Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Examining Faculty Perspectives

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Contemplative Practices in Higher Education:
Examining Faculty Perspectives

By Daria Pizzuto

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy
Seton Hall University
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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Daria Pizzuto, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ph.D. during this Spring Semester 2018.

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Abstract

Anxiety, depression, and feeling overwhelmed are consistently reported among college students. Contemplative pedagogy is a teaching approach that incorporates yoga, meditation, and other spiritual and physical activities into an academic curriculum. It is an emerging prescription in the field of higher education to alleviate some of the emotional struggles students face, providing an alternative solution to more clinical interactions. Contemplative faculty are higher education professors who regularly implement contemplative approaches in their teaching as a response to students’ needs. Through an analysis of faculty narratives, this study explores the experiences of contemplative educators in 4-year universities in the United States. This study found that higher education faculty perceive contemplative pedagogy as an integral part of their academic identity and value teaching life skills over subject matter. Professors in this study utilized contemplative pedagogy in response to their students’ emotional needs and frequently had to cope with their academic peers’ unsupportive attitudes toward their teaching and scholarship.

Keywords: contemplative pedagogy, professional identity, higher education faculty
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This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter Lyra.
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Chapter I – Introduction

“Modern education with its focus on material goals and a disregard for inner values is incomplete. There is a need to know about the workings of our minds and emotions. If we start today and make an effort to educate those who are young now in inner values, they will see a different, peaceful, more compassionate world in the future.” His Holiness Dalai Lama (Dalai Lama, 2016).

College student mental health is a significant issue. A nationally representative 2010 Survey of Counseling Center Directors reported that 44% of college students struggled with severe psychological problems (Gallagher, 2011). The top three disorders were depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. In 2015, anxiety emerged as the predominant concern among college students (50.6%), followed by depression (41.2%), relationship concerns (34.4%), suicidal ideation (20.5%), and self-injury (14.2%) (Reetz, Krylowicz, Bershad, Lawrence, & Mistler, 2016).

Contemplative pedagogy has emerged as a prescription to alleviate students’ social and emotional issues. Teaching contemplatively incorporates spiritual and physical practices such as meditation, yoga, journaling, visualizations, and other strategies into an academic curriculum. It is currently implemented in college classrooms as an alternative to traditional teaching, which focuses exclusively on content. Contemplative teaching goes beyond providing knowledge to the masses by acting as a vehicle for social and emotional change in students’ lives. It has been characterized as a “quiet revolution” (Zajonc, 2013) that offers a wide range of pedagogies, which support the development of “student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior” (p. 83). This approach is nascent in college teaching, and the extent of its use has yet to be documented.

Background
There is no single way to describe or engage in contemplative practices. The Latin *contemplare* means to observe, consider, or gaze attentively (Contemplation, 2016). Contemplation can also be described as a way of knowing, an epistemology that is different from rationalism. Gunia, Wang, Huang, and Murnighan (2012) define contemplation as an essential means for accessing moral values and, as a result, making ethical decisions. Contemplative practices are emerging in higher education as strategies to reduce stress, increase coping skills, improve attention and concentration, and integrate “academia and life, intellect and heart, body and mind, and knowledge and self” (Ergas, 2013, p. 213).

Literature attests that these practices have benefits for students and faculty of higher education. For students, contemplative practices build focus and attention (Barbezat, & Pingree, 2012), facilitate deeper engagement with the material, and promote introspection and reflection (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Slagter et al., 2007). In addition, contemplative practices improve cognition and behavior (MacLean et al., 2010; Slagter et al., 2007; Hölzel et al., 2011), enhance brain function (Pascual-Leone, Amedi, Fregni, & Merabet, 2005), significantly reduce stress and anxiety (Creswell et al., 2016; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007), support non-reactivity, and facilitate self-regulation (Short, Mazmanian, Ozen, & Bédard, 2015). Educators have found that contemplative practices aid in strengthening their connection with students and encourage creative engagement with teaching and research (McDaniel, 2010). For faculty, participation in contemplative practices results in enhanced classroom climates, compassionate and non-reactive responsiveness to students’ needs, resilience in stress-induced situations, and increased emotional balance and overall wellbeing (Schoeberlein & Sheth, 2009).

**Statement of the Problem**
In a survey of undergraduate students conducted by the American College Health Association at 2- and 4-year colleges, about one-third of U.S. college students had difficulty functioning in the last 12 months due to depression, and almost half said they felt anxiety in the last year (American College Health Association, 2013). In 2014, 33.5% of college students surveyed reported that, in the last year, they felt so depressed that it was difficult to function. The feeling of being overwhelmed with academic, career related, financial, and social matters is also pertinent—40.7% of male students and 57.6% of female students responded “yes” to the statement, “I felt overwhelmed by all I had to do in the last 2 weeks” (American College Health Association, 2013, p. 13). The top factors that affect undergraduates’ academic performance are stress, anxiety, sleep difficulties, and depression (American College Health Association, 2014).

Additionally, the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (2015) reported that depression and social anxiety have risen slowly but consistently over the past five years. By the same token, the rate for serious suicidal ideation—a process when an individual is experiencing thoughts of killing herself (Psychology Dictionary, n.d.)—has increased substantially over the last five years from 23.8% to more than 32.9%, according to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health’s 2015 annual report.

In addition to college students facing social and emotional issues, scholars state that American colleges still rely on a materialist framework to educate their students. Such a paradigm is slowly becoming outdated because humans are not only intellectuals but also “spiritual, emotional, moral, and social beings” (Lin, Oxford, & Brantmeier, 2013, p. xii). A scholarly debate has arisen on whether American higher education institutions should continue to practice a materialistic mindset (Lamb, 2013, p. 186) by charging for knowledge or “should
higher education be about life?” (Brantmeier, 2013, p. 95). The latter would inspire students to look for meaning and purpose in their own existences.

Higher education is searching for goals that go beyond providing knowledge to the masses, such that it becomes a vehicle for social change. Thus far, it has been acting as a “knowledge factory,” continuously relying on the market place economy paradigm (Ergas, 2013, p. 213). While it is understood that generating knowledge is higher education’s main purpose, perhaps it is the time to realign its goals and focus on “building greater human beings, with multiple forms of wisdom” (Lin, Oxford, & Brantmeier, 2013, p. xi). In doing, it can act as a vehicle of change for individuals and society (Ergas, 2013). By way of reevaluating its goals, could higher education encourage faculty and students to pay more attention to their inner, rather than their outer, selves? (Lin, Oxford, & Brantmeier, 2013).

Contemplative pedagogy has emerged as a prescription to address student social and emotional issues, impacting the current market place approach on a larger scale. It is a nascent phenomenon in college teaching that offers “a wide range of education methods that support the development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior” (Zajonc, 2013, p. 83).

Contemplative practices are well studied in the areas of logistics, effectiveness, neurological perspectives, and best practices. The literature thus far has focused on understanding practice effectiveness (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Slagter et al., 2007; Dyrbye, Thomas, & Shanafelt, 2006), the need for such practices in higher education (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2007), and best practices of contemplative teaching (Kanagala & Rendón, 2013; Magee, 2013; DuFon & Christian, 2013; Rogers, 2013). The literature provides fewer insider perspectives from faculty who implement contemplative practices. Driscoll (2000) highlights this
the lack of inquiry into faculty experiences, motivations, needs, influences on contemplative practices, and any victories or obstacles associated with implementing them in the classroom. Examining faculty experiences is critical for creating a fair, yet nurturing, academic culture and an environment of inclusion and respect for faculty and students.

**Purpose of the Study**

How do faculty view contemplative practices? How do professors explain their impact? And how do students respond to these initiatives? Answers to those questions are largely absent in existing research. From policy perspective, this study adds value to the broader picture of contemplative practices in higher education by making faculty voices heard, such that they can dialogue with policymakers and stakeholders.

The goal of this study is to understand faculty perceptions of contemplative practices. Specifically, my main objective is to gain insight into the essential experience of employing contemplative practices in college teaching. The study is guided by one overarching research question and four sub-questions:

1. How do faculty members perceive contemplative practices in their teaching?
   a. How do faculty implement contemplative practices?
   b. How do faculty members come to utilize contemplative practices in their teaching?
   c. How do contemplative practices impact academic professional identity?
   d. How do faculty members describe the benefits of these practices for themselves and their students?

**Significance**
Contemplative practices have emerged in educational settings as a go-to prescription to catalyze learning, deepen student experience, and enhance academic and social performance (Hart, 2004). They promote skills for deep inquiry and introspection, explore meaning and purpose of the material, cultivate resilience, and develop awareness. Although this phenomenon is gaining momentum (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Hart, 2004; Roth, 2014), much is still to be explored. For example, there is no definite number of how many faculty members practice these techniques and at how many institutions. From my email correspondence with Dan Huston, Professor of English and Communication at New Hampshire Technical Institute, Concord Community College, and founder of *Communicating Mindfully* (a mindfulness and emotional intelligence training institute), I could discern that contemplative practices are being used at around 60 U.S. institutions (D. Huston, personal communication, June 1, 2016).

Literature explores contemplative practices and their logistics, benefits, best practices, and implications in the classroom, yet it does not provide an insider’s view of the phenomenon. The significance of this study is therefore focused on faculty experiences using contemplative practices, thus making a contribution to the *educating the whole person* pedagogy ( Hooks, 2014). While the importance of faculty in contemplative pedagogy is well documented, Driscoll (2000) indicates that there is a lack of inquiry into faculty experiences, motivations, needs, influences on contemplative practices, and any victories or obstacles associated with implementing them in the classroom. She notes that, “we lack the study of our own work” (Driscoll, 2000, p. 39) and should examine faculty experiences from multiple perspectives. Specifically, a faculty member’s understanding of contemplative practices plays an essential role in enabling that educator to address students’ emotional and social needs. By way of exploring diverse perspectives and
varied approaches, this study will lead to a sustaining dialogue about the role of faculty who employ these practices.

Today’s education values the rational model, where intellectual skills are taught separately from emotional, spiritual, and moral lessons (Bai, 2009; Culham, 2013). Tertiary education seems to be deprived of moral and spiritual facets, educating individualistic, disconnected members of society who value material context and seek competition rather than collaboration. In a philosophical examination, Lin (2013) outlines how such disassociation leads society into depression, anger, and confusion. Furthermore, in a national study of spirituality in higher education, Astin, Astin, & Lindholm (2007) determined that college students have very high levels of spiritual interest and involvement, such that many are engaged in a spiritual quest and actively exploring the meaning of life (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2007). Not only do students expect their institutions to prepare them for the workforce and graduate education, but they also have high expectations that “…college will help them develop emotionally and spiritually” (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2007, p. 2). Although this study does not seek to add more spirituality to students’ education, it will examine faculty perspectives on spiritual practices. Because contemplative faculty act as agents that transmit contemplative practices to their students, it is critical to examine how they perceive these practices.

This research also benefits faculty members and college administrators in various stages of their careers. Novice faculty members that are intrigued by contemplative practices but are not sure where and how to start could learn from their peers’ obstacles and breakthroughs. Seasoned professors could use the insight to add a new dimension to their teaching, which may serve as professional growth. Administrators could appropriate value by educating themselves about these practices and creating institutionalized professional development opportunities for faculty.
This study also reexamines the productive use of instructional time. In a period of increased stakeholder voice and educator accountability, faculty are mandated to use their instructional time as efficiently as possible, covering as much content as possible. Such a tendency requires teachers to emphasize performance goals and create competition by comparison instead of mastery. Educators align their teaching to the test, and that, in turn, manifests in considerable student anxiety (Paris, Lawton, Turner, & Roth, 1991). Contemplative practices show students that outstanding work and study ethics include both dedicating time to external demands and taking the time to look within to generate one’s own meaning.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 reviews literature related to the history of contemplative practices in higher education as well as conceptual foundations of these initiatives. Chapter 2 also explores empirical studies on contemplative practices and their impact on cognition and behavior, brain function, and stress and anxiety. A discussion of how these practices fit into current higher education, and what academic courses had been taught utilizing this pedagogy is used to set the study’s context. A discussion and essential elements of Professional Identity Theory is also provided. Chapter 3 focuses on the qualitative research design and methods used alongside Professional Identity Theory as a conceptual lens to frame the experiences of contemplative faculty. Chapter 4 reports the study’s findings. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of research findings, implications for practice, and concludes with recommendations for future research.
Chapter II – Related Literature

In this chapter, I explore related literature and theory, two activities that support a study’s purpose and serve as a justification for chosen methodology (Bean, 2006; Tuckman, 1999). The relevant literature and theory are divided into five sections. First, I introduce the concept of contemplative practices and explore its history in higher education. The aim of section one is to share information about contemplative practices, an essential component of this study on faculty’s experiences using these teaching strategies. In this section, I explore how such practices are positioned in higher education and provide concrete examples of contemplative practices in college classrooms. In section two, I examine the conceptual foundations of contemplative practices. Specifically, I introduce the conceptual framework, which consists of integrative education, social emotional learning theory, introspection, and satipathana mindfulness. In section three, I explore professional identity theory to understand faculty members’ roles as agents of change and the transformative process they go through to become contemplative educators. Section four is dedicated to empirical studies that examine contemplative practices in distinct contexts and their potential benefits for the human brain. To connect the chapter’s sections, I discuss related literature limitations and identify the gap that my study aims to fill.

Related literature and theory serve as analytical tools, identifying contemplative practices in higher education, their history and background, conceptual foundations, empirical studies, positioning, and concrete examples used in the classroom. Hence, the content of this chapter critically influences each stage of my study, is essential for the success of this research, and is necessary in reviewing the study’s findings, conclusions, and implications for practice.

History and Background of Contemplative Practices
The historical development of contemplative practices is extensive. Such practices were central to educational life in Ancient Greek and Asian wisdom traditions (Eppert, 2013). Greeks utilized various approaches to *inner work*, notably Socrates’ adage “know thyself.” Hadot and Davidson (1995) found that inner work in Ancient Greece resulted in individual transformation and provided “a natural vision of things, which places each event in the context of universal nature,” (p. 83) and “the reward of joy as a consequence of practicing virtue” (p. 207). Ancient Greeks primarily used oral history so their accounts are not well documented, yet “research, reading, meditation, therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things, self-mastery, indifference to indifferent things, and accomplishment of duties” were continuously present in education (p. 84).

Although a major component of contemplative practices—mindfulness—derives from Eastern traditions and Buddhist philosophy (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006), a variety of traditions gave way to contemplative practices. According to Miller (2014, p. 62), “the most powerful examples come from the contemplatives themselves.” Buddha encouraged right understanding, right awareness, and right concentration, while a Sufi poet, Rumi, focused on “the inner life as central to spiritual growth” (Miller, 2014, p. 67). Rumi promoted *great silence*, thus encouraging inner reflection: “no more words, hear only the voice within” (Kornfield, 1993, p. 129, as quoted in Miller, 2014, p. 69). Rumi also interpreted contemplative practices through music and dance (for example, twirling dervishes). Saint Teresa of Ávila lived in 16th century Spain. In her work, she spoke about seven stages of contemplation—starting with examining one’s interior life, settling down, transitioning from natural to supernatural, experiencing trials and tribulations, and, in a final stage, reaching life with Christ and limitless love (Teresa of Ávila, 1989).
Ralph Waldo Emerson, a 19th century American essayist and poet argued that, “nothing is sacred except the integrity of your own mind.” He believed in the power of contemplation and encouraged silence and solitude to release intuition (Moore, 2002). He ultimately led the Transcendentalist movement in mid-19th century where individuals were encouraged to “still small voice within” (Miller, 2014, p. 76). Another contemplative, Mahatma Gandhi, an Indian civil rights leader, gave complete attention to every detail of his daily routine. He used the mantra “Ram” as an anchor to focus his mind. He stated, “it brings me joy, closer to God” (p. 84).

Contemplative practices in higher education originate from the concept of integrative education. A wide variety of educational influences and perspectives are woven together to compose integrative education: it explores multiple perspectives when presenting a concept; it employs artistic expression, participatory inquiry, and empirical analysis—often interchangeably; it promotes knowledge of the self, culture, and nature; it links critical thinking with experiential learning; it has elements of developmental psychology. Integrative education also teaches students to become self-reflective learners by educating students in inner growth—like paying attention to body, mind, and spirit. Lastly, integrative education also focuses on different learning and teaching styles (Esbjörn-Hargens, Reams, & Gunnlaugson, 2010).

Although the world's religious traditions served as the source and inspiration for contemplation, religion, and theology, courses at universities provided a disciplinary base for exploring such practices. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, in collaboration with the American Council of Learned Societies, has been a leader in promoting the development of over 100 courses in 80 different U.S. institutions (The Center for Contemplative Mind, 2015). Additionally, organizations such as Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, and the
Contemplative Studies Initiative at Brown University contributed to the development and created a community of contemplative educators. For example, the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education was created in 1997 to position “higher education as an opportunity to cultivate deep personal and social awareness: an exploring of meaning, purpose, and values in service tour common human future” (The Center of Contemplative Mind, 2015).

The modern world itself explains much of the enthusiasm about contemplative practices. Breakthroughs in science, technology, and globalization fostered improved living standards and created wealth. However, such rapid development led to serious resource and environmental problems. These are turbulent times, characterized by debt, political instability, poverty, and violence. In addition, present day society is focused on technology, 24/7 connections, and needing to be available at any time of day or night. As a consequence, there is a deficiency in emotional connection and social awareness.

Today’s individuals seek media attention, and that manifests in struggling to maintain human connection. In 2013, Konrath, Chopik, Hsing, and O’Brien (2014) measured Millennial’s levels of empathy and found them to be 48% less empathetic than students in the same study 20 or 30 years earlier. There has been a 30% increase in narcissistic traits between Generation X and Millennials (Twenge & Campbell, 2009) and a decreased ability to “…identify with the experience of others” (Konrath, Chopik, Hsing, & O’Brien, 2014, p. 231). The newest generation of college students—generation Z—is characterized as less sociable than the Millennial generation. They are tech-savvy and significantly interactive online. Given their preference to work alone, off site, or in virtual groups, they often have difficulties with hierarchical structures in organizations (Geck, 2006). Generation Z is highly individualistic and lacks communication skills (Half, 2015).
Framework for 21st Century Learning promotes problem-solving, analytical, interpretive, reasoning, and critical thinking skills (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, n.d.) as well as social and collaborative skills. Contemplative pedagogy seeks to address human connection in current college students and is defined in the next section.

**Defining Contemplative Pedagogy**

Contemplative pedagogy provides a broad range of pedagogical tools that support the development of student focus, self-regulation, empathy, and emotional and social awareness (Zajonc, 2013). Often called pedagogy of vulnerability, it leads to “deep learning” (Brantmeier, 2013, p. 96) and often seeks answers to an essential question: Is the primary purpose of higher education about life or something else?

There is no single way to describe contemplative practices. A variety of practices exist, such as mindfulness-based education, relaxation response, repetition of sound/movement (mantra), neurofeedback (direct training of brain function), peace building versus anti-bullying and wellness versus disease programs, exercise and stress relieving movements, spiritual retreats, and deep listening.

Contemporary college education has prioritized teaching students as to “how to think” (Ergas, 2016, p. 99) because humans spend many hours in a state of mind wondering (Ergas, 2016). Such a state may be a predicament, especially, when students find themselves in an academic classroom where paying attention and being engaged are expected. Contemplation pedagogy allows for mind wandering and nurtures it. It promotes inner awareness through self-investigation and has proved to be effective in leadership development (Gunnlaugson & Moore, 2009). Scholars also note that contemplation includes “…meditation as well as spontaneous and
unstructured moments where we experience awareness” (Lai-Ling Lam, 2013) and represents "careful attention and quiet wonder" (Buchmann, 1989, p. 39).

In addition to the above characteristics, contemplative practices “cultivate deeper awareness into the nature of the mind, facilitate empathy and compassion, support wisdom, and the active realization of the inner connectivity of life and people. […] They all cultivate greater focus; some lead to insight, wisdom, and compassion” (Barbezat & Bush, 2013, p. 23). Some scholars refer to such practices as “inner work” that consists of “reflective practices conducted under the gaze of consciousness” (Cohen, 2009, p. 31), which foster a deeper understanding of self and life (Cohen, 2009; Culham, 2013). Observing one’s inner experience non-judgmentally while still being engaged with it, reflecting and staying focused on it, and applying methods that foster inner work can potentially lead to a personal transformation.

It is clear from the related literature that there is great variety among contemplative practices including: journaling, meditation, visualization, centering, tai chi, yoga, breathing exercises, visiting places of spiritual significance, and the contemplative reflection of one’s life purpose. Long-time practitioners and authors, Daniel Barbezat and Mirabai Bush (2013) add contemplative reading and writing, contemplative sensing: deep listening and beholding, contemplative movement, reflection activities, and compassion meditation (Barbezat & Bush, 2013). John Miller (2014) tells us about other ways to practice contemplation in the classroom: insight (vipassana) meditation, mindfulness, body scan, movement meditation, mantra, visualization, and loving kindness meditation. In their entirety, contemplative practices promote the examination of one’s inner state, slowing down, accepting ambiguity and imperfection, and being comfortable with pauses in our daily routine (Miller, 2014).
Mindfulness is one of the major facets of contemplative practices. In turn, mindfulness can further be categorized into: centering practices, guided mindfulness, mindful breathing, eating and walking, deeply listening to a piece of relaxing music, full body scan practice, creative visualization, mindful writing, sketch noting, and others. Mindful movement encompasses stretching, mindful walking, yoga, tai chi, qi gong, and others. Centering practices can be divided into breath work, repetition, creative visualization, and others. Reflection also has multiple forms: blogging, journaling, video blogging (or vlogging), creating a vision board or a mind map. Ultimately, contemplative practices are methods that allow time for students to reflect on how the material in their courses affects and challenges their own sense of meaning.

**Positioning of Contemplative Practices in Higher Education**

There are multiple approaches to incorporating contemplative practices into college classroom. For example, Rona Wilenski and Laura Weaver of PassageWorks Institute (2015) developed the Engaged Teaching Approach. This teaching method integrates academic learning with social emotional learning, cultural responsiveness, and mindfulness (Roots, 2014). Research supports this teaching method—integrating social and emotional learning with academic requirements helps students succeed academically and socially (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). A meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs revealed that SEL participants demonstrated an 11% gain in academic performance, in addition to improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Contemplative teaching also contains strategies to cultivate an intentional and reflective learning environment, and understanding and accepting the learning community (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).
Contemplative practices are slowly weaving themselves into the fabric of higher education and manifest in multiple ways. Colleges may have a center on their campuses; for example, Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA, Brown University's Contemplative Studies Initiative, and Emory Collaborative for Contemplative Studies. Or, colleges may incorporate contemplative approaches through a specific course that is a) dedicated to contemplative practices or b) teaches content unrelated to contemplative practices yet incorporates them into its curriculum. Additionally, faculty and students use contemplative practices by incorporating them into co-curricular activities and student organizations, libraries, gyms, and residence halls. After perusing The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society syllabus catalogue (2015), I found that students in various American universities have opportunities to experience contemplation by way of experiential learning: ELA 1559: Introduction to Mindfulness Practice, NUIP 2210: Foundations of Mindfulness Practice; and/or academic classes: RELH 2195: Theory and Practice of Yoga, PHIL 4500: Philosophy and Meditation, both from the University of Virginia; FYSE 119: “Happiness” Amherst College; SIS 315: “Contemplation and Political Change” American University (Syllabus Archives, 2015).

Specifically, I examined NUIP 3030 Mindfulness and Compassion: Living Fully Personally and Professionally taught by Dorothe Bach and Susan Bauer-Wu of University of Virginia. This course was designed to prepare students “…to live more fully, be a more engaged and compassionate citizen and professional, and navigate life’s stressors with greater clarity, peace of mind, and healthy behaviors” (Bach & Bauer-Wu, 2016). It was based on a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program that was modified specifically for college students who would like to gain a deeper understanding of the research on mindfulness and pro-social behaviors. Course requirements included blogging about regular in-class and out-of-class
secular contemplative practices that foster self-awareness, emotional regulation, mental stability, and mental qualities, like empathy, compassion, generosity, and gratitude. Students were also required to watch videos, read, and maintain a secular personal contemplative practice. At the end of this course, the class and the professor went on a daylong spiritual retreat.

Contemplative practices become even more significant when speaking about violence on university campuses. College-age adults (18-24) are at higher risk for rape or sexual violence, regardless of whether they are a university student or not (RAINN, 2016). Specifically, male university students (from 18 to 24) are 78% more likely than non-students of the same age to be a victim of sexual assault (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). Among undergraduate students, 23.1% of females and 5.4% of males experienced rape or sexual assault on a university campus through physical force and violence (RAINN, 2016). Moreover, a survey by the Association of American Universities (2015) discovered that more than 27% of female college seniors reported that they had experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact since entering college (Cantor et al., 2015).

Universities struggle to keep their students safe, and they take measures to address the issue. However, the present paradigm—relying on external sources to solve the problem and focusing on fear and problems rather than wellness—is failing (Yeagar & Howle, 2013). Contemplative scholars argue that universities need a new paradigm, based on wellness, reflection, contemplation, peace, and arts to raise awareness about violence issues that colleges face. Rather than employing external sources (speakers, presentations, and lectures), universities could use internal sources and have students look at their inner world via contemplative practices. Yeagar and Howle (2013) recommend teaching peace and wisdom by incorporating wellness programs on campuses directly into higher education curriculum.
For example, to raise awareness about violence on and off campus, Stanford University, Jacksonville State University, University of West Florida, and other colleges participate in the Clothesline Project. The Clothesline project is an opportunity to address the issue of violence against women through art. It is a tool for women who have experienced violence to express their emotions by decorating a t-shirt and hanging it on a clothesline to be viewed by others as a testimony to violence against women (Utah Valley University, 2016). Similarly, Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida, uses a holistic approach to raising awareness about violence against women. The College Brides Walk celebrates the legacy of Gladys Ricart who was shot by a jealous boyfriend moments before she was to be married. Barry University holds an annual College Brides Walk during which both female (wearing white dresses) and male students walk six miles to reflect on and raise awareness about domestic and dating violence (Barry University, 2016).

Another example of inner sources power comes from the University of Redlands. To help students deal with anxiety and stress, the university created a meditation room—the first in the history of higher education—for its students in 2007. The room has multiple aims: it is available to students for “private silence” (About, 2016), academic courses, and free, non-academic university community secular classes that teach Qigong, Zen Meditation, Deep Relaxation, T’ai Chi, Sufi Dance, Christian Contemplative Prayer, Walking Meditation, Feldenkrais, and Restorative Yoga classes (About, 2016).

This section of literature review shows that harnessing internal power of contemplation can be fruitful. Whether it’s encouraging students to use art to express themselves, holding reflective walks to celebrate one’s life, or creating a meditation room for student and community practice—these actions raise awareness about social and individual issues. I explore the
positioning of contemplative practices in context of higher education through practitioners’ contemplative case studies. Empirical studies that examine the effectiveness of contemplative practices may be found in the literature review section.

**Contemplative Faculty and their Courses**

Faculty who implement contemplative practices in their classrooms are often referred to as the *contemplatives*. They fall into a special category of non-traditional, daring, and risk-taking mavericks (Gunnlaugson, Sarath, Scott, & Bai, 2014). London (2013) examined these faculty in their settings and found that these teachers are scarce and isolated. They often identify themselves as “holistic educators in un-holistic environment” (London, 2013, p. 78). The first example of contemplative practices comes from a University of Southern Maine professor of economics: Vaishali Mamgain. She offers a course on neoclassical economics and happiness. Throughout the course, she asks her students to continuously reflect on the causes and conditions that make an individual happy; who are the people that experience happiness; and whether happiness and pleasure are the same thing (Palmer, Zajonc, & Scribner, 2010).

Dr. John Miller is a Professor with the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He teaches holistic education and spirituality in education. In his ‘The Contemplative Practitioner’ course, meditation plays an integral role. He argues that incorporating contemplation in higher education curriculum is entirely feasible. His course has been running since 2002 and, out of 2000 students who have enrolled in the course, only one refused to participate in meditation.

The University of Alberta political science professor David Kahane asks his students to dig deep into the moral issues around allocation of resources by asking students to examine their own choices: the cost of a latté is equal to rehydration therapy for five children. Dr. Kahane
seeks to connect textbook material with his students’ experiences and inner observations.

Similarly, Frank Maddox of Emory University uses a variety of non-traditional assignments to show students the realities of poverty and wealth, responsible goods production and consumption. For example, after introducing his students to standard economic theory, he gives them an assignment. They are asked to go to a store like Wal-Mart or McDonald’s and observe, without judgment, people’s expressions and action that will help them gauge the degree of consciousness shoppers give to what they are doing (Barbezat & Bush, 2013).

Humanities professors at the University of Virginia Dorothe Bach and John Alexander use reading and writing as a means to help students connect to their minds as objects of contemplation, experience alternative ways of being and relating, and consider how they make meaning from these experiences. Bach and Alexander (2015) subsequently analyzed student work and feedback from a 3000-level elective comparative literature course, ‘Spiritual Journeys in Young Adult Fiction.’ The results show that students cherish the opportunity to inquire into their habitual ways of relating to their academic work and to each other. They find a greater sense of choice, connectedness, and rediscover their love for reading and writing (Bach & Alexander, 2015). The professors framed in-class, face-to-face time as a contemplative and reflective space:

Instead of diving immediately into the material, we begin each class session with a centering activity to help students and ourselves become present to the topic of discussion and to each other. Such activities include guided meditation, reflective writing, visualizations, and brief sharing exercises (Bach & Alexander, 2015).

Dr. Veronika Bohac Clarke, of the University of Werklund School of Education in Alberta, Canada, teaches an online spirituality course. She states it is not different from teaching
Professor Geraldine DeLuca teaches contemplation in Brooklyn College. In her course ‘Literature and Contemplation’ she blends contemplative practices with reading and analyzing literature. She states “…great literature gives us a sense of questioning and wonder” (DeLuca, 2013, p. 199). Professor DeLuca harnesses the power of contemplation to guide her students along a path of deep reflection. She describes a variety of ways to think, speak, and write about literature from a contemplative perspective. Writing in a contemplative way includes journal writing, deeply listening to others describe their work (with no judging), writing to music, writing about the visual, and writing to cultivate “flow” (Brief-Elgin, 1999; Nakamura, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). During class, her students also ponder essential questions such as “Who we are, how do we grow, create, bear our losses and our pain, handle conflict, live with others, find love, raise our children, endure the reality of death, let go, find peace?” (DeLuca, 2013, p. 199). In addition to reading and reflecting upon poems, fairy tales, fables, novels, short stories, and textbooks on meditation, each class also includes ten minutes of seated meditation. Such meditation sessions consist of:

a. Basic meditation of focusing on one’s breath and using it as an anchor;
b. Sense meditations: focusing on one sense at a time;

c. Body scans: bringing attention to various body parts;

d. Insight meditation: using breath as an anchor but focusing on the mind. Students are asked to notice emotions, obsessions, physical sensations arising, and any streams of associations. Then they give those emotions a name: fear, panic, envy, boredom. DeLuca defines this strategy “travel through consciousness” and students become witnesses of their minds, observing without judging or trying to manipulate.

e. Loving-kindness or “metta” meditation: sending loving thoughts to yourself and others: family, friends, co-workers, strangers, and the whole world, eventually expanding to “all beings everywhere” (DeLuca, 2013, p. 200).

Research on Contemplative Practices

Conceptual Foundations of Contemplative Practices

Contemplative practices in higher education were created by way of blending integrative education, satipatthana (mindfulness) framework, introspection, and social emotional learning theory. However, simply examining the conceptual foundations of contemplative practices is not sufficient. My study will explore higher education faculty’s perspectives on utilizing contemplative practices in their classrooms by way of professional identity theory as a conceptual lens.

Integrative Education

Integrative education is often compared to integrative, or mind-body, medicine. The concept of mind-body medicine “uses the power of thoughts and emotions to influence physical health” (University of Maryland Medical Center, 2016) thus helping patients manage psychological and physical stressors. A less fragmented approach to education, integrative
education is oftentimes defined as alternative, holistic, transformative, and progressive. It is contrasted with the more mainstream, conventional, or traditional forms of education, which tend to focus on the acquisition of knowledge, development of cognitive skills, and individual achievement (Esbjörn-Hargens, Reams, & Gunnlaugson, 2010).

Several metaphysical philosophers informed integrative education: Rudolph Steiner, Alfred North Whitehead, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and Sri Aurobindo. Steiner believed in biological evolution but also in the evolution of spirit and, specifically for humans, an evolution of consciousness. In 1919, he created the *Waldorf Curriculum* that engages the body (movement, agility, strength, balance, coordination, training of the senses), the heart (emotional responses to story, music, drawing, and nature), the mind (language, science, mathematics, history), and the soul (aesthetics, nature, exemplary stories) (Steiner, 1919, as quoted in Marshak, 2015).

Alfred North Whitehead (1967) stated that “education with inert ideas is not only useless: it is, above all things, harmful” (Whitehead, 1967, as quoted in Polanowski, & Sherburne, 2004). He further argued that it should be interdisciplinary and filled with values and principles that help students make connections between fragmented areas of knowledge. In tune with integrative education, Whitehead argued that students should link essential knowledge to many different areas of their own lives thus organically applying them (Whitehead, 1967, as quoted in Polanowski, & Sherburne, 2004).

Jiddu Krishamurti, a thinker and a philosopher, wrote that humankind needs to examine its subconscious on a regular basis in order to find knowledge. He stated:

*Man cannot come to it through any organization, through any creed, through any dogma, priest or ritual, not through any philosophical knowledge or psychological technique. He*
has to find it […] through the understanding of the contents of his own mind, through observation and not through intellectual analysis (Krishnamurti, 1980, para.1).

His definitions that observation and reflection are the two most essential components of effective learning echo contemporary contemplative practices:

Education is not only learning from books, memorizing some facts, but also learning how to look, how to listen to what the books are saying, whether they are saying something true or false. […] Education is not just to pass examinations, take a degree and a job, get married and settle down, but also to be able to listen to the birds, to see the sky, to see the extraordinary beauty of a tree, and the shape of the hills, and to feel with them, to be really, directly in touch with them (Krishnamurti, 1980).

The philosopher and teacher Aurobindo (1872-1950), also known as Sri Aurobindo, argued that the primary purpose of education is to promote spiritual development and the development of conscience. According to him, the aim of education is multifold. First, it is expected to train all the senses like hearing, speaking, listening, touching, and smelling. Second, education is to achieve mental development by enhancing memory, thinking, reasoning, and imagination. Lastly, an important aim of education is the development of morality: “Heart of a child should be so developed as to show extreme love, sympathy and consideration for all living beings” (Singh, 2012 para. 4).

Integrative education is a set of methods that enable students to move past fragmentation and develop a sense of purpose in the world. It promotes educating the whole person by integrating the inner life and the outer life of the student, cultivating individual and global awareness, and being part of a compassionate community of learners. Often described as
“adventuresome, exploratory, and discovery-oriented form of learning” (Palmer, Zajonc, & Scribner, 2010), it reaches beyond typical academic benchmarks.

**Social Emotional Learning Theory**

By introducing the theory of Emotional Intelligence, psychologist Daniel Goleman reframed the concept of “smart” from a strict IQ-based model to one that includes an individual’s emotions. Social emotional learning theory (SEL) is closely related to emotional intelligence theory. SEL describes how young adults acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, become self- and socially aware. By way of SEL, young adults learn to show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2015). Adolescents face stressors every day: in and out of school, during high-stakes testing, and merely by undergoing psychological and physiological development. As such, skills that help children and adolescents manage negative emotions, be calm and focused, follow directions, and navigate relationships with peers and adults are especially critical. (Barnes, Treiber, & Davis, 2001; Beauchemin, Hutchins, & Patterson, 2008; Waters, Barsky, Ridd, & Allen, 2015). Contemplative practices promote just that—being a proactive, rather than reactive, human being, nurturing positive emotions while examining negative ones without judgment, and developing compassion toward yourself and others.

**Introspection**

A cognitive process of introspection is a critical part of contemplative practices. Etymologically, the term “introspection” comes from Latin *introspicere* "to look into, examine, observe attentively,” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016) and refers to an observation of one’s inner world and, on occasion, “a description of the contents of one’s own consciousness” (Overgaard, 2008, para.1).
American psychologist and philosopher William James (1824-1910) viewed introspection as one of the obvious methods of inquiry when studying one’s “mental states” (p. 183). He clearly outlined its importance in self-knowledge and self-awareness:

“Introspective Observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always (p.185, emphasis in original). The word introspection need hardly be defined - it means, of course, the looking into our own minds and reporting what we there discover. Everyone agrees that we there discover states of consciousness” (p. 185).

Contemplative practices such as mindfulness meditation, reflection, and journaling all incorporate James’ definition of introspection when one looks within the self to observe a current state of mind, with subsequent inquiry as to what has been discovered.

**Satipatthana Contemplation**

According to Ven. Anālayo (2003), a scholarly monk from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, Satipatthana is defined as a “direct path” to Nirvana in Buddhism. In more lay terms, Satipatthana is a set of centering practices that involve breath work, body posture observation, contemplation of feelings and mental processes, mindfulness meditation, and rejection of earthly desires. It promotes self-discipline and self-awareness, introspection, and acceptance.

His research is comparable with contemporary findings: “mindfulness […] can refer to contemplating feelings and thoughts.”, He describes mindfulness as an “aloof quality of uninvolved, detached observation” or a “detached observational vantage point,” which requires the meditator to “step back” and become an “unbiased observer of one’s subjective involvement and of the entire situation” (Anālayo, 2003, p. 58). He then states that contemplation fosters emotional composure, which nurtures non-reactive perception. Or they can take part in self-discipline by “overcoming sloth-and-torpor” Anālayo (2003, p. 42).
Anālayo (2003) also argues that contemplation cannot be separated from cognition. He calls it the “cooperation of mindfulness with clear knowledge,” which refers to “the need to combine mindful observation of phenomena with an intelligent processing of observed data. Thus “to clearly know” represents the “illuminating” or “awakening” aspect of contemplation. Understood in this way, clear knowledge has the task of processing input gathered by mindful observation, and thereby is conducive to “the arising of wisdom.” (Anālayo, 2003, p. 42).

Modern use of contemplative pedagogy echoes Anālayo’s arguments. For example, one of contemplative practice is the awareness meditation. Anālayo describes it as “contemplation of the mind- awareness of the arising and passing away of the states of mind being contemplated, thereby revealing the momentary character of all mental events” (Anālayo, 2003, p. 43). Additionally, he introduces the concept of “uninvolved receptivity,” (p. 175) where the goal of contemplation is to become receptively aware of one’s mental processes by recognizing and identifying particular thoughts without trying to modify them in any way. Modern contemplatives strive to use meditation to calm students’ emotions by recognizing and naming them. Comparatively, Anālayo (2003) speaks about “maintaining non-reactive awareness” in such a way that it prevents one from reacting on impulse by removing its “emotional and attentional pull” (Anālayo, 2003, p. 175). The foundations of contemplative practices are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Foundations of contemplative practices.
Professional Identity Theory

Ibarra (1999, p. 764) identifies professional identity as “the relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role.” Professional identity relays to others that the skills that an individual possesses are unique, skilled, or scarce (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). It should further be noted that educators identify themselves by what they do, a major dissimilarity from other professions that identify themselves by where they work - “…organizational membership is an indicator of where you work (i.e., an organization). Education professionals, by contrast, are often defined by what they do” (Pratt, Rockmann, and Kaufmann, 2006, p. 236).

Professional identity is not static but a dynamic concept that constantly changes throughout the life of a teacher (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004) and is created through retrospective reflection and introspection by means of sharing one’s stories (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). Professional identity is constructed by way of understanding one’s professional role, workplace culture, professional socialization process, and educating oneself by way of reflection and continuous learning (Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012). In a similar fashion, Bucher and Stelling (1977) summarize the “dimensions” of professional identity and their growth over time:
1. The nature of the field—its boundaries, problems, and methods;
2. A sense of mission—beliefs about the larger social values served by that field;
3. The conditions for doing the work of that field;
4. The relationships between people in the field and others with whom they interact, i.e. colleagues in other fields; and
5. The relationship of the field to professional organizations and institutions (Bucher and Stelling, 1977, p. 27).

In addition to these dimensions, other essential aspects contribute to the development of a faculty member’s professional identity, such as the connection between professional, personal and social identities, the role of the university and the department, and “intersection of professional identity between university and work” (Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012). De Weerdt, Bouwen, Corthouts, and Martens (2006) similarly state that professional identity formation involves looking at the “professional as a ‘whole person’ rather than just the hands or brain” (p. 324).

Professional socialization strongly underlies professional identity theory. The process of socialization relates to acquiring the skills and the knowledge of being a member of an organization or profession, in conjunction with adopting the values, norms, and culture of that profession (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001).

Smith and Hatmaker (2014) argue that oftentimes socialization manifests itself by way of mentoring, orientation sessions, training, and apprenticeships. However, members of organizations may show initiative in seeking out mentorships thus gaining organizational and moral support, tacit information, and feedback that may not be available through formalized organizational channels (Chao, 2007). Furthermore, socialization contributes to professional
identity formation by way of role models, mentors, opportunities for interaction with seasoned
members, as well as formal and on-the-job training that provides the skills, knowledge, abilities,
and credentials that define someone as a member of a profession (Smith & Hatmaker, 2014).

In higher education, a faculty member’s professional identity is formed through
institutionalized structures that are established by departments, colleges, or universities to
socialize faculty members as researchers, teachers, and service leaders (Smith & Hatmaker,
2014). Academic professional identity also relates to teaching and research activities that are
discipline based (Deem, 2006, p. 204) and, generally, higher education faculty operate among
research, curriculum development, or teaching team members (Clarke, Hyde, & Drennan, 2013).

It is worth noting that academic professional identity may change in accordance with the
type of institution. For example, community college faculty form a different professional identity
because they primarily work at institutions that hold student-focused values. In a community
college setting, the absence of expectations to publish and a primary focus on teaching
contributes to an identity that differs from that of research institution faculty. Moreover, focus on
scholarship at a community college may be associated with neglect of students, because heavy
teaching loads limit time for publishing beyond teaching (Palmer, 2015). Conversely, four-year
research institutions may require that their faculty divide their time equally among empirical
scholarship, teaching, and service to the institution and the community.

Lastly, Burden’s Theory of Teacher Development (1979) supports professional identity
theory. Burden (1979) determined that the confidence and willingness to try new teaching
methods complements the identity of seasoned educators. Specifically, experienced teachers are
“willing to continually experiment” (Burden, 1979, p. 270) with new methods of instruction and
have confidence to feel “free to try new things” (Burden, 1979, p. 123). Presently, contemplative
practices are unconventional initiatives and a trend in education that not every educator is willing to try. Consequently, a question arises: Does it take a certain type of individual to become a contemplative educator?

In summary, professional identity theory looks at values, beliefs, norms, and relationships an individual creates when joining the ranks of a profession. This theory supports socialization into a profession by way of institutional mechanisms and personal proactivity of its members. It ultimately questions how one becomes the professional they are today, and what factors—both internal and external—influence the transformation. Professional identity theory will serve as a conceptual and interpretive lens to support my study.

**Empirical Studies on Contemplative Practices**

In his 1994 book *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*, Antonio Damasio, a neuroscientist and a professor of psychology and philosophy at the University of Southern California, determined that “the feelings are a powerful influence on reason; the brain systems required by the former are enmeshed in those needed by the latter; and that such specific systems are interwoven with those that regulate the body” (p. 245). In his later book, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, sorrow, and the feeling brain*, Damasio (2003) determined that feelings, body, emotions, and the mind are “disparate manifestations of single and seamlessly interwoven human organism” (Damasio, 2003, p. 7).

Evidence of contemplative implementation exists mainly as course syllabi, and opinion and best practices articles (Brantmeier, 2013; DeLuca, 2013; Ergas, 2016; Hart, 2004; Kanagala & Rendón, 2013). Similarly, research that investigates the need of such practices in higher education is limited to Astin, Astin and Lindholm’s (2007) national study of spirituality in college students. In essence, college students have very high levels of spiritual interest and
involvement. Many are engaged in a spiritual quest and actively explore the meaning of life (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2007). Moreover, not only do students expect their institutions to prepare them for work force and graduate education, but they also have high expectations that “…college will help them develop emotionally and spiritually” (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2007, p. 2).

I found a multitude of empirical studies that assess the effectiveness and the impact of mind-body connection in education. All the studies employ different methodologies, ranging from experiments with pre- and post-measures to informal phenomenological case studies; and all examine different facets of contemplative practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and visualization. Empirical studies report on four major effects of contemplative practices:

1. Cognition and behavior;
2. Brain function;
3. Stress and anxiety, and

The review of the literature confirms that scholarly research on faculty perspectives—how faculty view contemplative practices, how professors explain the impact, and in what ways students respond to these initiatives—is scarce. By focusing on higher education faculty understandings of contemplative practices, I designed this study to fill this void.

**Cognition and Behavior**

Literature explicitly shows that implementing contemplative pedagogy in the classroom brings tremendous benefits to students: it increases focus and creativity, fosters pro-social behaviors, promotes patience, generosity, and attention, and deepens the understanding of course material (Barbezat & Bush, 2013, p. 23). In a multi-year experiment, Clifford Saron, Katherine
MacLean, and colleagues at the University of California, Davis, studied the impact of meditation on cognition and behavior by observing participants in a meditation retreat setting. The sample consisted of 86 participants between 21 and 70 years of age who met the following criteria: (a) willing to be assigned to a meditation retreat, (b) be seasoned meditation practitioners (at least three, five-day retreats), and (c) be willing to abstain from drugs and alcohol three months before and during the study. In addition, all participants were responsible for their own room and board during the retreat (~$5,300) but were paid $20 per hour during data collection. Participants meditated about five hours each day for three consecutive months, and the research team took pre- and post-measures from two randomly assigned groups. Saron, MacLean, and their colleagues demonstrated that intensive meditation training increased attention and introspection. Their findings indicated meditation training may have a strong impact on the mind’s attentional efficiency (MacLean et al., 2010).

Another experiment conducted by Helen Slagter and peers in 2007 demonstrated that training in vipassana meditation enhances one's ability to allocate attention efficiently in order to detect visual targets more accurately. Their sample contained 17 participants over a three-month meditation retreat during which they meditated for 10-to-12 hours per day and were labeled as the “practitioner group.” The comparison group consisted of 23 participants who were interested in learning about meditation. They were labeled the “novice group” and received a one-hour meditation class every week for 3 months. Additionally, the comparison group was asked to meditate for 20 minutes daily for one week prior to each session. In each session, two images were embedded in a rapid stream of images and presented in close proximity; the second image was often not seen. This is believed to occur due to competition between the two images for limited attentional resources in the mind. Those who participated in a three-month insight
meditation retreat could recall the second image with less effort and time. Therefore, the findings of this study demonstrate that mental training results in increased control over the distribution of limited brain resources (Slagter et al., 2007).

Pagis (2015) found that vipassanā meditation fosters social equanimity. She conducted a two-year, cross-cultural, ethnographic, participant-observation of vipassanā meditation practitioners. Participants in meditation retreats in Israel and United States learned how to be with others while not directly attending to them. Being together and practicing vipassanā meditation fostered the emergence of silent social attunement that, in turn, facilitated composure and tranquility. As a result, participants purposefully cultivated equanimity with and for others (Pagis, 2015).

A longitudinal study by Hölzel and peers completed in 2011 showed the impact of meditation practice by comparing pre- and post-meditation brain scans. They used anatomical magnetic resonance (MR) images from 16 healthy, non-meditation participants that were obtained before and after they underwent an eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. The findings showed an increase in grey matter in the left hippocampus, a brain area responsible for learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, and perspective taking (Hölzel, et al., 2011).

**Brain Function**

Other studies have found that mental training improves concentration and brain function. Extensive mindfulness meditation has been linked to a reduction of the fraction of errors for responses with the same reaction time (van den Hurk, Giommi, Gielen, Speckens, & Barendregt, 2010) thus demonstrating better adaptability and executive attention. In a similar fashion, Alvaro Pascual-Leone and colleagues in a study on the effects of mental visualization, proved that
participants who practiced daily physical exercises had similar gains in their ability to perform piano exercises as subjects who only visualized these exercises with no physical activity (Pascual-Leone, Amedi, Fregni, & Merabet, 2005).

Long-term meditators also have structural differences in regions of the brain that are responsible for cardiorespiratory control (Vestergaard-Poulsen, van Beek, Skewes, Bjarkam, Stubberup, Bertelsen, & Roepstorff, 2009) and larger gray matter volumes than non-meditators in brain areas that are involved with emotional regulation and response control (Luders, Toga, Lepore, & Gaser, 2009). A 2015 study by Luders and peers (Luders, Cherbuin, Kurth, & Lauche, 2015) found that long-term meditation leads to less age-related gray matter atrophy. Each group in this study consisted of 28 men and 22 women ranging in age from 24 to 77. On average, participants who meditated had 20 years experience doing so. Brain scans of meditators and non-meditators demonstrated that areas of the brain affected by aging were fewer and less widespread in people who meditate than in people who don’t (Luders, Cherbuin, Kurth, & Lauche, 2015).

Meditation also changes the physiological state of one’s brain. Sara Lazar, a neuroscientist at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, found that meditation practice might be associated with changes in the brain’s physical structure. Twenty seasoned Western meditation practitioners who meditated for an average of 40 minutes per day served as the study’s participants. Although two participants were a meditation teacher and a yoga teacher, the rest of the sample pursued traditional careers. Lazar and her team recruited participants from local meditation communities (Lazar, et al., 2005). Using MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), researchers assessed cortical thickness. Their findings revealed that brain regions associated with attention, interoception (sensitivity to stimuli originating inside of the
body), and sensory processing were thicker in meditation group than participants in a control group.

**Stress and Anxiety**

Literature shows that rates of stress and anxiety among young adults are significant (Dyrbye, Thomas, & Shanafelt, 2006), and contemplative practices have a robust impact on student wellbeing. Shapiro, Brown, and Biegel (2007) matched a treatment group of graduate counseling psychology students taking a 10-week meditation course with a control group enrolled in other courses. Those participants who were exposed to the meditation training showed significant pre- and post- decreases in stress and anxiety while demonstrating significant increases in positive emotions (Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007).

A 2016 study by Creswell and peers investigated the effects of mindfulness meditation on stressed, job-seeking, unemployed adults (n = 35). Participants were randomized to either receive a three-day intensive residential mindfulness meditation or a relaxation training. At the end of three days, follow-up brain scans showed differences in those who practiced mindfulness meditation; specifically, there was more communication among the portions of the brains that process stress-related reactions and other areas related to focus and calm. After four months, those who had practiced mindfulness showed much lower levels of inflammation in their blood than the relaxation group, even though few were still meditating (Creswell et al., 2016).

**Compassion and Self-regulation**

Contemplative practices also promote compassion and social connection among students as they focus on developing and deepening their awareness of how to relate to others. For example, John Helliwell has shown that as social capital, giving, and overall social connection increase, it creates and sustains one’s wellbeing (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Similarly, a 2007
study by Antione Lutz and his colleagues explored the effects of compassion meditation on brain centers that regulate emotions. They found that compassion meditation activated brain regions responsible for monitoring one’s feeling state and positive emotions thus demonstrating that emotional processes are flexible skills that can be learned and expanded upon (Lutz, Dunne, & Davidson, 2007, p. 543) thus providing a connected and compassionate response to others.

In the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR), practitioners work to recognize habitual, unhelpful reactions to difficulty and learn to bring an accepting attitude to all experiences, including difficult sensations, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (Mindfulness-Based, 2014). In other words, participants learn to develop enhanced, non-judgmental awareness of moment-to-moment experiences of their mental processes. While exploring the benefits of MBSR, Kathryn Birnie and her peers demonstrated that MSBR participants “had a greater ability to adopt and others’ perspectives, experienced reduced distress […] and were increasingly spiritual and compassionate toward themselves” (Birnie, Speca, & Carlson, 2010). Similarly, Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, and Walach (2004) determined that an MBSR approach improves vitality and may help a broad range of individuals cope with their clinical and nonclinical problems. After examining the effects of an MBSR program on the sleep quality of a heterogeneous sample of 63 participants with cancer diagnosis, Carlson and Garland (2005) observed overall sleep disturbance significantly decreasing, as well as a significant reduction in stress, mood regulation, and fatigue.

Mindfulness practices also contribute to emotion regulation and enhance self-regulatory capacity in graduate students. A 2015 study by Short, Mazmanian, Ozen, and Bédard observed a sample of eight psychology graduate students (seven female) while they participated in four consecutive days of mindfulness training. At the end, students significantly improved in
mindfulness and self-regulation skills. Specifically, researchers observed large increases in awareness and non-reactivity to inner experiences, with significant effects in self-regulation and self-reinforcement (Short, Mazmanian, Ozen, & Bédard, 2015).

The second longitudinal study in this chapter examined the impact of meditation practice on the connections between brain areas using Diffusion Tensor Imaging (DTI). After four weeks of meditation, changes in white matter (responsible for connecting brain areas) were found in participants who meditated but not in the controls who did not. These changes impacted a part of the brain that contributes to self-regulation (Tang, Lu, Fan, Yang, & Posner, 2012).

Summary

Contemplative practices in higher education are based on ideas of connectedness, inclusion, self-awareness, and self-examination. Such practices value interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and regard learning processes just as important as learning outcomes.

Section one is set up to define contemplative practices, their types and essential elements, position them in the context of higher education, and explore empirical research within this movement. In the second section, I examine a blend of four concepts that facilitated the birth of contemplative practices. Section three is dedicated to professional identity theory—a tool that creates the study’s conceptual lens. In a subsequent section, I investigate empirical studies that examined contemplative practices in distinct contexts and via various methods. Such studies outline tremendous benefits for practitioners: A contemplative approach to life decelerates aging, increases attentional ability, enhances learning and memory, and reduces anxiety.

Contemplative practices enhance students’ inner worlds by allowing them to see nontraditional perspectives and promoting spiritual (but not religious) growth. Through these initiatives, students become more caring, more tolerant, more connected with others, and more
involved in self-discovery. In fact, seeking answers about themselves and the world supports student outcomes, such as “…academic performance, psychological wellbeing, leadership development, and satisfaction with college” (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2007).

Before moving on to the research design chapter, I want to return to the research question (and four sub-questions) I presented at the start of this chapter:

1. How do faculty members perceive contemplative practices in their teaching?
   a. How do faculty implement contemplative practices?
   b. How do faculty members come to utilize contemplative practices in their teaching?
   c. How do contemplative practices impact academic professional identity?
   d. How do faculty members describe the benefits of these practices for themselves and their students?

The overarching research question serves as a guide to determine the appropriate conceptual framework for this study. By applying contemplative practices framework, such as introspection, social emotional learning, satipatthana mindfulness, and integrative education theory, one could explain the nature and essence of contemplative practices and their effects on student outcomes. Yet, these theories alone would not explain the process of transformation that higher education faculty go through to become contemplative educators.

Contemplative practice theories focus on characteristics and benefits. Nonetheless, they fail to mention the role of an agent—a person who implements them. This study, therefore, uses professional identity theory to understand higher education faculty perspectives on contemplative practices in college teaching. Specifically, what is needed is a framework that considers both contemplative practices and the agents (in this case, higher education faculty) that implement
such practices. Using professional identity as an interpretive lens provides the missing link. In this study, I use this theory to explicate whether contemplative practices play a role in shaping higher education faculty personal character and professional development. In addition, using professional identity theory will help me illustrate how contemplative faculty members acquire and develop knowledge about contemplative practices. In other words, how they understand the meaning and value of such practices for themselves and their students because one’s beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning are linked to interpretation of information (Schommer-Aikins & Hutter, 2002).

Professional identity theory illustrates the transformative process that contemplative faculty members may go through in their teaching. I use professional identity theory to understand what it takes to become a contemplative educator and whether being one impacts one’s identity as an educator. Such theory clearly may not explain the complete process of becoming a contemplative educator, but it may help identify another important variables, like whether a contemplative educator identity, years of experience, and institutional socialization intervenes with the journey to become a contemplative educator.

I garnered faculty insider perspectives through narratives in which they communicated their views on a contemplative classroom. Adopting professional identity theory as a lens for analyzing the narratives revealed the transformative activities that guided faculty in their journeys as contemplative educators. This theoretical framework provided dimensions of professional identity and raised the following questions: Do faculty members create formal and informal developmental relationships? Do they take initiative to connect with more seasoned contemplative faculty? What are their levels of proactivity and motivation? As such, professional
identity theory facilitated a more concrete vision of what universities and departments do or don’t do to effectively foster the professional identity development of contemplative faculty.

Through this review of the literature, theories, and empirical studies, contemplative practices in higher education are defined, contextualized, and conceptualized. Related literature serves as a systematic tool to support emerging themes in analyzing the experiences of the faculty in this narrative study. In conjunction with the conceptual framework, the analysis of literature establishes the research design, contextualizes the findings, and aids in data interpretation.

By joining the ranks of contemplative educators, an individual starts to develop knowledge, skills, and values that are identical to those that other contemplatives practice. In contrast, one may become significantly different from those who are not part of the contemplative movement. Presently, contemplative practices are unconventional initiatives: a trend in education that not every educator is willing to try.

Presently, related literature contains multiple studies on the impact and effectiveness of contemplative practices in higher education settings. While there is some research that uses informal phenomenological and ethnographic research designs, there is a significant prevalence in experiments with pre- and post-measures. I used a narrative research design to address this methodological deficit. The review of the literature also confirmed that scholarly research on faculty perspectives—how faculty view contemplative practices, how they explain their impact, and the ways in which students respond to these initiatives—is limited. By pursuing higher education faculty understandings of contemplative practices, this study was designed to fill this gap.
Chapter III – Methodology

Research Design

All research is based on some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes “valid” research and which research method(s) is/are most appropriate for the development of knowledge. In order to conduct and evaluate any research, it is therefore important to know what these assumptions are. This chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions and the design strategies that underpin this research study. I review and present common philosophical assumptions and identify the interpretive and postmodern paradigms as research frameworks. In addition, this chapter discusses the research methodologies and design used in the study including strategies and instruments for data collection and analysis, as well as explaining the stages and processes involved in the study.

Related literature contains multiple studies on the impact and effectiveness of contemplative practices in higher education settings. While there is some research that uses informal phenomenological and ethnographic research design, most empirical work in this area uses experiments with pre- and post-measures. In part, that aided my decision to conduct a narrative study to fill this methodological gap.

This study identifies how higher education faculty view contemplative practices in their teaching, their implementation, and their benefits. The study also inquires about the journey faculty members undertake to become contemplative practitioners. It explores obstacles that faculty face when implementing contemplative practices in the college classroom, how they respond to such obstacles, and whether contemplative practices impact individuals’ academic professional identity.

The organization of this chapter parallels the broad principles of qualitative inquiry. I
include detailed information on researcher paradigm, researcher bias, design of the study, sampling procedure, study participants, data collection, analysis, and reporting plan. In the last two sections of this chapter, I discuss reliability and validity of my study, acknowledging possible limitations of this method. This chapter initially brings attention to the qualitative approach of inquiry, paired with elements of detailed procedures and a discussion of researcher bias.

In its entirety, Chapter 3 describes the methods and paradigms that ground this study. I took inspiration from post-modern and interpretive approaches (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lather, 1988; Neuman, 1991). These two approaches accommodated the interpretation of faculty’s personal accounts in order to represent their stories and construct broader narratives. I explored not only the private stories of individual faculty members but also tapped into collective interpretations of these narratives.

**Researcher Paradigm**

Researchers use philosophical and methodological paradigms in order to see how their worldviews may shape their research. Neuman (1991, p. 57) describes a research paradigm as “a framework or a set of assumptions that explain how the world is perceived where the paradigm of a science includes its basic assumptions, the important questions to be answered or puzzles to be solved, the research techniques to be used, and examples of what scientific research looks like.” Each paradigm carries four major components:

1. **Epistemology:** the view on how knowledge is constructed (researcher as an active participant or a neutral observer?)
2. **Axiology:** the role of values and ethics in research and the researcher’s stance on his/her values
3. **Methodology:** the model behind the research process to answer the research questions
4. **Ontology:** the position on the nature of reality (i.e., one reality or multiple realities?) (Neuman, 2011).
Scholarly literature emphasizes that it is imperative to examine the research paradigm because it significantly affects how the researcher approaches her study in terms of reference, worldview, and perception of social reality (Berry and Otley, 2004; Creswell, 2009; Neuman, 2011). As Riessman (1993) explains, narrative researchers examine culture and society through individual stories. Subsequently, personal stories become “a community of life stories” (p. 4). Narrative researchers perceive language to be “deeply constitutive of reality” (p. 5) and not a “transparent medium, unambiguously reflecting stable, singular meanings” (p. 2). Riessman (1993) further states that narrative research methodology is grounded in the personal experiences of research participants (Reissemann, 1993). Thus, by using narrative research, I gathered stories from multiple contemplative educators and assembled them through my own lens. When conducting this narrative study, I clearly defined my role as researcher, analyzing these stories not only as individual data sources but also as a whole.

According to Creswell (1998) “qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions on inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports details of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). By way of examining the experiences of higher education faculty, this study discovered and documented common features of faculty who were more likely to engage in contemplative practices in the college classroom. My objective was to explore both the societal and individualistic realms of contemplative practices in higher education. Through qualitative methodology, I gleaned insider perspectives of what it takes to become a contemplative educator and whether doing so impacts one’s professional identity. Through their narratives, faculty communicated their views on a contemplative classroom, their perspectives on how they create formal and informal
developmental relationships, how they acquire and develop knowledge about contemplative practices, and how they understand the meaning and value of such practices for themselves and for their students. A narrative research design allowed me to focus on individual professors and their stories, thus making this methodology most preferable and appropriate.

By its nature, qualitative approach is inductive. Hart (2002) argues that narrative methods “are always exploratory, conversational, tentative, and indeterminate” (p. 141). They do not lead to the ultimate truth but instead offer “a measure of coherence and continuity to experience” (p. 156). He further explains that narrative researchers are not “scientists seeking laws that govern our behavior,” but can be identified as “storytellers seeking meanings that may help us to cope with our circumstances” (p. 155). During this study, I developed a research environment that was ethical and trusting (Terrel, 2016) by building rapport with the participants, positioning them as experts, and using timely follow-up questions and prompts. I then worked within that environment to interpret and construct meaning. Through collecting and analyzing faculty stories, I gathered narratives that allowed me to interpret particular aspects of being a contemplative educator (Gill, 1991; Harries, 1979). This study intended to tell a rich yet ethical story, true to data collected and respectful of all participants (Richardson, 1994; Hart, 2002).

In its entirety, a narrative research design encompasses the following constructs: It is socially constructed, subjective, and examines social phenomena. Its focus is on the details of the situation, the reality behind these situations, and subjective meanings and motivations behind the meanings. The researcher is an integral part of the research and cannot be separated (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). As such, I interpreted the larger meaning of participants’ aggregate experiences through my own lens. However, my analysis was guided by individuals’ interpretations of their experiences and prior research. Participants’ voices and stories were told through my own voice
because all experience is open to interpretation (Duffee & Aikenhead, 1992; Scott, 1991). Quotes that illustrated emergent themes were continuously used to support the findings.

In addition to faculty perspectives, I used narrative design to understand the context in which contemplative practices took place and how faculty explained the influence of such initiatives on their academic identities. In other words, narrative methodology aided me in accurately reporting participants’ views and creating “a complex, holistic picture” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15) of faculty perceptions on contemplative practices in higher education.

**Interpretivist Paradigm**

Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 296) state that an interpretivist approach depends upon both the participant’s view and the researcher’s view of reality, so that the researcher can “find meaning in an action, or to say one understands what a particular action means, requiring that one interprets in a particular way what the actions are doing.”

Ontologically speaking, interpretivists believe that reality is socially constructed through participants’ subjective experiences. They also argue that there is no *one* reality but multiple and that they can change. From the epistemological point, interpretivists believe that knowledge is constructed through subjective meanings and social phenomena. Meanings emerge from the details of situation, the reality behind these details, subjective meanings, and related actions. Interpretive paradigm also values the internal elements of a situation. The role of the researcher is that he/she is an integral part of the research process and cannot be separated, which produces subjective meanings (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Yet, these meanings are grounded in participants’ narratives and experiences.

In my study, findings were reached as this investigation proceeded. That is, findings emerged through dialogue in which conflicting interpretations were negotiated among the
participants (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). According to Willis, Jost, and Nilakanta, (2007) interpretivists believe there is no single correct route or particular method to knowledge. Similarly, Walsham (1995) argues that in the interpretive tradition there are no “correct” or “incorrect” theories. Instead, they should be judged in accordance with how “interesting” they are to the researcher and others in the field. Interpretivist researchers attempt to derive constructs from the field through an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of interest. Gephart (2004) argues that interpretivists assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation because there is no objective knowledge that can be separated from human thinking processes. According to the interpretivist paradigm, access to reality can be gained only through social media such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings (Myers, 2009).

The interpretive paradigm is based on observation and interpretation; to observe is to collect information about events, while to interpret is to make meaning of that information by drawing inferences or by judging the match between the information and an abstract pattern (Duffee & Aikenhead, 1992). In other words, the interpretive paradigm attempts to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them. This perspective values pragmatism and morality while fostering an open and ethical dialogue between researchers and respondents. It believes that our understanding of the social world is created through such dialogues. These collaborative conversations between researcher and participant construct meanings that subsequently emerge from the research process (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Additionally, all interpretations are based in a particular context, situation, and/or time. Meanings are open to re-interpretation and negotiation through discourse process, and interpretivists rely heavily on naturalistic methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis.
Post-modernism

Post-modernism is a form of scholarship, which emerged through the work of French intellectuals, such as Lyotard, Derrida, and Foucault (Gephart, 1999). It challenges the assumptions of modern culture, especially socially constructed hierarchical assertions (Bloland, 1995). Post-modernist researchers believe that the world is created through discourse. This paradigm submits, “to understand the world we have to understand the discourse we operate within” (Bloland, 1995). According to Gephart (1999), the goal of post-modernism is social transformation to challenge existing power structures by opening opportunities for critical discourse among people that were previously excluded (Gephart, 1999). The main objective of the post-modern paradigm is to unpack social discourse to reveal hidden structures and then produce innovative, more inclusive social constructs (Boje, 2001). Postmodernism recognizes excluded groups and attempts to compare their reality to that of others (Bloland, 1995).

Post-modernism openly challenges the assumptions of modern (in particular, hierarchical) thought and serves as an alternative tool to understand the world (Bloland, 1995). In contrast to positivism, which postulates the existence of a single reality and truth, post-modernism assumes that any one individual or group’s construction of reality is a reflection of their lived environments (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Post-modernism assumes that knowledge is created within a natural setting and accounts for multiple perspectives within that environment (Creswell, 1998).

My study is positioned in the context of higher education. American tertiary education still relies on a scientific framework when educating students, such that it upholds modern values. The post-modern lens, however, is useful when studying higher education’s objectives, significance in society, symbolism, and deeply embedded hierarchies (Bloland, 1995).
In my study, post-modernism will complement interpretivism. Post-modernism is committed to discourse analysis (Gephart, 1999), thus making it well suited for analyzing participants’ stories, how they tell them, and why they chose particular linguistic structures. In addition, contemplative faculty tend to go beyond traditional pedagogy, which is complementary to the post-modern approach, which challenges the values and aims of higher education. Contemplative faculty are a rare breed (Brantmeier, 2013), who incorporate non-traditional techniques in the classroom such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness. For these faculty, being part of the faculty cadre at a university was a different experience from that of their “traditional route” colleagues. The ideological, societal, and perceptual differences did not undervalue their experiences, but instead placed “the emphasis upon the other, the marginal, the outsider, in postmodern thought needs to be kept in the foreground in higher education” (Bloland, 1995, p. 552). Through a post-modern lens, I wanted to give these faculty a voice by bringing their perspectives to a community of scholars.

In this study, narrative methodology, interpretivism, and post-modernism were intertwined. I drew on the prior research literature to understand my findings as they emerged. In conjunction with prior research, the three paradigms enhanced the study from both methodological and theoretical perspectives, with each approach contributing to the study its own unique features.

**Sampling Procedure**

I used purposeful sampling in this study. Patton (2002) identifies purposeful sampling as the process of selecting the most information-rich cases for the most effective use of a researcher’s time and resources (Patton, 2002). I selected 19 participants by posting a research recruitment letter on the forum administered and maintained by the Contemplative Mind in
Society, a professional network and research organization for contemplative practices in higher education. The recruitment announcement contained a brief study description, research questions, and inclusion criteria for participation.

I sought faculty that have already established contemplative practice(s) in their classrooms. For the purposes of this study, and to be considered as a participant, individuals were required to have at least one year of experience with implementing contemplative practices in their classrooms, whether they be a higher education faculty member, full or part time, tenured, tenure-track, or contingent, serving in four-year degree granting colleges in the United States. When participants responded to the announcement, they took a brief qualifying questionnaire that sought information on their demographics, years of teaching experience, discipline, institutional support, and self-reports of their level of experience with contemplative practices.

The subjects they teach can easily identify contemplative faculty. And although all participants were assigned a pseudonym, their specific discipline was also left undisclosed. In order to protect participants’ identities, their disciplines were categorized into two broad categories: social sciences and the humanities. Nine participants taught in the former and seven taught in the latter. No hard sciences faculty responded to the recruitment announcement.

At the time of this research, all participants were in different stages of their journeys with implementing contemplative teaching. Contemplative practices in higher education are new, and there are no studies that address how long it takes to become an experienced practitioner. Therefore, the research on teacher life cycles was used to determine the length of experience one needs to have to be considered a seasoned practitioner (Woodward, 2010).

According to Woodward (2010), professional cycles of K-12 teachers start with a novice stage, which is characterized by being overwhelmed (1-3 years). Then educators become stable
and committed to the profession (4-6 years), experiment with pedagogy and become activists (7-18 years). Eventually, they reach the serenity and authority stage (19-30 years). After over 30 years in education, teachers often become disengaged from their profession (Woodward, 2010). Informed by Woodward’s framework, participants were classified into three groups in terms of their years of experience with contemplative pedagogy: novice (1-5 years), experienced (6-14 years), and seasoned (>15 years).

The qualifying in-take questionnaire that participants completed provided this experiential information. Participants were also asked to self-identify their level of comfort with contemplative practices and choose from three options: novice, developing, and experienced. The majority of faculty (n=15) self-identified as experienced practitioners of contemplative practices in higher education, whereas four stated that their level of experience with contemplative practices is developing. Woodward’s framework on teacher life cycles was used to compare the existent level of experience with contemplative practices with the self-identified levels. In its entirety, the self-identified level of experience was consistent with Woodward. Only four out of 19 participants self-identified as experienced contemplative educators, yet based on their years of experience, they fell into a novice category.

Table 1
Participant profiles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Self-identified level of experience</th>
<th>Level of experience based on Woodward’s framework</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Keenan</td>
<td>Experienced</td>
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<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Cohen</td>
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<td>Experienced</td>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Kerr</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn Mark</td>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Stein</td>
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<td>Experienced</td>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Farley</td>
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<td>Social sciences</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Harris</td>
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<td>Seasoned</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Cox</td>
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<td>Novice</td>
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<td>Anna Price</td>
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<td>Experienced</td>
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<td>Trina Davidson</td>
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<td>Todd Steinberg</td>
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<td>Benjamin Davis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kim Banasik</td>
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<td>Tabitha Hill</td>
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<td>Kate Fisher</td>
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<td>Experienced</td>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants in this study were geographically dispersed. Six participants resided and taught in the Midwest, five in the Northeast, with four participants from the South and West. The majority of faculty (n=11) were employed at public institutions of higher education, while eight taught at private institutions, five of which carried affiliations with world religions.
The in-take questionnaire also sought information about institutional support for contemplative pedagogy. Most participants (n=13) responded affirmatively, and four stated that they are not sure; two responded negatively. When asked about being a member of contemplative community, the majority of participants responded affirmatively (n=10), eight said they are sometimes an active member of contemplative community, and one participant responded negatively.

**Data Collection**

Data collection for this study consisted of 19 in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 40-60 minutes. During these interviews, participants revealed their personal histories, perspectives, and experiences toward contemplative practices, their emotions and attitudes towards such practices, any obstacles they encountered while becoming contemplative educators, and the impact of such initiatives on their professional academic identity. In addition to in-depth interviewing as the primary method of data collection, my methodological plan included an open-ended method of questioning, and open and inductive coding as primary source of data collection.

Participants for this study were recruited with a recruitment letter posted on the forum administered and maintained by the Contemplative Mind in Society, a professional network and research organization for contemplative practices in higher education. The letter contained a brief study description, research questions, and inclusion criteria for participation. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society is a networking organization with membership fees. One of the benefits of being a member is access to their extensive network of contemplative educators through their listserv. All members may post on the forum and use this organization listserv. Members post various announcements, such as publication announcements, questions,
opportunities to provide feedback, as well as recruiting announcements for various studies on the topic of contemplative practices. As a member of this organization, I did not need permission to post my recruitment letter on its forum.

As study participants responded with their interest to participate in the study, they were mailed a letter of informed consent (Appendix C). Once participants submitted a signed the informed consent form, they were asked to complete a brief in-take questionnaire (Appendix D) and scheduled an interview at a mutually convenient time. The in-take questionnaire was administered via Google Forms. Information from the questionnaire was used to determine participant eligibility and provided essential information about the participants’ relationship with contemplative pedagogy.

Participants in this study were geographically dispersed. Efforts were made to conduct the interview in person at a location chosen by the participant. Due to distance, financial, and technology constraints, most interviews were conducted via phone. No Skype interviews were conducted.

Interviews were conducted consistently using a pre-arranged set of questions. Although I created these open-ended questions to use as a guide during interviews (Appendix E), participants used their own frame of mind and worldview when sharing their stories, which led to flexible conversations. In addition, I had a set of follow-up probes, prepared in advance. There were instances when I had to reframe and rephrase questions or pause to allow time for the participant to think (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Kvale, 1996). To establish trust during the interviews, I used a soft-ball technique. In other words, before asking the first question on the interview protocol, I established a common ground between the participant and myself by using non-intrusive, casual questions and statements (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).
All interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder. During the interviews, I took copious notes that contained detailed, concrete descriptions of what had been discussed during the interview. Pages in my notebook were divided into two columns. The left column corresponded to my observations during the interview, while the right column was used to write any preliminary impressions, questions, and follow-up inquiries.

In order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned. The names of the institutions where participants were employed were also not disclosed. Instead, institutions were described in terms of their Carnegie classification and regional location. Additionally, participants’ teaching discipline was also kept confidential. In compliance with IRB guidelines, all digital audio files of interviews, in-take screening questionnaire data, interview transcripts, and field notes were stored on a USB memory device in a locked file cabinet at researcher’s private residence. All data will be retained for at least three years. After it is determined that no further analysis is needed, they will be destroyed.

**Data Analysis**

Johnson, Dunlap, and Benoit (2010) argue that, “qualitative research creates mountains of words.” Organizing, collecting, managing, storing, analyzing, reducing, and extracting meaning from the information obtained during qualitative research can be burdensome (Johnson, Dunlap, & Benoit, 2010). Due to the research design of this study, I obtained a large amount of narrative data. I organized it by pseudonyms, date, the approximate interview time, location, and background information of the respondents.

Recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service. After transcription, all 19 interviews were uploaded into qualitative analysis software. They were then coded using field notes and corresponding memos. Following each interview, memos were
written, reflecting on participants’ stories, my own reactions, and emerging themes. Memo writing allowed me to make connections with previous interviews and adjust questions in the interview protocol for the upcoming interviews.

Qualitative research is inductive, yet I used both *a priori* codes (based on existing literature) and inductive codes (derived from new knowledge). After all inductive codes had been exhausted, I moved toward a deductive method of analysis. In the first stages of analyzing the interview data with field notes, I used a holistic approach (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 77) and in-vivo approach (using small phrases: “they ask for it”). I coded openly, line-by-line, to generate categories from respondents’ language: “mindful walking,” “breathing,” “singing bowl,” “complaints,” “people uncomfortable,” and “do not force it.” Categories were then grouped into themes, such as “best practices,” “student reactions,” “strategies, tools/materials,” “organizational elements,” and so on. After all inductive methods were exhausted, I used predetermined codes derived from related literature on contemplative practices such as academic identity, professional network, contemplative strategies, and contemplative community.

To visually display the data, I created multiple mind maps of major codes, categories, and any connections between them. In NVivo, I created a cross-case matrix to reveal any emerging themes both horizontally and vertically. As I progressed through the study, regular organization of the data was performed. Such data reviews required revising the interview transcriptions, complementing those with memos, updating the mind map with emergent findings, and foreseeing any upcoming interviews. During the organizational data review, I used memos to clarify my research decisions, reflect on any newly gained insight, emergent theory, code choice, and possible connections between the codes.
Purposeful sampling was used in this study. I established clear criteria when selecting my study sample and differentiated it based on gender, discipline, being part of a community of contemplatives/being a solo practitioner, and years of experience using contemplative practices in a classroom. Such criteria served as a guide when I approached my data analysis.

My research design produced significant amounts of rich data, which necessitated creating a data reporting plan. According to Polkinghorne (1989) the final narrative report should give a clear description of an experience. The reader of the report should come away with the feeling that “I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46). During and after the data collection stage, I used raw data to support the conclusions I made, extracting evidence from interviews and excerpts from field notes. I am confident that theoretical saturation was reached during the interviews.

**Researcher Bias**

Qualitative methodology often calls for the researcher and participant to be interconnected. Recognizing researcher subjectivity facilitates her objective perspectives (Ratner, 2002) and determines whether it facilitates or impedes objective reasoning when interpreting participants’ worldviews. Qualitative research literature recognizes the effect that the researcher may have on study outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Without thoroughly examining biases and preconceptions, the researcher may impose her frame of reference and worldview on the data.

To remedy the possibility of researcher’s views imposing on a study, Segady (2014) calls for a thorough analysis of one’s own interpretative work and recognizing the second level of interpretation when examining participants’ responses. He further posits that interpretive research is comparable to being in the shoes of others. Working with interpretations requires a
researcher to look at her participant as a subject, as opposed to an object, thus fostering an interpretive understanding of perspectives and behaviors (Segady, 2014). In addition to continuous examination and reflection on bias, a researcher may start proactively looking for commonalities with concepts and subjects that appear different; revising ideas after a break so that they appear in a more objective light, and adding psychological distance to a decision by imagining giving advice to someone else (Grant Halvorson & Rock, 2016).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that qualitative research requires that the “biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer” are identified and made explicit throughout the study (p. 290). Similarly, Peshkin (1988) writes that the researcher’s prejudices and biases “have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement” (p. 17).

In this section, I will discuss my preconceptions, notions, and biases in relation to contemplative faculty in higher education. This activity is an important step to further conversations about methodology because a researcher’s personal qualities add another dimension to the study and influence the research process. I will reflect upon and present my personal experiences with contemplative practices and consider my opinions on faculty who implement them. In addition, simply reflecting on biases and preconception is not sufficient, thus at the end of this section I will also outline strategies to recognize and manage my biases as I work through this study (Peshkin, 1988).

There is considerable variety in contemplative practices, and I have come face-to-face with many of them. For about five years, I have been a practitioner of various contemplative practices: yoga, meditation, reflective journaling, and mindfulness. More specifically, I practice yoga about two-to-three times per week. I rarely sit in meditation, but I am convinced of its
benefits for the body and mind. Another contemplative practice—journaling—has been a continuous part of my life. I journal every week and reflect on the past week and make plans for the following week. I go for contemplative walks and contemplate nature.

In addition to my personal practice, I am also an active participant in the teaching community. I have created and taught a “Mindfulness in the Classroom” course for secondary school teachers at Bernards Township Public Schools three years in a row. During the class, I take teachers through the process of introduction, implementation, and adjustment of mindfulness practices in their classes. Over the past two years, I also have spoken to multiple K-12 educators that implemented mindfulness practices with their middle and high school students. For my “Advanced Qualitative Research” course, I have conducted a small study seeking information on how mindfulness is implemented in public and private middle schools in New Jersey.

I am a practitioner of mindfulness in my professional life. For the past two years, my 8th and 7th grade students helped create and have been using a classroom policy for mindfulness practices. In my classroom, students have an option to request a 10-minute mindfulness practice two times a week. To do so, they move a designated object [a picture] from one side of the class to the other thus giving me a sign that they are requesting a mindfulness practice. After that, the class votes anonymously and, if the majority of students say yes, then the class settles down for 10 minutes mindfulness practice.

I am familiar with how to implement, conduct, and gather student feedback on mindfulness practices. I am, at times, torn that I may be taking time away from instruction. However, I also believe in the benefits of mindfulness for my students and have informally sought students’ feedback on these practices. Largely, students’ feedback contained three major
themes: (a) they like these practices very much and wish other teachers would implement them, (b) they like the fact that they get to choose when they participate in these practices, and (c) they prefer a differentiated approach, where activities are varied. This feedback was collected using an anonymous survey midway through the 2016-2017 school year. I have read and reflected upon this evidence and believe that students spoke their minds.

Last year, I participated in a conference dedicated to contemplative practices in higher education settings. Although it was a contemplative forum, I did not meet any of participants of my study. At that conference, discussions demonstrated that contemplative faculty are rare, and they often see themselves as “rebels” and non-conformists. They challenge the status quo, yet they may feel isolated and misunderstood. Some face difficulties as they implement contemplative practices with their students, such as lack of support from their colleagues and institutions, and lack of education and advocacy. Some faculty start small initiatives on their campuses involving peers; some keep their practices to themselves. Some are actively engaged in advocacy and education and belong to large contemplative networks such as the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, while others have very few ties with fellow practitioners.

By way of being part of this realm of education, I have also observed that this is a movement, one that is gaining momentum. Educators are intrigued, yet skeptical. As a member of the Contemplative Mind in Society and the Mindfulness in Education network, I have been privy to forum discussions that seek advice on best practices to implement contemplative practices. In addition, I have read forum posts from practicing contemplative faculty who seek advice on resolving challenges they face when introducing these initiatives to their students. I personally know professors that have been trying to achieve administrative buy-in at their institutions and establish campus-wide implementation of such practices. I am cognizant of how
this movement is becoming increasingly mainstream, and how more universities are coming on board (Lin, Oxford, & Brantmeier, 2013; Morgan, 2015) with establishing contemplative campuses (e.g., Redwoods University, Brown University, the University of San Diego, Rice University). In addition, international universities are also establishing contemplative practices initiatives both classroom- and campus-wide (e.g., Monash University in Australia, the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, and De La Salle University in the Philippines).

As a student of higher education and a contemplative myself, I hope that this movement will grow. I often ask myself whether contemplative practices will become the norm in college classrooms and whether they soon will be a required component of the 21st century college education. I am a supporter of such practices and an advocate of their implementation in both tertiary and secondary education. Moreover, my hope is that this study will play a crucial role in helping this movement grow.

I also believe in my responsibility as a researcher to discover where these faculty fit in the context of higher education and provide an unbiased analysis of contemplatives’ stories. Part of my strategy to reduce bias was to add questions to the interview protocol that challenge my assumptions by providing unfavorable perspectives on those practices. For example, I included questions that sought to understand contradictory angles and negative connotations of contemplative practices. In addition, I reflected critically throughout the study and was open to findings as they emerged. I actively examined my subjectivity and kept a meticulous record of reflection memos that document my personal perspectives during data collection, analysis, and write up of findings (Peshkin, 1988).

Reliability and Validity
Methodological literature outlines four elements for judging the quality of any research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In my study, I described contemplative practices and the context in which they took place accurately, as they were seen through participants’ eyes. I used robust language to present my data as visually as possible. In addition, I maintained meticulous records of all interviews and field notes, cataloguing them by date and pseudonym. By way of writing multiple reflective memos, I examined my bias as a researcher and justified any decisions and thought processes as the study progressed. I also documented and reflected upon changes that occurred during the study: changes in interview protocol and probing questions as well as participant feedback and availability.

To achieve descriptive accuracy of faculty members’ narratives, I reviewed transcripts and recordings for accuracy throughout the study. To efficiently match participants’ behaviors with their perspectives, I used the linguistic and perceptional concepts of the people studied (Maxwell, 1992). Lastly, I shared my major findings with my dissertation committee and incorporated their feedback.

Limitations

Institutional norms and resources strongly influence faculty experiences (Austin, 1990); therefore, during interviews I explored institutional characteristics such as presence or lack of institutional support. However, I only sampled faculty that already had an established practice in their teaching. It could be worth exploring the non-practitioner side of contemplative practices in higher education, specifically, why some faculty chose to practice and others do not.

A scale of institutional support for these practices was not determined in this study. Levels of institutional support were not measured and thus present yet another limitation.
Although the intake questionnaire sought responses on whether participants felt they had institutional support, it did so using a yes/no/not sure question. Institutional support, measured in terms of number of supportive faculty, could not be determined with these interviews.

Finally, the use of these practices might have varied based on faculty position and/or tenure. I did not have sufficient data to analyze the relationship between use of contemplative practices and faculty position and/or academic rank because I did not ask that question of participants. Differences among faculty of various academic ranks and positions may account for differences in their experiences with contemplative pedagogy.
Chapter IV – Research Findings

The goal of this study was to understand faculty perceptions on contemplative practices in higher education. More specifically, the main purpose was to gain insight into the experience of employing contemplative practices in college teaching. Utilizing the essential elements of the professional identity theory as a conceptual framework, I focused on faculty’s personal journey with these practices, their perception of the impact of contemplative practices on their teaching and on their professional identities, and how participants described benefits of these practices for themselves and their students. The study was guided by one overarching research question and four sub-questions:

1. How do faculty members perceive contemplative practices in their teaching?
   a. How do faculty implement contemplative practices?
   b. How do faculty members come to utilize contemplative practices in their teaching?
   c. How do contemplative practices impact academic professional identity?
   d. How do faculty members describe the benefits of these practices for themselves and their students?

This chapter introduces the findings from interviews conducted with 19 higher education faculty members. At the time of this study, all participants were employed in 4-year institutions of higher education in the United States. Participants all had at least one year of experience with implementing contemplative practices in their classrooms. Data analysis of descriptive narratives obtained through semi-structured interviews reveal complex experiences regarding participants’ perceptions of the influence of contemplative practices on their teaching as well as on their personal and professional identities.
For the purpose of this study, professional identity theory is defined as “the relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role” (Ibarra, 1999, p. 764). Elements of this theory framed the study by providing critical facets of academic identity and examining how contemplative practices shape it. Professional identity is constructed by understanding one’s professional role, organizational culture, and professional socialization process (Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012). Professional identity theory thus provided insight into how faculty understand their professional roles as contemplative teachers, how contemplative pedagogy impacts their teaching and their relationships with students and peer faculty.

This chapter contains three sections that reveal how participants implement contemplative practices and how they came to utilize these practices in their teaching. The chapter also describes the impact of contemplative pedagogy on these faculty members’ professional identities, and how they view the benefits of these practices for themselves and their students. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

**Coming to Contemplative Pedagogy: the “Hows” and the “Whys”**

Faculty came to use contemplative practices in their teaching after having incorporated it into their personal lives to heal from traumas. After seeing the benefits of contemplative practice in healing themselves, participants started experimenting with teaching contemplatively in their classes. Faculty narratives revealed two major pathways toward the adoption of contemplative practices in their teaching. First, faculty who experienced benefits for themselves wanted to pass along these practices, and their associated benefits, to their students. Second, faculty implemented contemplative practices in their classes in response to witnessing the stress and
anxiety their students dealt with on a regular basis. They saw these practices as a way to provide students with tools to address their emotional needs during college and after.

Most faculty began their own contemplative practices in response to a serious health diagnosis, marriage/relationship problem, an accident, or challenges in their personal or professional lives. Sarah, a seasoned psychology professor in a public institution in the Midwest, discovered contemplative practices when faced with grief after her mother’s passing. She explained, “I was really struggling with my grief and I was seeing a grief counselor. She said to me, ‘Have you ever tried mindfulness practice?’” Sarah started practicing mindfulness to help her cope with her grief and found it useful: “It really helped me at a very difficult time of my life be with my experiences in a way that I wasn't overwhelmed. It allowed me to be with my grief instead of just avoid it or stuff it to be overwhelmed by it.” Jolene, a reading and developmental education instructor, started living contemplatively after a cycling accident changed her life. She described her path to contemplative practice as follows:

I used to be on the cycling team at my university and I got t-boned by a truck. I had a traumatic brain injury. I had multiple broken bones, lost multiple pints of blood. I was in physical therapy and I decided that yoga and meditation would probably be something good to add to my physical therapy regimen. I started taking yoga classes at the X University campus.

Although some participants came to contemplative techniques because of an internal need to heal themselves, others discovered contemplative practices through exposure to various spiritual traditions in their childhood, professional background, or place of work. Kate, who is a long-time contemplative practitioner in higher education and a teacher education professor in the West, remembered how her parents influenced her worldview as a child when they experimented with various religious traditions. During our interview, she remembered her father: “I think the seeds got planted in my childhood because both of my parents were contemplatives, when I was
growing up. My dad basically switched religions several times while I was growing up.”

Regardless of how participants came to contemplative practices, they all spoke about the benefits that living and working contemplatively provided them.

**To Benefit Faculty**

Being objective to one’s emotional state and in tune with the body was critical for these faculty. Teaching contemplatively aided them in recognizing their own fatigue and taking necessary breaks, regularly evaluating their mental and physical states, and holding meaningful pauses when feeling frustrated. Faculty emphasized the importance of recognizing their emotions (positive, negative, or neutral) and creating space to feel them instead of reacting. Using these practices to be more self aware significantly enhanced the quality of their lives, making them richer by bringing more awareness of their present states. Mary has been teaching communication studies in higher education for 28 years. A certified yoga instructor, she talked about how contemplative practices enhanced her life by allowing to be more aware of her needs: “I really didn't even know how to take a really deep breath. It's that awareness in the present moment, non-judgmentally doing anything.”

Jolene shared that contemplative practices allowed her “to acknowledge what's going on,” thus becoming a neutral observer of her body and mind. She further remembered how contemplative practices encouraged her to listen to her body and rest when necessary: “In the past I've been pretty bad about taking breaks… Now I really try to watch the clock because sometimes I've done these binges where I'm like, ‘Yeah, let's work for two hours.’ I'm like, ‘That's not healthy.’” Jolene also implemented regular check-ins with herself to intentionally assess her emotional and physical state throughout the day: “whether that be every 15 minutes, 30 minutes, hour. Just take a moment to breath or do some simple yoga practices. Like, ‘Hey,
where you been? Where's your brain at? Where did it go?’” Autumn, a faculty member in the communication studies department at a private institution in the Midwest, similarly spoke about stopping and pausing to recognize her emotions and create space to feel them instead of reacting: “Contemplative practices is anything that encourages a pause and an awareness and also a genuine commitment to being engaged with the world. Like, ‘Okay. I'm aware, I can see this, and so how can I be with this in the most compassionate way?’” Autumn and other participants in this study largely credited contemplative practices with fostering their own self-awareness and being in tune with their physical and emotional needs. Seeing this benefit for themselves, faculty decided to implement these practices with their students.

To Address Students’ Needs

The positive impact of contemplative practices in faculty’s personal lives served as impetus to start implementing contemplative practices with their students. Sarah has been practicing mindful meditation for 15 years and was seeking ways to start implementing these strategies in her classroom. At a professional conference, she connected with an experienced practitioner who encouraged her to try mindfulness with the students: “I remember a woman there saying to me, ‘You have a practice right?... It helps you?... She says, ‘Why don't you just use it in your classroom?’” Sarah hesitated: “I'm not a mindfulness teacher” but her colleague encouraged her: “Sure you can. You can just do little bits.” Similarly, Benjamin discussed how mindfulness practices supported him through his personal relationship struggle and, seeing the benefit in his own life, he incorporated them with his students. During marriage counseling, Benjamin’s therapist recommended a book on mindfulness and relationships that made a significant impact on his life: “It helped me to be present with the challenges that I was going through at that time and helped me to communicate better with basically everybody in my life.”
Inspired, Benjamin slowly started incorporating mindfulness into his undergraduate communication course. He explained his rationale, “Maybe my students would also find that mindfulness was helpful in the way they communicated and interact with others.”

Similarly, Mary related a story of recognizing the benefits of these practices for herself and bringing them to her students. She came to yoga when seeking relief with rheumatoid arthritis. Seeing the benefits that yoga brought to her, she decided to incorporate it with her students: “And then I decided, you know, this is really wonderful for me, I'm gonna start doing this with my students.” In addition to the desire to provide students with benefits of contemplation, faculty also implemented contemplative pedagogy in response to students’ emotional struggles.

Having observed emotional and social struggles of their students, participants implemented contemplative pedagogy in response to students’ needs, thus providing meaningful tools to deal with anxiety, depression, and feelings of being academically overwhelmed. Each faculty member recognized the everyday social and emotional struggles college students faced. Some pointed out students struggling with difficult feelings when faced with immigration issues, academic failures, financial hardships, language barriers, and familial obligations such as caring for an aging family member. For example, Jessica, a communication professor at a public college in the Northeast, reported that her students found contemplative practices helpful: “…because they also know how crazy their minds usually are. They have a lot of anxiety and a lot going on.”

Faculty spoke about contemplative practices as specifically needed with non-traditional students: adults, refugees, immigrants, first generation, and students in developmental education courses as well as marginalized populations. Many talked about the need to introduce contemplative techniques with students who are struggling academically. Jolene implemented
contemplative practices in her developmental classes in order to remedy some students’ academic anxiety: “I get a lot of students who might be very frustrated with the process of education, or maybe their literacy skills are 'substandard' because of a testing situation.” Similarly, Elizabeth, a professor in a college located in the South, also worked with students in developmental English classes in her college. Her students had a lot at stake. She decided to incorporate these practices to alleviate some of student stress she was witnessing: “I could see the fright on their faces. ‘My God, I have to pass this class. Otherwise I'll never be able to take a college class for credit.’” She further revealed that after seeing “the fear so gigantic” she saw a dire need for contemplative pedagogy: “they [students] really need to be able to quiet down their mind and body to get ready to learn.”

Another college student archetype was evident in participants’ stories—an adult learner. Participants often emphasized the need for contemplative practices with adult students who lead busy lives, often have established careers, work full time, and care for children or aging parents. Nicole, a philosophy professor at a private institution in the Midwest, reflected on the situation her adult graduate students face: “They [students] don't have the time. They're working, they have kids, they have people they're caring for, they just don't have the time.” A nursing professor from the southeast, Kim shared a similar perspective where one of her adult students had to care for the aging mother,

She's the primary caregiver for her aging mother who's quite ill and she also works full-time. So, she has a lot of stress. And she told me that she was incredibly grateful for learning the mindfulness exercises because it really helped her alleviate some of her stress, not only as a student but as a family caregiver for an aging family member, you know, her aging mother. She said it has helped her out so much, you know, just alleviating anxiety and helping her to be more in-touch with herself.
Michelle ran student support services to try to bring more contemplative practices to students who face immigration challenges or are having difficulties assimilating into American society. She shared a story about a refugee student who was experiencing test anxiety. He was a refugee student from Nepal and had lived in a United Way refugee camp outside of Nepal from 5 to 15 years of age. Michelle worked with him around “some of the cultural challenges he was facing.” She remembered that the student “was always very anxious with testing, and I was like, you know, you're right on target in class, but then you go in for this test and you get very anxious.” Together, they worked on breathing exercises and positive affirmations, with an intention to change his thought process to be more positive. As he went into the test: “I can do this, I know this material.”

Loving kindness meditation was a regular tool in Nicole’s classroom because “it gives them [students] power and I don't mean ego power. I mean it makes them aware of the fact that they're influential in the world.” During our meeting, she discussed the demographic and socio-economic makeup of the student population at her institution: “We have the highest percentage of students of color of any school in the state; students from the central city. I have students who are dealing with immigration issues now… Students who deal with depression, anxiety, whatever, trauma, lots of trauma.” After seeing a clear need to address students’ emotional and social struggles, Nicole decided to give students a variety of practices, allowing them to decide which ones resonated the most.

When implementing contemplative pedagogy, educators in this study were driven by one of the two rationales. Perceiving the benefits for themselves, many passed these benefits along to their students, while others implemented contemplation in teaching after having observed
students’ emotional needs. The following section discusses how faculty perceive specific benefits of students’ contemplative practices: focus and acceptance.

**Focus**

Faculty felt that contemplative practices they employ in their teaching had significant impact on student focus. Although contemplative activities were differentiated (counting breaths exercises, mindful meditation, mandala coloring1), many participants noticed a transformation in their students. Specifically, faculty observed students being restless at the beginning yet coming to peace with stillness and silence as the course progressed. Students also started non-judgmentally paying attention to their surroundings and having smoother transitions from one class to another.

Trina spoke about focus activities she implemented in her counseling classes. Those techniques included breath work and “just noticing and letting go and spending that time in a depth of silence and focus.” She reported that, at the beginning of the course, she saw her students were restless and uncomfortable. She later added that, although her students may not have embraced these focus activities right away, they grew to appreciate the focus time: “…by mid semester I see them quieting and being very into the silence. By the time that a gong rings at the end of the 10 minutes of silence, they were amazed that the time has gone by.”

In a similar manner, a teacher education professor Kate discussed how contemplative practices have improved her students’ attentional capacity: “they [students] talked about how it really helped them focus their mind more on class and transition. You know, ‘cause college students are always rushing around from one class to another. It helped them with the transitioning.”

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1 A mandala is a circular geometric image or a diagram that represents the Universe in Hinduism and Buddhism.
Acceptance

In addition to improving focus, faculty often reflected on how these practices aided students in their awareness of academic and psychological challenges and be able to accept them non-judgmentally. Faculty also said that employing contemplative practices encouraged students to become profoundly aware of their own emotional states, which prompted them to accept and reflect, as opposed to react, to a situation. This closely relates to the concept of introspection or *looking within* that American psychologist and philosopher William James (1824-1910) viewed as one of the methods of inquiry when studying one’s “mental states” (p. 183).

During the interviews, faculty widely recalled a variety of verbal and written exchanges with students over the course of a semester. Students often reflected that contemplative practices allowed them to cope with non-judgmentally accepting their emotional states. In his mindfulness-based class, Benjamin had a student with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Although the student was aware that she had the disorder, the class helped her “realize the extent to which she had it.” Benjamin clarified that “the course helped her really identify and accept it,” so that then she could take concrete steps to work through it. The student proceeded to buy a book on OCD and mindfulness and found a therapist who focused on mindfulness treatments.

A health science professor in the south, Elizabeth shared a story from her developmental English class, where she had a foreign-born student who often struggled with speaking English. By using a practice modeled in Elizabeth’s class, the student overcame her fear of public speaking. During the interview, she retold the story: “Yesterday, I had to make my very first speech in my speech class in front of everybody, and I've never made a speech in my life." She said, "I did my three breaths before I got up there," and she said, "I killed it. I killed it."
Increased introspection in students also manifested itself during the interviews. Contemplative pedagogy cultivated a greater awareness of students’ emotional states and nurtured non-judgmental responses to these emotions. For example, Jessica gave an example of her student: “I have a young man who's in the class and he was saying, ‘I went golfing with my dad and I was just having the worst day of golf. I couldn't hit anything. It was just horrible.’” She further mused that the student gave an introspective response to his bad luck during golf: “I was just very calm and I was just like, okay, well, it's golf. Nobody died. I don't need to worry about it.” The student attributed his ability to look within to mindfulness techniques in Jessica’s class.

In a similar fashion, William, a communication studies professor in the West, reflected on his psychology class where a student struggled with interpersonal relationships. The class received a mindful listening assignment the week before and was asked to share. William spoke about his undergraduate student Ryan [pseudonym]: “I'm like, ‘Okay, Ryan, what's up?’ He goes, ‘So I'm at home this weekend, and I'm talking with my mom, and I'm listening to her bitch about my dad like she normally does.’” William got nervous about what the student would share next: “oh my gosh, okay, am I going to have to intervene in this story at some point? Where's he going?” The student then shared that “as long as I'm stuck here talking to my mom, I might as well try this mindful listening thing.” Following William’s mindful listening exercise, the student started listening to his mother more mindfully, realizing “when I really started focusing on her, and not how I was feeling about what she was saying, all of a sudden I realized, she's hurting. It's not been easy being married to my dad, and she's really hurting.” Faculty in the study perceived that such levels of student awareness were common.

Participants widely stressed the importance of contemplative pedagogy and the value that it provides to students. When asked about specific observations of student transformations,
professors cited stress management, focus, and acceptance as skills that students acquired as a result of these practices.

**Which Contemplative Practices Are Implemented in a College Classroom?**

Faculty defined contemplative practices as tools that allow one to be mindfully present with one’s own experience as it is unfolding in a reflective and experiential way. The analysis of educator narratives revealed specific types of contemplative practices that were employed in college teaching as well as approaches that worked best when implementing these practices in a classroom. Participants regularly differentiated practices by utilizing a variety of contemplative strategies: spiritual, physical, creative, awareness-based, and interpersonal. Spiritual contemplative practices were characterized as having a pre-selected phrase or a memorized verse to focus the mind during the practice. Physical strategies all contained elements of movement: yoga, hiking retreats², and walking meditation. Creative group practices involved faculty encouraging students to create a tangible product through art or writing, such as making a drawing, a vase, or writing a story in a journal. Awareness-based practices were based on observation of one’s state of mind or body without applying any judgment. Such practices included mindfully watching one’s breath, a mental body scan to release tension, or a sitting meditation. Lastly, interpersonal practices involved two or more people. For example, mindful listening required one person to express her feelings while another was listening with awareness, or organizing an interfaith panel discussion with students interacting with invited speakers.

**Classifying the Practices**

I classified these contemplative practices into five overarching categories: physical, spiritual, creative, awareness-based, and interpersonal. By identifying certain characteristics that

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² The Adventure Education course contained hiking as part of course curriculum.
revealed themselves during the interviews, these practices were then placed into the five categories.

Some faculty frequently implemented physical contemplative practices. They hiked with their students into the mountains on a retreat, walked a labyrinth (walking to and returning from the center), and incorporated a variety of yoga poses into their classes. Yoga, one of contemplative practices based on physical sensations and body awareness, was common. Mary, a long-time higher education professor and a certified yoga instructor, spoke about incorporating yoga into her research methods course. During her classes, she started with a yoga breath and slowly transitioned into implementing yoga poses. In particular, she mentioned that a warrior pose—one knee bent, another leg straight, arms are wide, facing forward—has been impactful in her classes. In her interview, Mary recounted how she would ask students while they engaged in yoga or meditative practices in class, “What's your source of strength? And where are you grounding and where are you rooting? Where are you feeling the energy flow upward, what's helping you reach out?” She often asked her students to draw upon the impact of such poses to ground themselves before starting their academic work for that day.

Spiritual practices were characterized by connecting to a higher power by saying a prayer, visualizing being in a presence of God or a higher power, or mantra repetition. William was a seasoned professor of communication and a contemplative practitioner that had been utilizing contemplative pedagogy in his classes for over five years. He shared his go-to practice of a centering prayer that he often adjusted in accordance with students’ belief systems. At the beginning of each semester, he would explain to his students how contemplative strategies work and make an announcement to his students “to spend two minutes a day just sitting in silence.” From then on, this practice was expanded by visualizing oneself in the presence of a Source. If a
student happened to be a person of faith, William encouraged him/her “to think about sitting in the presence of a loving God.” If they were not—“to think about sitting in a benevolent universe.” If a student did not consider the universe to be benevolent, William recommended, “just sitting at peace with themselves.”

Participants that utilized creative contemplative practices anchored them in appreciating the process of creating and producing a final product. Such strategies were founded on working with one’s hands—molding, painting, or writing. Tabitha, a teacher education professor, incorporated creativity-based contemplative practices with her students on a regular basis. Her main focus was on craft media: ceramics and textiles. She emphasized that producing art is “inherently contemplative because you’re working with your hands, and you’re manipulating in a way you don't with painting or drawing or photography.” She also mentioned embroidery, crochet, sewing, or working with modeling clay as well as “just doing simple smoothing of the surfaces” as part of her contemplative pedagogy.

Sarah, a teacher education professor with five years teaching contemplatively at a public institution in the Midwest, regularly employed mindful body scan with her undergraduate students and asked them to reflect on their experience afterward: “What did you notice? If we did a body scan, did you notice any areas of comfort or discomfort in your body?” Awareness-based practices involved paying close attention to body and mind sensations. Sitting meditation, body scan, and breath work all fell into this category. Faculty employing awareness-based practices focused on cultivating mindful awareness of their students’ state of being, physical as well as mental.

Interpersonal contemplative practices contain techniques that were done between two or more people. Faculty shared mindful listening exercises where two students worked together:
one focused on their ability to listen and hear, while another shared a journal entry. For example, mindful listening was a common exercise that Benjamin, an undergraduate communications professor with 25 years teaching experience, regularly implemented with his students. Students were required to share a journal entry they wrote the night before. While one student shared, the other one was trying “to be the best listener that [they] can be.” Benjamin further clarified that the student that was playing the role of the speaker was ultimately required to reflect on the experience by answering follow-up questions such as whether they felt listened to, and as the listener, whether it was hard or easy.

Overall, awareness-based techniques were the most widespread. Specifically, mindfulness and meditation were the two most extensively used practices. Faculty in both public and private institutions frequently utilized mindful breath work paired with non-judgmental awareness in their classes. Breath awareness incorporated short breathing exercises where students were asked to mindfully observe their inhales/exhales for a few minutes. This included guided meditation where professors read off the script, silent meditation, or meditation accompanied by music. The majority of faculty held weekly class sessions and incorporated breath awareness and/or meditation into each of their classes, often on an as-needed basis. It is worth noting that the accessibility and simplicity of using breath work and meditation in a classroom was one reason for its popularity among college professors. Both seasoned and novice contemplative practitioners cited mindful breathing and meditation as their go-to strategies that could be done on a moment’s notice and did not require extensive training or props.

The five main categories of contemplative practices are outlined below.

Table 2.
Contemplative practices in higher education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
<th>Creative</th>
<th>Awareness-based</th>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Yoga</td>
<td>• Prayer</td>
<td>• Contemplative photography</td>
<td>• Sitting meditation</td>
<td>• Mindful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mindful walking</td>
<td>• Mantra repetition</td>
<td>• Mindful drawing</td>
<td>• Body scan</td>
<td>listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Retreats</td>
<td>• Visualizaion</td>
<td>• Weaving</td>
<td>• Breath work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Labyrinth</td>
<td>• Feeling energy</td>
<td>• Mindful writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walking</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Journaling</td>
<td></td>
<td>discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Camping</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mandala coloring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: created by D. Pizzuto (2018).

The majority of faculty established a combination of these practices in their classrooms. Yoga was widely paired with body awareness and breath work, while mindful activities, such as mindful listening and walking, went hand-in-hand with journaling and contemplative observation. Jessica, a communication professor at a public institution in the Northeast, reflected on a great variety of meditations she used with her undergraduate students,

We do sitting practice like a Shambhala style, just sort of regular sitting. I also introduce several other kinds of practices, several other kinds of sitting practices, so for example, I use the book "Search Inside Yourself" in my diversity class. We use some of his practices such as ‘Just Like Me Meditation,’ and there's another one called ‘Multiplying Goodness’ that I introduce. Then we do Loving Kindness Meditation. We do free writing.

In addition, she often paired mindful walking meditations with contemplative photography. She further clarified: “we do a walking practice where I introduce walking meditation. We do a contemplative photography where they [the students] go out and take pictures.”

Some faculty had a more elaborate approach to these practices, employing formal ways to meditate and contemplate. These practices were clearly outlined in their course syllabi, and they often used props, such as gongs, chimes, or meditation cushions. William, a seasoned faculty in a major research university in the West, noted: “I have everybody bring yoga mats, and we have
them lying all over the classroom, and I walk them through a process of tightening and relaxing their muscle groups.” Some professors taught contemplation-based courses, and it was made clear to students before the class started via course description that contemplative practices were a key part of that course. Others preferred more casual techniques, such as taking three deep breaths before each class, and did not formally refer to them as contemplative practices.

Elizabeth, a health sciences professor in a public institution in the South, did not have a formalized description of the breathing exercises she did with her students in her syllabus. Instead, she described “a simple three-breath exercise” she did at the start of each of her undergraduate classes: “basically what I do in my classes is I start every class with a three-breath exercise.” As her classes progressed, she made students aware of potential benefits and observed that her students take these techniques into their personal lives.

**Differentiating the Practices**

Participants regularly differentiated contemplative practices, depending on their needs and those of their students. Jolene was a developmental education instructor in the South. When asked how she determined when to implement these techniques, she explained that she mainly did so based on her own needs and the needs of her students: “I'm very constructivist, reflective. I'm like, ‘Yeah, what are the students needing today?...’ Sometimes I'm like, ‘Yeah, the script feels good.’ Sometimes I'm like, ‘Yeah, we need something different.’” A believer in student autonomy, she often asked her students to voice their needs once they became accustomed with the practices.

In addition to more mainstream practices such as meditation, yoga, prayer, mantra recitation, and mindful walking, faculty in this study also implemented more atypical practices: weaving, drawing, labyrinth walking, hosting speakers, and nature and silent retreats. William
organized an interfaith panel for one of his classes that left a lasting impression on his students because “they just have never seen this group together.” He described the strategy during our interview: “I bring in a rabbi, a Buddhist priest, a minister, and the head of the local Muslim congregation. They all come in to talk about their perspective on forgiveness, and apology, and how we relate to each other as human beings.” By bringing together an interfaith panel for his students, William could demonstrate to students the value of human relations and interpersonal communication.

How Contemplative Practices Are Implemented in a College Classroom

Slow Implementation

While the previous section discusses which types and characteristics of practices professors utilize in their classes, the subsequent section talks about how they are implemented (i.e., the processes and policies used while teaching contemplatively). All contemplative faculty in this study implemented contemplative practices slowly in order to create students’ buy-in. Even the most novice faculty (less than five years of experience with contemplative teaching) emphasized that at the beginning of the course, the majority of students are skeptical of these practices in their college classrooms. Michelle, a professor of health development and family science has been teaching contemplatively for two years. During our interview, she reflected: “some people don't even want to close their eyes initially. Some people are very uncomfortable.”

Participants widely agreed that implementing contemplative practices in an unhurried, yet consistent, manner works best. There was general consensus that these practices are new in higher education, and, unless one’s course is specifically based on a contemplative concept such as mindfulness, students may feel uncomfortable. Contemplative faculty in this study cited patience as an essential quality when teaching contemplatively. Michelle spoke about giving her
undergraduate students time to see the intrinsic value in these initiatives: “You can't push them or rush them into this. They all have to get there in their own time.” Others concurred that implementing these techniques slowly helped even the most skeptical students to buy into these practices as semester progressed. Sarah introduced mindfulness into her classes last fall by incorporating strategies such as mindfulness of the breath, of the body and of other senses including hearing, tasting, and touching. She further extended her classroom practice with mindful eating, mindfulness of sound, mindful movements such as mindful walking and stretching. She thought some of her students were skeptical at the beginning, but were slowly coming around as the course progressed: “the students at first kind of looked at me sideways, but by the end of the semester, they were all really finding the benefit.” She further recalled a comment that one of her students made on her course evaluation form: “All day on Wednesday, I look forward to this class because I know I get to do two minutes of mindfulness.” Overall, teaching contemplatively challenged students’ comfort levels, yet the majority of students found the benefit as time progressed.

**A Policy of Non-forcing**

The majority of the faculty adhered to an opt-in policy. Only one participant made contemplative practice (meditation) a required practice. Other faculty spoke at length about how they do not require yet *offer* these practices to students. Sarah reflected that she looked at contemplative practices as planting seeds: “How students embrace the practice is really up to them…You can't force people to do it. You can expose them to the practice and offer guidance.” Although mindfulness was not a required practice in her classes, she accentuated to her students that these practices “are highly recommended, and I will guide you through it during the semester if that's what you choose to do.”
The majority of faculty in this study did not make participation in contemplative practices mandatory. Instead, at the beginning of a course, participants notified students both formally (in their syllabi) and informally (by way of speaking about these practices in class) that contemplative pedagogy is part of the course. Participation was not required, yet faculty made a strong case in support of these practices by outlining the benefits, providing guidance, answering student questions, and offering alternative arrangements. Jeff, an adventure education professor in the West, demonstrated a representative way of addressing the students who were not willing to participate. His students were offered two options: to maintain silence or leave the class for a few minutes while their peers proceeded with the practice. While some of his students chose not to partake in a visualization activity, all chose to stay in the class and maintain silence.

All faculty in this study understood that not all students were ready and willing to wholeheartedly embrace contemplative practices. They were content to at least expose students to them. Many participants were satisfied with students being aware of contemplative practices and hoped that in the future they may consider trying meditation again. Michelle reflected that instituting the opt-in policy opened her students up for opportunities to take these practices into their personal and professional lives: “If they choose to develop their own practice, I always leave up to them. It's really fascinating to watch how each of them chooses to engage throughout the semester.” At the end of the semester, she sought feedback from her students through course evaluations and summative reports. As a result, some students reported that they “were meditating seven days a week” while others “were only doing meditating in the class and hadn't extended it beyond that.”

William emphasized that allowing students to arrive to these practices in their own time is imperative: “I never push students to go places where they're not ready. I think that that might
be one of the reasons why I've been pretty well received with what I've been doing.” Being able to implement these initiatives slowly, yet consistently, was important to contemplative faculty in this study. The majority of participants chose to not require contemplative practices, thus instituting a non-enforced policy. Instead, they advocated for alternative strategies to get students to participate, such as continuously outlining the benefits and encouraging questions. Many participants perceived that by making these practices optional, they created more student interest and faced less resistance.

**How Contemplative Practices Influence Academic Professional Identity**

Professional identity theory contains two main components that contribute to one’s professional identity: professional values and the relationship with other constituents in the field, such as students and academic peers. Participant interviews highlighted the influence of contemplative practices on their teaching, such as listening deeply to their students and being more in tune with students’ needs. Contemplative educators placed significant value on teaching life skills, with subject matter often secondary. Faculty viewed their roles as guides, as opposed to instructors, and called for a more integrative approach to education where cognitive abilities are taught in conjunction with emotional and social skills.

One’s relationship with colleagues was also a major theme. Faculty narratives revealed three major attitudes of non-contemplative faculty toward their work: actively supportive, passive aggressive, and openly resistant.

**Life Skills over Subject Matter**

Consistent with the values of contemplative practices that emphasize interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning, participants in this study placed significant importance on teaching life skills over subject matter. As professors incorporated contemplative practices into
their teaching, many reported an impact on their professional identity. Contemplative faculty prioritized teaching emotional and relational skills over cognitive aspects of learning. Participants articulated that the goal of education was to allow students to become reflective, aware professionals who recognize their feelings and stay true to their authentic selves. For both themselves and their students, contemplative educators valued self-compassion, acceptance, resilience, and authenticity. Part of their academic identities were sought to move away from a performance-based system, connect deeply with students, look beyond stereotypes, and use contemplative practices to ground themselves when teaching.

Incorporating more emotional and relational skills into the context of higher education was Kim’s goal as a professor: “I just feel there's such an emphasis placed, an over-emphasis, on the cognitive aspect of learning, and teaching, and critical thinking.” Jolene used contemplative pedagogy to practice self-compassion and help a student overcome perfectionism. Yoga was a required component in one the mindfulness seminars she organized for undergraduate students. She recalled a student that did not want to go into a tree pose because “…she was always really afraid of people looking at her.” Jolene stated to the student: “Yeah, you're in a tree pose. If you fall, you fall. This is a metaphor for life.” Gradually realizing that the process was just as important as subject matter was a constant theme in participants’ narratives.

By teaching contemplatively, Kim—an experienced health sciences professor—reflected on her teaching values: “I feel like I'm helping them to tap into what's most whole in them, not just to feed them information.” In a similar way, a communications professor and a long-time contemplative educator, Mary, reflected on how her teaching changed by employing contemplative practices: “I used to think, oh I want my students to learn, you know, about this theory or this set of skills… My students, they have to have this and this information.” With
contemplative pedagogy, her professional values slowly changed: “I'm realizing is, it’s the skill of processing that's even more or just as important.” Richard, a seasoned professor of social science and counseling, felt similarly responsible to pass the content on to students because that is what was required. As time progressed, he realized that contemplative pedagogy provided students with meaningful tools to increase wellbeing: “The content of the X class, whatever it is, is important, but the mindfulness—the contemplative pedagogy—is vital.” He further mused that academic content is readily available to students, but the life skills that contemplative pedagogy teaches them: “… are the skills that they [students] can carry with them.” As Richard grew and developed as a contemplative educator, his professional values also changed, and now his goal was to teach his students “to be able to handle stress and cultivate relationships and be compassionate to themselves and other people.”

Developing extensive personal skills in addition to required subject matter was important for Trina, a clinical counseling professor in a private higher education institution: “I'm not just doing content and understanding. What I'm doing is modeling what it is to be a therapist, a healthy therapist, and not just healthy but a deep therapist.” Similarly, Michelle discussed how her goal for family science students was to connect to a bigger picture of what being a professional entails. During our interview, Michelle spoke extensively about the journey her students undertake to become professionals that lead healthy, balanced, and mindful lives: “I really want my students to enjoy life, and [its] moments, both challenging and happy… This is all part of life and how you approach it.” Teaching soft skills such as self-compassion, resilience, and reflection were non-negotiable parts of academic identity of these educators.

Moving Away from the Performance-Based System
While contemplative faculty recognized the importance of subject matter, they also emphasized life skills, stating that the purpose of college education is “not to teach student just make a living, truly make a life.” They yearned to get their students to reflect on life’s meaning and larger purpose. The importance of incorporating more emotional intelligence activities into the current education system was widely emphasized in faculty narratives. This was closely related to one of the conceptual foundations of contemplative teaching—integrative education. A less fragmented approach to education incorporates emotional, intellectual, and social aspects into teaching. It is often contrasted with the more mainstream, conventional, or traditional forms of education, which tend to focus on the acquisition of knowledge, development of cognitive skills, and individual achievement (Esbjörn-Hargens, Reams, & Gunnlaugson, 2010).

Participants widely called for moving away from the performance-based system that is currently prevalent in higher education toward a more holistic approach to instruction and assessment. Many urged for a transition away from the final product mindset toward keeping the focus on the process of learning. For example, when asked about her vision for the future of higher education, Autumn, a communication studies instructor, reflected,

I would love if grades were not a thing. […] I would love to see grades or how we have used grades to be greatly transformed if not completely gone so that experience and understanding and contemplation and true learning is privileged rather than a regurgitation of having done a whole bunch of check marks of writing.

In a similar fashion, Kate talked about helping students develop their social-emotional competence by noting that current higher education is: “too focused on content and information” and values material context and competition rather than collaboration. Similarly, Autumn wanted to encourage more creativity within the classroom and “to take away competition [since] that's a soul killer and that also feeds into the grade thing.” Kim considered academic subject matter important yet argued that students need, “to be able to go with the flow, and be flexible, and
change gears, and become a life-long learners.” She emphasized to her students the importance of understanding other people's feelings as well as one’s own.

**Connecting with Students**

Educator narratives frequently highlighted a deep and meaningful connection to students because of contemplative pedagogy. Practitioners felt that they were giving something of themselves—reaching students on a more personal level. Enhanced trust and relationship building repeatedly appeared in narratives. Many mentioned deep awareness of student-related issues as well as a compassionate approach to teaching by looking beyond the stereotypes and reassessing their views on students. Faculty also reflected on the fact that teaching contemplatively may be significantly more challenging because it made an instructor vulnerable and susceptible to critique.

Educators often found themselves in tune with students by detecting students’ energy and perceiving how their presence affected students and their learning. Nicole stated that her long-time meditative practice allowed her to read the energy in the room and enhanced her teaching: “I can be standing in the classroom and suddenly know what a particular student might need.” At our meeting, she gave an example of the class the day after the 2016 presidential election when she walked into her classroom and perceived the tone as somber. Although she had a plan for that day, she opted for a guided meditation instead: “We had a number of things on the agenda that day, so I just tossed them out. I took them on a guided meditation that was meant to extend an understanding of what it is to be. We imagined the experience of those who voted differently from us.” Nicole attributed her ability to perceive her students’ needs to her extensive meditation practice.
Kim discussed how employing a contemplative approach to teaching improved her relationship with students because she felt like she was giving something of herself: “I'm giving them something personal that they can use and that many of them find helpful and they're grateful for.” Teaching contemplatively deepened and enhanced her connection with students: “I feel like I'm reaching them on a deeper level when I teach them mindfulness.” Similarly, Autumn was building a trusting relationship with students by not implementing fixed course expectations, …Developing that relationship where my students are like, ‘Well, if there aren't rigid structures or expectations, then folks are just going to be lazy.’ I'm like, ‘Oh that's interesting. If there aren't structures are you not going to work hard?’ They're like, ‘Well, no.’” She encouraged students to complete work for the sake of learning, not earning a grade.

Participants frequently gave credit to contemplative pedagogy for helping them establish meaningful relationships with students, being in tune with students’ needs, and teaching students to value process as well as the outcome.

In addition to building better relationships with students, contemplative pedagogy awakened new perspectives in themselves about who they are as teachers. They widely reflected on acceptance, focus, and reflective skills in their teaching. They also emphasized that incorporating contemplative practices into their teaching built rapport with students.

William, for example, started seeing his students differently. During our interview, he reflected on looking beyond student stereotypes to recognize their needs and potential. In his contemplatively taught class, for example, he had students that “looked like players.” William continuously felt the urge to ask these students: “Why are you in this relationship class?” However, as the semester progressed, his perspective slowly changed: “they end up asking these great questions, because they're really seeking, and there's nowhere for them to go.” Contemplative pedagogy helped Adam—a stress reduction instructor at a public institution in the
Midwest—to gain compassion toward his students. He enhanced his teaching by reassessing how he viewed his students. He noticed that he “was really concerned about them as people rather than as empty vessels to pour knowledge into.” As a result, he became more aware of student learning processes, accepting that “each individual is different.” He started to be able to perceive more of students’ questions, their uncertainty or being overwhelmed. Kim also spoke about how employing contemplative practices in her teaching “made me more sensitive to, more aware of the importance of cultivating relations, just relationships with students.”

During the interviews, faculty recognized that teaching contemplatively puts an individual more in touch with their feelings, which makes a teacher more vulnerable. In other words, the empathetic aspect of teaching was stronger when contemplative practices were used. Faculty juxtaposed contemplative teaching to traditional teaching that, in their view, was more disconnected while contemplative pedagogy allowed for stronger connection with students’ feelings.

Kate, a teacher education professor with 10 years of experience, described a situation where a student shared a tragedy with her before the start of the class. She had experienced a similar tragedy and could feel its effect on her emotions. She shared that “this is the kind of situation that all my meditation has prepared me for.” She excused herself for a few minutes and stepped out to calm herself. She further recalled that her students remembered that moment of teacher vulnerability. Many commended her for modeling contemplative practices to them in a real-world context. She explained,

For months after that I had students come up to me and say things like, ‘That was probably some of the most powerful teachings that I’ve ever received in my life. Seeing you being so authentic and so real. They’re not just these ideas in a book.’
Although faculty considered teaching contemplatively challenging, many persevered with it, believing it was a positive force. William expressed that engaging contemplatively with students takes effort and may not be for the fainthearted. He reflected on how available information is in the current education system, such that “they [students] have all downloaded the slides and are sitting with their earbuds anyway. It doesn't matter that none of us is really there.” He further reflected that teaching contemplatively is a “…vulnerable process, and it's much more personal, so a critique of what you're doing hurts more.” Faculty found that teaching contemplatively built a strong connection with students yet made a teacher more vulnerable because it required being present and acutely aware of learning processes.

**Centered Teaching**

Centeredness was another quality that participants attributed to contemplative teaching. Many practitioners called upon these techniques to ground and center themselves before teaching. Some reported a state of calm alertness that accompanied them during teaching and enabled them to accept both negative and positive situations in their classrooms. Being grounded also manifested in coping with perfectionist tendencies.

By centering themselves with contemplative practices, faculty also learned to let go of controlling the lesson and letting it evolve more organically. In addition, practitioners widely discussed how contemplative pedagogy allowed them to focus on their students and the learning process itself, a contrast from traditional pedagogy that instead focused on the course goals and end product. Elizabeth, for example, was an experienced health sciences professor at a public institution in the South who taught both online and in-person courses. She spoke about taking three centering breaths before the start of each of her classes: “It allows me that opportunity to get myself together, so I can be calm.”
Mary called upon contemplative practices to center herself and be more accepting of imperfections in her teaching: “I just have a more of a ... gentleness, a more of a softness with my passions now. I'm more able to let everything evolve.” When asked about how these practices make her feel, she stated: “It's this freaky combination of feeling more calm and more energized. And how I am able to [have] constant energy to do something.” Jolene, as a reading specialist at a public college in the South, confirmed that, before implementing contemplative pedagogy, she was very performance oriented and tended to answer her students’ questions before they finished asking them. She was, however, in process of re-educating herself: “I think it's given me time to reflect more and to be okay with silences. To allow students to reflect, to be. To have that time to reflect so that they might be able to provide more of a contribution to the discussion.” In process of switching her paradigm, she incorporated intentional pauses during teaching to promote a more reflective and grounded class discussion.

**How the Practice of Contemplation Affects Peer-to-Peer Relationships**

Relationships between people in the field strongly underpin professional identity theory (Bucher and Stelling, 1977, p. 27). Consistent with this statement, a major theme emerged from analysis of contemplative educators’ narratives: relationships with non-contemplative colleagues. Participants frequently discussed institutional and departmental support of these practices and academic peers’ attitudes toward contemplative pedagogy.

Narratives revealed diverse attitudes toward contemplative faculty and the work they do. The attitudes are divided into three categories: supportive, passive-aggressive, and openly resistant. In some cases, having support enhanced faculty’s experiences. Participants with supportive peers felt comfortable, encouraged, and grateful. Inspired by positive feedback, many took on educational leadership roles on campus to speak about contemplative pedagogy. Other
participants were distressed when coping with their peers’ aggressive attitudes. Lack of support and openly aggressive comments and actions forced professors to use contemplative pedagogy covertly, with one participant leaving her teaching position altogether.

**Supportive Attitude**

The majority of participants received support from their day-to-day colleagues. This support manifested in complementary rhetoric, genuine interest, active participation in contemplative activities during classroom visits, and financial support from the department or college. Both fellow faculty and administration, with which participants worked closely, were supportive. Frequently, like-minded faculty with a common goal—contemplative pedagogy—would express support and interest in each other’s work. Colleagues from the same department, who often taught the same subject matter, also expressed encouragement for their peers’ contemplative journey. Participants widely pointed out that having a professional learning group or a collaborative on campus provided much-needed support for them as well. Mary, a long-time practitioner of yoga in higher education, remembered that, “there were a lot of people who poo-poo’d [laughs] what I was doing. But, my immediate colleagues in [X] studies, they're, like, all over this.”

A contemplative pedagogy collaborative at Kate’s college consisted of like-minded faculty with a common goal to learn contemplative pedagogy. The group contained approximately 20 members, with faculty from various disciplines and other staff from the university: “…biology, psychology, teacher education, theater, sociology, business, so that's just faculty. We also have staff members, so we have different people in student services, financial aid, and the counseling center.” On average, the collaborative met twice per month with some semesters being more consistent and others less so. The group’s primary goal was to be “a
support group for each other and sharing what we're doing.” Kate reiterated that because they all had a common goal—to share their experiences with contemplative practices—she felt the support from her peers in the collaborative.

Autumn, communication and women’s studies instructor at a private institution in the Midwest, felt grateful that her university administration expressed interest in the contemplative activities she did with her students. That prompted her to invite the associate dean of faculty into her class: “He got down there on the floor and it was so cool… It is very different from how all the rest of the class on campus look.” Michelle received financial support from her dean: “She helped pay for some of my meditation training. She gave us the money to create a meditation room for the college.” Michelle attributed the support to teaching at a college that focuses on human development: “She [the dean] has been incredibly supportive of all of us doing this work. But again, we're seen as the human development college, so “yeah, of course they [the college] do that stuff. That soft science.” Faculty that were part of a “human”-oriented department felt they received more support. The consensus was that there are certain fields, like psychology, counseling, social work, writing, religion, and developmental education that are friendly to contemplative practices. Conversely, faculty perceived hard sciences as “unwelcoming” disciplines for implementation of contemplative practices. Analogous with the Educating the Whole Person framework (Hooks, 2014), Michelle expressed frustration with her colleagues in hard sciences who were unwilling or unable to deal with students that had social or emotional challenges. She felt like her colleagues in the hard sciences were focusing “a one-dimensional teaching situation in the classroom…Especially in engineering or physics.” Michelle noticed that colleagues that adhered to a more traditional style of teaching were not willing to deal with the
emotional side of student development: “They don't want to know about that…But somebody has to deal with this other part of the student. They have more to them than just a brain.”

Autumn reflected on how not belonging to a certain “contemplation friendly” department made her uncomfortable to practice contemplation with her students: “I was still very timid and scared just within my own being…when I don't teach like social work or something like that.” Jolene, a reading education instructor in a public institution in the South, mused that because she teaches developmental education classes that “nurture the whole person” she did not receive direct resistance from her college: “that's also just the environment that I'm in… Maybe if I had implemented in some other department there might have been a different response.” Mary taught at a “department that is rooted in dialogic communication so we've always done you know, deep listening.” Michelle perceived a clear divide between the soft and hard sciences when implementing contemplative practices in a college classroom: “I hate to keep picking on physics or engineering… They think that, like, “Well, that's them. We don't do that kind of stuff. We don't have to do that kind of thing, that's what they do over there.”

**Passive-Aggressive Resistance**

The second peer attitude toward contemplative faculty was passive-aggressive, subdued resistance. It manifested itself via nonchalant rhetoric that came from both administration and faculty, requests to include less contemplative material into a course, or feelings of not being taken seriously at their institution. About half the faculty shared that, at some point of their contemplative journey, they all experienced verbal micro-aggressions from their colleagues and administration. Some often felt the need to not disclose too much about their practices by “staying under the radar” and refrained from using contemplative discourse. Others had to cope with requests from the university administration to teach more content and less of “that
mindfulness stuff.” At that point, participants addressed administrations’ concerns by reducing contemplative practices and incorporating more subject matter into their courses.

When asked to describe the attitudes of her colleagues and administrators toward her work, Jolene revealed that she was the recipient of passive aggressive comments from an administrator: “She would keep joking about it. It was tongue in cheek, ha-ha silly, but I think it probably went a little bit deeper.” Jolene found the director’s comments “funny but not really funny.” As she remembered further interactions: “I think she might have said, ‘What, are you one of those granola people?’”

Some contemplative faculty chose not to fully disclose the use of contemplative practices or used different rhetoric to speak about them. For example, Jolene avoided disclosing her yoga practice due to how her colleagues received it: “I used to sneak around about doing yoga. I mean, I wouldn't tell people that I was going because I, you know, again was chided for doing that ... or scolded for going.” Richard faced resistance at his institution in the West, where he taught social science and education courses. By providing his students with these tools, he felt he was doing the right thing yet struggled with “changing the words.” He intentionally employed different rhetoric to speak about contemplative practices,

If I'm doing something that is of service to the kids or to others, and I know that my intentions are pure, and I know that there's resistance based on false knowledge or false beliefs, then it's not dishonest to describe it in a way that's more comfortable. I'm not hurting anyone… I call it ‘benevolent bullshitting.’

Autumn felt that she was viewed as unprofessional by her fellow colleagues: “I feel that some folks choose to not take me seriously. Some folks could choose to see me as being unprofessional because I sit on the floor [during the practice].” Jessica felt she experienced micro-aggressions from a university administrator that asked her to change the content of her
class on diversity: “He was kind of like, ‘I would like to see this be a little more diversity and a little less mindfulness.’” Although she kept the book “Search Inside Yourself” by Chade-Meng Tan, which was the mindfulness component of the class, she changed one of her classes to make it more diversity focused in hopes of addressing his concern.

Given this resistance and requests to reduce the use of contemplative practices, I wondered how the use of these practices might have varied based on faculty position and/or tenure. I did not have sufficient data to analyze the relationship between contemplative practices and faculty position and/or academic rank because I did not specifically ask about it in the interviews.

**Open Resistance**

Some participants spoke about experiencing openly aggressive attitudes from their colleagues. This type of peer attitude manifested itself in active resistance: direct comments, actions to stop the use of contemplative practices in the classroom as well as manipulating faculty and student politics with an objective to demean the reputation and character of contemplative faculty. With non-contemplative faculty, such an attitude often revealed itself via refusal to implement these techniques in classes and openly voicing their disapproval at department and faculty meetings. Some contemplative faculty viewed their institution’s whole organizational culture as “openly resistant.”

During her sabbatical, Mary decided to dedicate time to exploring the empirical side of contemplative practices because of the disapproval she received from her colleagues. When presenting her findings, she recalled comments from some of her academic peers: “Not everybody, but they would either tease me or ignore me or scold me. Like, ‘Well, I don't have any time to breathe in my classes’ and ‘How can your students be learning?’”
In addition to rhetoric that was openly disapproving, non-contemplative faculty sought to cease the use of contemplative pedagogy on campus, deliberately seeking to undermine the reputation and character of contemplative educators. Both Jessica and Trina remembered how some of their fellow professors used faculty and student politics to stop the implementation of contemplative practices in their classrooms. Jessica worked with a department colleague “who was against it, who didn't want me to teach the mindfulness class, didn't want it to be regularized as a regular class rather than a special topics class…” She brought her proposal to the faculty senate hoping to establish her mindfulness class as a regular and not a special topics class. Before the senate could vote on her proposal, a peer faculty member “went going around to the other faculty and asked them [faculty senate] to vote against it, which they did not.” Trina faced a similar situation with a colleague, except this time students were involved: “One of my fellow faculty does not trust spiritual practices, has no background in spirituality, and has kind of taken on herself telling students that I'm very harsh and they need to be afraid of me.” As she reflected further on this challenge, she found that “once students come into my class in a couple of weeks, they let that go and relate to me as me instead of the image that they had of me.”

Some faculty mentioned that open resistance manifested itself in the campus climate overall. Both Autumn and Richard mentioned that campus climate was a significant factor in terms of whether an institution is receptive to contemplative pedagogy. Autumn explained her campus climate as “a climate of fear.” She stated that at her institution “there isn't much talk about contemplative practice because we're a Catholic institution, so there's prayer and all that. That's acceptable.” After speaking to a few of her students, she perceived that the contemplative practices she uses in class are viewed by “some folks as being anti-church.” Beyond the contemplation, however, she outlined other concerns on campus: “It's just not a safe campus. [...]

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It is not a secret that our campus is openly hostile to LGBTQ folks [...] it is dangerous for students on our campus.” In spite of the current climate, she enjoyed her time at her institution but felt the need to move on with her career: “I've loved it so much, I've learned so much from my students, from myself. These have been the best years of my teaching, and I am leaving.” Similarly, Richard, who also experienced open resistance from colleagues and the institution itself, described the organizational culture at his institution as “toxic.” He shared that: “It has been very painful at times, but thank goodness for the spiritual practices where I've seen that this was a gift for me to experience this pain. I'm better for it, but it was very hard. There's a lot of hostility.”

Finally, participants who experienced this kind of push-back felt disheartened and sad; they had a hard time handling these critiques from their colleagues and administration. Trina lamented the fact that her colleagues were skeptical about contemplative pedagogy while, in her view, students needed these practices:

Very, very few, in fact, maybe two people over there, professors over there would see any validity in spiritual practice. The rest of them are just, I think, terrified of it, think it is propaganda or something like that. They refuse to allow any of that in their classes, and it makes me terribly sad because I think young people are really hungry for it.

Summary

Faculty in this study considered contemplative pedagogy a necessary and non-negotiable part of their personal and professional being. In teaching, participants valued life skills over subject matter and formed deep connections with students. Creativity, acceptance, self-awareness, and resilience were some of the skills faculty strived to nurture in their students.

Participant narratives also highlighted components of their journey to contemplative lifestyle and pedagogy, mainly focusing on educators coming to contemplative practices to heal themselves from major life traumas. Being objective to one’s emotional state and in tune with the
body was critical for these faculty. Participants also perceived that contemplative pedagogy aided students with managing stress, improving focus, as well as helped them overcome challenges and build resilience. Seeing benefits for themselves, faculty then consciously chose to incorporate these techniques into their teaching, seeking to provide students with tangible strategies to handle academic and social stress.

An academic identity theme was also supplemented by the discussion about faculty-to-faculty relationships. It was important for contemplative faculty to know what their academic peers thought of their work. Three types of attitudes from non-contemplative faculty were identified from the narratives: supportive, passive-aggressive, and openly resistant. Implications of these findings for higher education policy and practice are discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter V – Conclusion

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the purpose of the study, research question, theoretical framework, and methodology. It then focuses on a discussion of research findings and implications for practice. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research on the experiences of contemplative higher education faculty.

Overview of the Study

In 2016, anxiety rates among college students were at 50.6 percent, followed by depression (41.2%), relationship concerns (34.4%), suicidal ideation (20.5%), and self-injury (14.2%) (Reetz, Krylowicz, Bershad, Lawrence, & Mistler, 2016). In addition to anxiety and depression, students reported being overwhelmed with academic, financial, and social aspects of being a college student (American College Health Association, 2013, p. 13).

Contemplative pedagogy has emerged as a prescription to student social and emotional issues. A nascent movement in college teaching, it employs a wide array of methods such as yoga, meditation, journaling, mindfulness, and other spiritual and emotional strategies to “support the development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior” (Zajone, 2013, p. 83). With this in mind, my study explored the experiences of faculty members that employ contemplative practices in their classrooms in 4-year degree granting institutions in the United States.

This study focused on providing insight into employing contemplative practices in college teaching as well as how they shape academic identity. In addition, I explored barriers toward implementation of these practices in higher education and the professional needs of contemplative faculty members. One overarching research question guided the study: how do faculty members perceive contemplative practices in their teaching? and four sub-questions: (a)
How do faculty implement contemplative practices? (b) How do faculty members come to utilize contemplative practices in their teaching? (c) How do contemplative practices impact academic professional identity? and (d) How do faculty members describe the benefits of these practices for themselves and their students?

Theoretical Framework

I adopted professional identity theory as a conceptual lens for analyzing the narratives of contemplative higher education faculty. This theoretical framework aided in determining the tiers of transformative activities that guided the participants along in their journeys toward becoming contemplative educators. The theory also provided essential dimensions of professional identity to frame the findings of this study, such as understanding one’s professional role, workplace culture, professional socialization process, beliefs, and values (Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012; Ibarra, 1999). Specifically, professional identity theory was used to explore how faculty create formal and informal relationships, whether they show initiative to connect with more seasoned contemplative faculty as well as their levels of proactivity with these practices.

Using professional identity theory prompted me to look at these faculty from an integrated perspective because it necessitates looking at the professional as a “whole person” rather than just the hands or brain (De Weerdt, et al., 2006; Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012). With that in mind, professional identity theory thus allowed me to establish intersections between professional, personal, and social identities of contemplative higher education faculty.

Methodology

Using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2012), I selected 19 higher education faculty members to be interviewed for this study. To be considered as a participant, individuals were required to have at least one year of experience with implementing contemplative practices in
one’s classroom, be a higher education faculty member, full or part time, tenured or contingent, serving in a 4-year degree granting college in the United States.

Data collection occurred by way of a brief in-take survey in Google Forms and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The survey sought information on demographics, years of teaching experience, discipline, institutional support, and self-identification of their level of experience with contemplative practices. The length of the interviews ranged from 40 minutes to one hour. During the interviews, participants reflected upon their experiences of being contemplative educators in higher education.

During each interview, field notes were accumulated, with memos written after each interview. All interview transcriptions and memos were analyzed in NVivo. Open and inductive coding was used as primary source of data analysis to see what terms, patterns, or themes emerged for each interview. Codes were grouped into super codes, which in turn were used to generate themes. Some emergent themes were consistent with existing literature, while others revealed new trends.

**Discussion of Findings**

In this section, I discuss findings of this study and how they fit within the context of existing literature on contemplative practices in higher education. This study sought to explore the experiences of faculty who use contemplative practices in their college teaching and its impact on their identities. While several themes that emerged from this study aligned with those found in previous research on contemplative faculty, results from this study add to the existing literature, specifically: the struggles associated with being a contemplative educator on a college campus, feelings of isolation, and a lack of like-minded community of educators at their institutions.
Faculty Perceptions of Contemplative Practices

Professional identity theory was used as a conceptual lens in this research. It states that one’s identity is formed by both internal and external influences, professional relationships, working conditions, and the skills and knowledge of being a member of an organization or profession. The theory also contends that values, norms, and culture of that profession (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001) are also an essential part of one’s professional identity. This study found that contemplative practices play a critical role in participants’ personal and professional identity formation. Contemplative values regarding goals of higher education, the importance of personal practice, scholarship, and belonging to a contemplative community all strongly influenced these educators’ identities.

Within the context of higher education, faculty perceived contemplative pedagogy as an effective set of skills to pass along to their students to help them alleviate stress, manage anxiety, and persevere in the face of academic, familial, and societal challenges. Such an approach to education is consistent with research on social emotional learning. Social emotional learning explores how students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, and become self- and socially aware. Skills such as empathy, compassion, as well as ability to relate to others are part of social-emotional learning (CASEL, 2015). This study also found that contemplative faculty perceived specific benefits for their students: acceptance and focus. Contemplative faculty perceived these practices as valuable tools that enhanced their teaching and built relationships with students.

Participants in this study also perceived contemplative practices in their teaching as an uphill battle. Consistent with previous research (London, 2013), many participants felt isolated and continuously voiced concerns of not having a campus-based contemplative community of
educators. London’s findings reveal that contemplative faculty often identify themselves as “holistic educators in un-holistic environment” (London, 2013, p. 78) and the current study confirms this assertion. Participants lamented their lack of institutional support, uncooperative academic peers, as well as open hostility from both peers and university administration. Given such a landscape at colleges and universities, there may not be much room for growth of these practices without major changes. Contemplative pedagogy still arouses doubt among practitioners of traditional pedagogy. This is similar to the relationship between complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and Western medicine practitioners. CAM has been a topic of discussion among medical practitioners for many years. Among the medical community, CAM went through different stages where it was first condemned, then viewed with skepticism, and finally accepted as a viable alternative to traditional medical interventions (Winnick, 2007).

Contemplative faculty also perceived contemplative practices as a source of professional frustration. Many coped with abundant misconceptions that surround these practices. They battled the stereotypes by coming out as instructional leaders on campus and creating free workshops, lectures and classes, often without receiving credit or recognition. Participants used their scholarship to raise awareness about the benefits of these practices for students and faculty and struggled to have their scholarship recognized as legitimate by their academic peers. Contemplative faculty often lamented the lack of time they and their peers had to learn about these practices and held back due to their working schedules.

In response to research sub-question 1a, (how do faculty implement contemplative practices?), this study found that contemplative faculty employ a great variety of practices in their classes. Some activities fall into a category of mainstream contemplative practices such as yoga, meditation, visualization, journaling, mindful breathing, walking, and listening, and
spiritual retreats. Other activities diverge from typical contemplative practice framework: drawing, mandala coloring, and making art. These faculty teach a variety of courses. Some are based entirely on contemplative pedagogy and teach concepts like mindful communication, deep listening, and forgiveness. Some are entirely unrelated, with elements of contemplation incorporated into the courses: English, developmental literacy, and social justice.

Professors widely agreed that implementing contemplative practices in an unhurried yet consistent manner works best. Faculty were aware that these practices are new in higher education. They realized that not every student may be on board and implemented techniques slowly to avoid making their students uncomfortable. They did so by engaging the students and demonstrating the value of these practices. Many employed a non-mandatory policy, where contemplative practices were not required, but recommended, as valuable tools to succeed in college and life.

The first finding also addresses research question 1d, how do these professors describe the benefits of these practices for themselves and their students? Contemplative faculty perceived significant benefits for their own mental and physical states, as well as for their teaching. Previous research on contemplative practices found that having a consistent practice aids with emotional regulation, perspective taking, response control, and compassion (Hölzel, et al., 2011, Luders, Toga, Lepore, & Gaser, 2009; Lutz, Dunne, & Davidson, 2007). Additionally, literature on wellbeing of K-12 teachers reports that participating in mindfulness activities increases teachers’ sense of well-being, contributes to their ability to manage student behavior and develop meaningful relationships with students (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). In line with this research, this study found that teaching with contemplative practices in college also built relationships with students.
Similar to their K-12 peers, higher education faculty also reported an improvement in their overall psychological and physical wellbeing. That manifested in self-awareness, acceptance, and compassion. Higher education faculty also reported becoming more reflective, as opposed to reactive, practitioners who were more engaged with their students. Contemplative practices were perceived as a non-negotiable and valuable part of participants’ lives that brought significant benefits to them and their students.

In response to research sub-question 1b, (how do faculty members come to utilize contemplative practices in their teaching?), this study found that contemplative faculty came to contemplative practices in their personal lives to heal themselves from major life traumas. They then started using contemplative pedagogy to center themselves before, during, or after teaching.

Burnout among higher education faculty presents a significant issue (Hogan & McKnight, 2007; Lackritz, 2004). Academics do large amounts of work at home, read within and outside of their content area, and often schedule vacations to coincide with their work conferences (Sorcinelli, & Near, 1989). Academics in this study used contemplative practices to recognize fatigue by consciously evaluating their mental and physical states. Taking short breaks to meditate, mindfully breathe, or engage with yoga aided them in coping with work-related stress. This study found that being objective to one’s emotional state and in tune with one’s body was essential for these faculty. During teaching, participants frequently employed meaningful pauses when confronted with a difficult situation or question. Faculty emphasized the importance of recognizing their emotions (positive, negative, or neutral) and creating space to feel them instead of reacting. Having energy and zest for life was attributed to taking part in contemplative practices. Universities and departments could use these as preventive strategies to anticipate
faculty burnout. Perhaps training interested faculty to incorporate contemplative practices into their workday could be a low-cost option to combat faculty burnout.

College student struggles with mental health continue to increase (Reetz, Bershad, LeViness, & Whitlock, 2016). University professors, on the front lines, often struggle to help their students because they lack proper psychological training (Howard, 2016). Consistent with the educational literature, participants in this study implemented contemplative practices in their classes as a response to students’ stress and anxiety. Seeing the benefits of these practices for themselves and driven by desire to improve their students’ academic and emotional lives, these faculty introduced contemplation to their students. Professors resolved to provide students with meaningful tools to deal with anxiety, depression, and feelings of being academically overwhelmed. Stress management, focus, and acceptance were the three specific benefits professors outlined during interviews.

Faculty considered contemplative practices especially beneficial for non-traditional students: adult, refugee, immigrant, first generation, and students in developmental education courses as well as marginalized populations. In light of recent uncertainty about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, undocumented students are experiencing a significant psychological toll. As they cope with a precarious future in the United States, contemplative practices could help them cope.

In a national study of spirituality in college, Astin, Astin and Lindholm (2007) found that university students have high levels of spiritual interest and involvement. Consistent with this research, contemplative faculty perceived strong interest and an overwhelmingly positive response from their students. Inspired by such feedback, these faculty were convinced they are on the right track to provide the best possible teaching and service to their students.
In response to research sub-question 1c, (how do contemplative practices impact academic professional identity?), this study found that contemplative educators do not separate their personal and professional identities. Rather, they see the contemplative parts of their personal and professional lives as one authentic self. In fact, many advocated against bifurcation of their personal and professional lives. Data analysis also revealed how contemplative educators view their role as teachers. They viewed themselves as guides who accompanied students on their quest to learn how to think for themselves and discover their potential.

Professional identity manifests through an individual’s beliefs, values, and motivations when joining the ranks of a profession (Ibarra, 1999). Professional identity of these educators surfaced when values and goals of higher education were discussed. Faculty frequently referred to their vision for higher education. The contemplative movement calls for higher education to realign its goals by encouraging faculty and students to pay more attention to their inner, rather than outer, selves. Contemplative faculty narratives revealed perspectives consistent with available contemplative pedagogy research: to commit to “building greater human beings, with multiple forms of wisdom” (Lin & Oxford, 2013, p. xi) and act as a vehicle of change toward “self-development and the betterment of society” (Ergas, 2013, p. 213). Consistent with the above research, contemplative faculty referenced how American higher education needs to reassess its overarching goals. A majority of participants perceived the current focus of higher education to provide knowledge as antiquated and called for change to accommodate the needs of current college students. They widely resisted the idea of “filling students’ heads with knowledge” but opted for teaching students to search for meaning and purpose in their own lives.

Contemplative faculty were student-focused educators, that were in tune with student needs and listened deeply to students both in and out of classes. They perceived course content
as secondary to life skills. They resisted the idea that teaching was to transmit knowledge and aid students in finding gainful employment but emphasized that teaching had heftier goals, such as helping students develop as human beings and live healthy, productive lives. The 21st century skills movement advocates for critical thinking, problem-solving, analysis, interpretation, scientific reasoning as well as global and self-awareness, health and wellbeing literacy, adaptability, civic responsibility and leadership skills (Partnership, n.d.). Consistent with this framework, contemplative teaching provides students with tools to become health and wellness literate.

However, with greater accountability and assessment in higher education (Freeman & Kochan, 2012), contemplative practices may not receive support from all students, parents, and other stakeholders. Measures based on student outcomes are used to determine whether colleges deliver value for the price and effort. Upon graduation, colleges are expected to provide students with a knowledge base that will lead to gainful employment and send a capable workforce into society. Spending time on contemplative practices in the classroom thus raises the question: Should college education focus on long-term outcomes or short-term accountability?

Although this narrative goes against greater accountability pressures in higher education, it directly relates to another rising trend: integrative education. Integrative education focuses on helping students become self-reflective learners by educating themselves in inner growth—like paying attention to body, mind, and spirit. Lastly, integrative education also focuses on different learning and teaching styles (Esbjörn-Hargens, Reams, & Gunnlaugson, 2010). All participants described the value of emotional skills such as self-awareness, self-reflection, acceptance, resilience, and emotional intelligence.
In addition to these responses, other findings organically emerged from data analysis. For instance, participants talked at length about the importance of having a contemplative community on campus and support of their colleagues. The contemplative community finding includes faculty reporting on contemplative resources available to them on their campuses and locations; the attitudes of non-contemplative colleagues toward their work; and whether subject matter makes any difference in the use of these practices.

Participants worked at institutions that supported contemplative practices, albeit at various levels. In the intake survey, the majority of contemplative faculty stated they have institutional support (n=13), although narrative data analysis revealed otherwise. Generally, institutional support manifested itself in a passive way: administration and academic peers knew about contemplative pedagogy being implemented on campus and allowed it to continue. This may fall under academic freedom because “teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject” (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 1990). Contemplative faculty viewed a passive attitude as a positive—“they [administration] are not bothering me, and I’m happy.” In spite of this generally passive position of university administration towards contemplative pedagogy, participants endured various instances of subtle and open aggression from their non-contemplative academic peers and administrators. Without the available support of like-minded colleagues, many contemplative faculty preferred to stay under the radar in order to continue teaching contemplatively. Faculty continuously perceived disparities among the attitudes of non-contemplative peers toward contemplative practices. Some non-contemplative faculty openly and actively supported their contemplative colleagues, while others used subtle rhetoric to express their disapproval. The third group of non-contemplative
faculty openly resisted and created active campaigns to cease the use of contemplative practices in teaching.

Participants in the study frequently perceived that being accepted or rejected as a contemplative faculty member may depend on the subject matter one teaches. They referred to disciplines that are contemplative-friendly, and those that are not. Mainly, fields like psychology, counseling, social work, writing, religion, and developmental education were identified as more compatible with contemplative pedagogy. Conversely, faculty perceived hard sciences, such as physics and engineering as “unwelcoming” disciplines for implementation of contemplative practices. None of the faculty interviewed were in hard sciences. Additionally, faculty voiced their concerns that if they do not belong to a contemplative-friendly discipline, they may have a harder time justifying the use of these practices in the classroom.

**Responses to Challenges**

Participants shared barriers that they encountered on their journey as contemplative faculty in higher education: (a) contemplative practices were perceived as non-scholarly by non-contemplative education community, (b) contemplative faculty faced challenges when creating buy-in from students, and (c) professors and their interested peers struggled to find sufficient time and resources to seriously commit to these practices.

Misconceptions that prevailed on college campuses presented one of the barriers that contemplative faculty faced. Faculty in this study frequently coped with fallacies about conceptual foundations and overall aims of contemplative practices in higher education. Participants frequently lamented that their academic peers dismiss contemplative practices without having a clear understanding of what they entail. They widely discussed that their non-contemplative colleagues thought contemplative practices were all founded on tenets of
Buddhism, thus bringing a religious connotation into a classroom. Additionally, participants noted that their non-contemplative colleagues often used terms *mindfulness* and *meditation* interchangeably and did not have a clear idea of either notion.

The second barrier that contemplative faculty perceived was, albeit miniscule, resistance from students, especially at the beginning of a course. This finding is in line with research on K-12 teachers’ experiences with implementing mindfulness in schools where teachers coped with challenges of student buy-in (Renshaw et al., 2017). Participants in this study observed that some of their students found contemplative practices unexpected and were initially intimidated by them. Participants also observed that the practices conflicted with students’ religious beliefs, such as students from fundamentalist Christian religious groups perceiving contemplative pedagogy as *new age*. In spite of this resistance, faculty in this study often found creative ways to accommodate students’ beliefs by way of employing various strategies, such as Lectio Divina—a Benedictine contemplative practice based on meditation and prayer.

Research on implementing contemplation in K-12 teachers notes the lack of time and resources as two primary factors that impact implementation. Durlak (2016) argues that, in K-12 program implementation, limited staff training and competing administrative and financial demands hinder the development of mindfulness programs. In K-12, other factors like timing, physical environment, and logistics also inhibit implementation (Renshaw et al., 2017). Similarly, contemplative faculty in this study faced a lack of time to fully devote themselves to the implementation of these practices. They wished for more time to expand on, research, write about, and educate their colleagues on contemplative pedagogy. Due to pressures to provide excellent teaching, service, and scholarship, contemplative faculty felt they constantly had to make choices about whether to implement these practices with their students on a particular day.
In spite of challenges, participants emphasized the importance of persevering, prioritizing, and intention when teaching with contemplative pedagogy. They firmly believed that by using contemplation in their classrooms, they were being of service to their students. Additionally, the lack of time also hindered interested parties on campus. Some non-contemplative colleagues expressed interest in exploring contemplative practices in their own classrooms; however, due to significant expectations for teaching, service, and scholarship, contemplative faculty generally encountered the attitude: “I would love to do this, but I have too much on my plate.”

**Implications for Practice**

These findings have several practical implications for those interested in contemplative pedagogy, for faculty and institutional leaders, and for those who aspire to contemplative teaching and scholarship. In this section, I present general recommendations that relate to contemplative higher education faculty, followed by specific suggestions for institutional leaders, scholars, and faculty. Suggestions for future research are offered in conclusion.

**Increasing Awareness of Contemplative Faculty Values**

Scholars continuously seek new, more accurate interpretations of what it means to be a higher education faculty member (Finkelstein, Conley, & Schuster, 2016). Robust and thorough studies about contemplative faculty experiences are critical for creating a fair, yet nurturing, academic culture and an environment of inclusion and respect for all faculty. This will encourage faculty to focus on their work and not the stereotypes surrounding their appointments. This study helps remedy a lack of qualitative research on contemplative faculty experiences in higher education.

Contemplative faculty adhere to a non-traditional, alternative style of teaching where
subject matter often comes secondary to students’ social and emotional wellbeing. The participants frequently had to deal with dated stereotypes, such as being labeled as “hippy” or “granola” to be able to teach in higher education. Many had to cope with the notion that research on contemplative practices is non-scholarly and should not be allowed in higher education.

With this new approach to teaching, the notion that “normal” faculty are those who teach more traditionally could be potentially damaging to contemplative faculty’s professional esteem and institutional morale. Contemplative faculty brought significant value to their departments and institutions by providing students with strategies to manage stress, decrease anxiety, and build resilience. In spite of that, they felt undervalued and underappreciated by their peers who teach using a more traditional style. The faculty in this study were unsettled by how they thought peers viewed them and their work. While some of the unsupportive attitudes manifested through formal and casual faculty conversations, other “traditional” faculty openly supported contemplative faculty in their quest.

Contemplative faculty in this study often struggled with voicing their professional values to a larger academic community. Departments/colleges should consider inviting contemplative faculty to create lectures, newsletters, and seminars on a contemplative teaching philosophy. This could be done at faculty meetings, formal and informal workshops, webinars, and faculty retreats. In addition, a faculty spotlight segment in a university newsletter, magazine, or social media page could feature that faculty member revealing her accomplishments and teaching philosophy to a broader educational community. Annual faculty surveys about educational philosophy and teaching practices could yet be another outlet where contemplative faculty could voice their values and beliefs. Further, actively seeking faculty contributions to the university community may increase the chance that contemplative faculty will share their values with their
academic peers. Lastly, contemplative faculty in this study reported widely positive feedback from their students, through both anonymous and identified course evaluations. They should use that data to support the use of contemplative pedagogy in higher education. Further, contemplative faculty should interact with students to involve them in creating professional development workshops for non-contemplative faculty to demonstrate the value these practices have had for them.

Building Faculty Collaboration on Campus

Literature on higher education faculty experiences has demonstrated the importance of establishing faculty collaboration networks and how they influence job satisfaction, writing productivity, and student achievement (Austin and Baldwin, 1991; Elliott, et al., 2016; Hutson, & Downs, 2015). Faculty in this study frequently lamented the lack of a campus community of like-minded educators. The institutions allowed contemplative faculty to participate in campus life, but at various levels. There were also disparities among departments, with some condemning contemplative pedagogy and some actively supporting it. Contemplative faculty widely preferred to fly under the radar and, in fear of prejudice, kept their teaching strategies to themselves, which may hinder valuable faculty-to-faculty collaboration. Participants frequently endured various instances of both subtle and open aggression from their academic peers.

The lack of contemplative communities should be addressed, and opportunities to educate the university community should be prioritized. To regulate microaggressions from non-contemplative faculty, campus wide initiatives could be created to educate the campus community about the value of these practices in education. To assist contemplative faculty with academic segregation, university administrators should inform themselves of any resources and
organizations on campus and remotely that support contemplative pedagogy (i.e., Mindfulness in Education Network, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, etc.).

Contemplative faculty already take on a significant amount of responsibility beyond the classroom to advance these practices with their students and peers. It is critical for contemplative faculty across departments and institutions to get to know each other, share their experiences, and have an outlet for their scholarly needs. Institutions and departments should support the creation of formal groups for those that are interested in contemplative pedagogy issues; the contemplative faculty could be further empowered to collaborate with non-contemplative faculty.

This study found that some non-contemplative faculty were favorably disposed toward contemplative practices. They appreciated the benefits these practices brought to students yet did not practice contemplative techniques themselves due to the lack of available training. To nurture these on-the-fence relationships, institutions should allow time for the non-contemplative faculty to attend contemplative pedagogy workshops and research these practices on their own time. To increase faculty-to-faculty collaboration, institutions should encourage faculty peer mentoring, research co-authoring, and academic and social faculty functions on campus.

**Educating Campus Community about Contemplative Practices**

This study found that contemplative faculty faced misconceptions about contemplative practices at every turn. Generally, these fallacies in understanding were based on ideas that a) contemplative practices in higher education carry a religious connotation, b) mindfulness equals meditation, and c) contemplative practices are non-scholarly. Participants were troubled that their colleagues did not understand the conceptual foundations and objectives of contemplative practices. As a result, faculty in this study reported that they had peers who were favorably
disposed toward using these practices but did not do so due to the lack of information about them. Departments should work to dispel these misperceptions among all faculty. This may be accomplished at faculty meetings or separate workshops under the supervision of Center for Faculty Development, Academic Affairs Offices, or the Office of the Provost.

Contemplative faculty in this study regularly sacrificed personal time to implement these practices with their students, published numerous research papers, and continuously pushed the limits of what contemplative faculty could and couldn’t do at their institutions. These professors loved their work, were deeply committed to teaching, and placed students’ wellbeing and happiness above all. Keeping in mind such commitment, university administration should actively create opportunities for contemplative faculty to lead professional development by providing support to host professional development workshops, webinars, or virtual events on campus and remotely. This may be accomplished by providing contemplative with adequate time to research and prepare a topic, publicizing it via university websites or newsletters, and distributing flyers on campus. University administration could also encourage their non-contemplative faculty to attend these faculty development opportunities and engage in academic discourse. A paradigm change that encourages the use of contemplative practices can be accomplished by educating the academic community.

In summation, this study seeks to enrich scholarly and practical understanding of contemplative pedagogy and invite academic discourse about the possibilities of using varied contemplative practices in college teaching.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

In this section, I discuss directions for future research based on my analysis of
contemplative faculty narratives. This study focused on contemplative faculty who teach in 4-year colleges in the United States that had at least one year of experience with implementing contemplative practices in their teaching. The study explored how they negotiated their personal and professional identities and defined professional success as contemplative educators. A future study should incorporate contemplative faculty from 2-year community colleges to demonstrate how faculty implement contemplative practices at this level of higher education.

In addition to differentiating by Carnegie classification, future research should look deeper into geographical influences on contemplative practices. Study participants were geographically dispersed. During the interviews, some participants mentioned that “because we are in the Midwest” or “we are in the Bible Belt” contemplative practices were not as supported as they were at East coast institutions. Although participants resided in four distinct areas of the United States: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West, this study does not provide representative information on how faculty experiences differ from one geographical area to another. Future research should look deeper into how geography affects contemplative pedagogy and its influence on faculty experiences in and outside of the classroom.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of establishing peer-to-peer faculty collaboration networks and their positive influence on job satisfaction, productive writing, and student achievement (Austin and Baldwin, 1991; Elliott, et al., 2016; Hutson & Downs, 2015). Participants in this study lamented the lack of contemplative community available to them on their campuses. Future research should explore institutions with established contemplative networks and any mechanisms they use to sustain these practices in their classrooms.

Contemplative practitioners in this study were tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct
professors. This study did not provide generalizable information on whether not having tenure
can interfere with implementation of contemplative practices. Future studies should explore the
experiences of contingent faculty and compare them with those of tenured faculty. In addition,
tenure-track contemplative faculty should further be tracked by academic rank classifications,
i.e., assistant, associate, or full professor level.

Lastly, contemplative faculty in this study widely reported that employing contemplative
practices promoted better relationships between faculty and students. However, this study did not
provide representative information about how these practices promoted better interactions. Either
quantitative or qualitative research on which contemplative practices promote positive faculty-
student relationships would help researchers and educators understand why contemplative
practices support learning in the college classroom. Additionally, the findings could be tested in
future studies with a focus on nontraditional students.

Concluding Remarks

Findings for this study add to the current body of research on contemplative practices in
higher education. It provides a robust overview of faculty perspectives that contribute to
scholarly dialogue about contemplative educator identity, personal journey, benefits, and
professional challenges of contemplative faculty.

The purpose of this study was to explore, understand, and share the narratives of
contemplative higher education faculty as well as bring awareness to their values and struggles in
higher education. Contemplative faculty’s academic identity was informed by their personal
practices, and these identities shaped students’ academic experiences in compelling ways. Using
these findings to modernize institutional practices and adopt innovative approaches to college
teaching are essential to long-term student success.
References


Clarke, V. B. (2013). Engaging the noosphere: An integral approach to teaching spirituality online. In Groen, J., Coholic, D., and Graham, J.R. (Eds.), Spirituality in social work and


Appendices

Appendix A – IRB Approval Letter

June 21, 2017

Dear Ms. Pizzuto,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled “Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Examining Faculty Perspectives.” Your research protocol is hereby approved as revised through expedited review. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of this stamped form.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for your cooperation.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Elaine Walker

Office of Institutional Review Board
Presidents Hall • 400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079 • Tel: 973.313.6314 • Fax: 973.275.2361 • www.shu.edu
Hello,
my name is Daria Pizzuto and I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University. For my dissertation, I am conducting a research study about how faculty members perceive contemplative practices in their teaching, how they describe the benefits for themselves, as well as their implementation, benefits, and any impact on academic identity.

I am looking for higher education faculty employed in 4-year, degree granting institutions in the U.S., and have at least one year of experience with contemplative practices in their classroom, who would be willing to participate in one-on-one interviews with me about contemplative practices in their teaching.

The interviews will take about 35 minutes and will be done via Skype, at a mutually convenient time. Interviews will be confidential and you will be given a pseudonym. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in an interview, please respond to me via email daria.pizzuto@shu.edu or reply to this post with your contact information and I will email you the form.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 973-761-9397 or email me at daria.pizzuto@shu.edu.
Appendix C – Informed Consent Form

Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Examining Faculty Perspectives

Researcher’s Affiliation: Mrs. Daria Pizzuto is a doctoral candidate in the Seton Hall University College of Education and Human Services, Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership, Management and Policy program.

Purpose of the Research: This research study explores faculty perspectives on contemplative practices in higher education. The aim of this project is to understand how faculty members perceive contemplative practices in their teaching, as well as their implementation, benefits, and any impact on academic identity.

Research Procedures: Research procedures include the following: research participant will complete a demographic questionnaire and participate in one digital audio recorded, in-depth, semi-structured interview that will not exceed 40 minutes conducted by the researcher. Participants’ information and identities will not be released. Interview questions will seek to understand how faculty perceive contemplative practices in their teaching, how they implement them, how they came to utilize them in their teaching, and what benefits they see for themselves.

Demographic Questionnaire: Prior to the interview, each participant will fill out a brief Participant Intake Survey consisting of 8 questions. Questions will gather information on demographics, discipline, years of experience teaching, and years of experience using contemplative practices in teaching, and whether or not a participant belongs to a community of contemplative educators.

Interview Guide Instrument: Sample questions that will be asked of each participant include:

- Can you tell me in your own words what contemplative practice is?
- What contemplative practices or activities do you engage in while teaching?
- How do you incorporate contemplative practices into your own life?
- How do you incorporate contemplative practices into your teaching?
- Can you give me a specific example or tell me about a recent time when you used contemplative practice in a class?
- From what tradition(s) do you draw?
- What challenges have you encountered when using contemplative practices in your teaching?
- Has contemplative practice always been a part of your work as a professor?
- How did you begin using contemplative practices in your teaching?
- Do you know of other faculty who practice some form of contemplative practice?
- Do you feel supported to practice contemplative practices at your institution?
• How often would you say contemplative practices come up in conversations with colleagues? a) Do you share ideas or practice together?
• What impact do you feel practicing together with students has on your teaching?
• What have you noticed about how your students have responded to contemplative practice? a) What kinds of transformation have you seen in your students?
• Can you tell me a few stories about at time when contemplative practice was particularly transformative in a) your class? b) For you personally?

**Voluntary Nature of Participation:** Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality:** In this proposed study, anonymity is not possible because the researcher will know the participants as part of the interview process. All identifying information and interview responses will be kept strictly confidential and you will be assigned a pseudonym (alias) to protect your identity. Professional transcribing service TranscribeMe! will transcribe the recordings. Only the researcher and the transcribing service will listen to the recordings. The researcher and the transcribing service will have access to the interview recording and transcript. Only the investigator will have access to the identifying data. During the study, the dissertation mentor and committee members will have access to the coded information through the researcher.

The records of this study will be kept confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked cabinet, located at the principal investigator’s private residence. Each participant and audio recordings will be assigned a pseudonym. No information will be included in any report that is published or unpublished that would make it possible to identify participants. All electronic data will be stored on a USB memory key. The USB memory key will be stored in a locked cabinet at the principal investigator’s private residence.

**Anticipated Risks:** There is little to no foreseen risks or discomfort associated with this project.

**Benefits:** Participants will not likely experience direct personal benefits but their responses will help the researcher understand how faculty perspectives on contemplative practices might better inform university leadership and their academic peers about these practices.

**Participant Compensation:** There is no payment and/or incentive for participating in this project outside of contributing valuable information about contemplative practices in higher education.

**Contact Information:** If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the principal investigator, Daria Pizzuto, at 973-761-9397 or daria.pizzuto@shu.edu, in the Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy at Seton Hall University, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079, Jubilee Hall, Room 407.

The dissertation mentor, Dr. Elaine Walker can also be contacted at (973) 275-2307 or elaine.walker@shu.edu, in the Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy at Seton Hall University, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079, Jubilee Hall, Room
416. If you have questions about your rights as a human research subject, you may contact Dr. Mary Ruzicka, director of Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research at (973) 313-6314 or irb@shu.edu.

**Audio recording:** Interviews will be audio recorded. To protect your confidentiality, the audio tape will be assigned a pseudonym. Only the principal investigator and the transcription service will have direct access to the tapes, however, the dissertation mentor and committee members will have the right to access the data files upon request. Only the principal investigator and transcription service will listen to the tapes. The recordings and interview transcripts will be stored on a password protected, secure USB drive, in a locked cabinet at the principal investigator’s private residence. The interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcription service TranscribeMe! Participants will have access to their interview data upon request. The investigator will retain all data collected for 3 years after project completion, after that all recordings will be destroyed.

**Statement of Consent:**

To indicate consent to participate in this research study, please sign and date this form in the space provided below. Participants will be provided with a copy of this signed and dated consent form for their records.

_____ I understand the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of this study. I agree to participate in this study.

_____ I agree to be audio recorded during my interview.

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**Participant Name (Please Print)**

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**Participant Signature**

Date

---

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

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**Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board**

JUN 21 2017

**Expiration Date**

JUN 21 2018

**Approval Date**
Appendix D – Intake Survey

1. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
2. What is your discipline?

3. How many years have you been teaching on the higher education level?

4. How many years have you been implementing contemplative practices in your teaching?

5. How would you identify your level of experience with contemplative practices:
   a. Novice
   b. Developing
   c. Experienced

6. Do you have institutional support at your university to practice contemplative practices?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not sure

7. Are you an active member of a community of contemplative educators?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Sometimes
Appendix E – Interview Protocol

Faculty interview #

Info on Background:
Collected with intake qualifying survey

Introducing the interview

To facilitate our note taking, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. Only I will have access, and I will destroy the recording after I transcribe it. All information is confidential, your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Thank you for your agreeing to participate!

Interview style: semi-structured.

Interview questions:

☐ Tell me a little bit about your teaching…

☐ Can you talk a little bit about the history of your personal relationship with contemplative practice?

☐ Can you tell me in your own words what contemplative practice is?

☐ What contemplative practices or activities do you engage in while teaching?

☐ How do you incorporate contemplative practices into your own life?

☐ How do you incorporate contemplative practices into your teaching?

☐ Can you give me a specific example or tell me about a recent time when you used contemplative practice in a class?

☐ From what tradition(s) do you draw?

☐ What challenges have you encountered when using contemplative practices in your teaching?

☐ Has contemplative practice always been a part of your work as a professor?

☐ How did you begin using contemplative practices in your teaching?
☐ Do you know of other faculty who practice some form of contemplative practice?

☐ Do you feel supported to practice contemplative practices at your institution?

☐ How often would you say contemplative practices come up in conversations with colleagues?

☐ What impact do you feel practicing together with students has on your teaching?

☐ What have you noticed about how your students have responded to contemplative practice?

☐ Can you tell me a few stories about a time when contemplative practice was particularly transformative in your class [for you personally]?

Probes

Say what you mean by [term or phrase]

When you say, [term or phrase], what are you actually doing?

It sounds like you are saying […] Is that a fair summary?

So you are saying […]? [any time I paraphrase what I think the interviewee said, I will ask them if the paraphrase accurately captures what they meant]

Why was that important to you?

Why does that stand out in your memory?

Why does that matter?

How did you feel about that?

What was significant about this to you?

Tell me more about that.

What would that look like?

How do you do that?

What were other people doing then?
If I were watching you do this, what would I see?