standards that shape how we're living do

we feel worthy and deserving of love. Self-compassion, however, is universal love. We all deserve love just because we exist. A bad grade on a writing assignment can easily translate to feeling like a failure unworthy of love. This is important to think about. Self-talk, our internal monologue, is more powerful than we recognize, as self-talk can be used to foster loving kindness. Why is it so hard to extend compassion toward ourselves? How can awareness of our self-talk surrounding writing flow over into other areas of our lives? Observing our thoughts and emotions with openness is a healing approach in higher education that reaches far beyond the secular classroom. Without limiting ourselves to society's influences, what would genuine success look like in the writing classroom? This project is about redefining what success looks like in our writing. The composition classroom is about creating a sense of community and writing success is all about discovering aspects of ourselves we didn't know existed, while making connections with the world around us. Mindfulness meditation can slow down our energy in the classroom, so we feel connected to one another. This is how we build resilience and sustainability - through connection.

In conclusion, this project is a call to action for professors to remember these aspects of our being. Everything we do should be to nourish the spirit, including writing. What are the ways students nourish themselves and their spirit over the course of a semester in your class? How are they approaching social justice as well as kindness and compassion in their work? All areas of our lives can be caressed with kindness and compassion, including the dark corners of the mind and heart. These ways of knowing bring us out of the delusion of consciousness that we are not interconnected with all

living beings, including the living, breathing earth, and that our love and care should only be extended to our closest people. Mindfulness practices increase our vibration, tune us into higher frequencies, integrate spiritual downloads, open the pathways to receive and perceive insights from our spirit guides, and finally to perceive higher dimensions of reality. The idea of spirit guides is taboo in secular and academic spaces and remains locked within the confines of the church or spiritual circles, however, this way of knowing has most definitely influenced the work I produced while in this master's program. Our connection with our spirit guides does many things for us, including keeping us protected from harm and pain as well as offering us information about how to proceed with matters concerning the heart. Through meditation, we become aware of these angelic spirits that are present with us in our daily lives, including in the work we do in secular spaces. Our brains and bodies can perceive these higher dimensions of reality as guidance to know and understand what steps to take to build a new world order in the west. Contemplative practices can lead us into an understanding of how to once again ground ourselves in spirit. Let's really start to think and talk about what it means to ground ourselves in our intuition - in the awareness of what our spirit guides communicate to us and what our dreams and meditations reveal to us, to practice compassion and kindness toward ourselves and the world around us.

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