An Inquiry into Higher Education’s Controversial ‘Countermovement’: Contemplative Pedagogy

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An Inquiry Into Higher Education’s Controversial “Countermovement”: Contemplative Pedagogy

Roberta Mary Pughe

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Educational Leadership, Management and Policy

Seton Hall University 2021
APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Roberta M. Pughe has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ph.D. during this Fall Semester.

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Abstract

Academic interest in “mindfulness” has grown exponentially since the 1980s. Along with the dissemination of mindfulness came an appropriation of contemplative sacred texts and the somatic psychologies along with a misperception of its concepts and practices as inherently religious. Contemplative pedagogy, which addresses the application of contemplative studies to the classroom and its community, is therefore equally likely to be misunderstood. Despite recent studies claiming the benefits of contemplative pedagogy on students’ mental health, test results, and personal and interpersonal relationships, contemplative pedagogy is still widely underutilized; this suggests such a misunderstanding of the field and could explain the lack of implementation in the classroom. In this study, I outline both sacred and secular origin contributors of contemplative pedagogy, with Gestalt therapy theory and cognitive behavioral therapy theory in particular as psychological contributors appropriated; at the time of writing, this study appears to be the first to distinguish the sacred and secular contributions of this field explicitly. Subsequently, through 14 semi-structured interviews of non-contemplative-identifying faculty members, I develop a grounded theory for understanding faculty perception of contemplative pedagogy. This grounded theory explains the causes for underutilization in the classroom. Namely, it is found that the breakdown in the adoption of contemplative pedagogy is not due to negative perception of the theory or any perceived religiosity associated with contemplative pedagogy. Rather, the breakdown in the adoption of contemplative pedagogy stems from a lack of institutional support. Many teachers feel that they are not provided with the time and resources to learn to be contemplative educators. Most intriguing, while it is found that faculty are cautious in incorporating religious affiliations into their professional identities, a perception of contemplative pedagogy as religious and/or spiritual does not cause a negative
perception thereof. The results of this study suggest that the most effective way to bring contemplative education to faculty and students is to develop institutional policies that support, encourage, and protect teachers if they devote more time to their professional development.

Keywords: Contemplative Pedagogy, Contemplative Practices, Higher Education Pedagogy, Gestalt Therapy Theory, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Theory
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I am extremely appreciative of my intelligent and seasoned participants who freely gave their time and in-depth perceptions of their significant experiences in higher education. They were open, sincere, and wise, and their interviews were incredibly rich and heartfelt, contributing such magnanimous research to the field of contemplative pedagogy.

I have also been truly fortunate to receive nurturing and encouragement from my colleagues, psychotherapists and friends. I especially want to thank my long-time friend Emilia Di Santo for her unlimited generosity, intelligence, spirited support, and her indefatigable encouragement, often cooking for me so my body and soul were nourished. Special thanks to my inner-circle girlfriends, who for the past five years endured less of me socially yet remained strong in their confidence of me and their attachment to me and listened, with patience and wisdom, to the permutations of my dissertation topic, never faltering in their belief in me.
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to

Francesca Eperjesi Udvarnoky Pughe (1935–2020)

John Edward Leofric Pughe (1933–1990)
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“Contemplation is a kind of spiritual vision to which both reason and faith aspire, by their very nature, because without it they must always remain incomplete. Yet contemplation is not vision because it sees ‘without seeing’ and knows ‘without knowing.’ It is a more profound depth of faith, a knowledge too deep to be grasped in images, in words or even in clear concepts. It can be suggested by words, by symbols, but in the very moment of trying to indicate what it knows, the contemplative mind takes back what it has said, and denies what it has affirmed. For in contemplation we know by ‘unknowing.’ Or, better, we know beyond all knowing or ‘unknowing.’”

Father Thomas Merton, American Contemplative Trappist Monk (1915–1968, p. 1)
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Within faith traditions around the globe, contemplation is understood to be a necessary pathway for accessing that which is “sacred,” by which I mean culturally held beliefs and truths that can illuminate knowledge creation beyond what can be currently attained through science. While contemplation is an important concept within Platonic philosophy, the term derives from the Latin, “contemplatio” meaning “to reflect upon something at length, to consider deeply.” The wisdom or knowledge gleaned from this pondering is called “gnosis” in wisdom traditions and is believed to be primordial, transcending the intellect (Pughe, 2015). Today, within the classrooms of higher education, sacred texts and contemplative practices are informing curricular pedagogies applied within student-teacher learning methodologies implemented by faculty. This intriguing field of study is referred to as contemplative pedagogy (CP), a controversial pedagogical approach with applications focused on empirically researched, humanistic, heart-centered, body-centric teaching tools and techniques (referred to as contemplative practice [CPr]), which are contributing to a burgeoning interdisciplinary discipline known as contemplative studies (CS). The controversy surrounding this multidisciplinary field derives from a plethora of pluralistic definitions with varying perspectives while the empirical research confirms resounding benefits to student and faculty alike (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). While faculty have basic questions about how to implement CP and its practices in their classrooms, controversy remains as these same faculty are also challenging the educational value and appropriateness of the practices within a secular higher education setting, thus potentially negating implementation. Given the many disputed questions, Ergas (2018) named this a 21st-century curricular-pedagogical countermovement, promoting a rapid expansion of interest in CP across institutions of higher
education. While some critics have suggested that promoting contemplative practice in the classroom creates perilous hazards, crossing the line that divides separation of church and state from religious evangelizing, other scholars have suggested that these concerns are irrelevant as CP often involves secularized versions of practices derived from sacred or religious contexts and can, therefore, easily be applied within the classrooms of higher education. Therefore, its proponents argue, CP does not conflict with a holistic educational model (which values aspects of students beyond the cognitive realm) (Jacoby, 2019).

The culturally imperialist decontextualization and appropriation of Indigenous traditions (Smith, 2012) leaves some scholars wary of first-person approaches to learning that are based on practices associated with particular world religions, suggesting a “hybrid spirituality” is being proselytized within the classrooms of higher education (Komjathy, 2018).

Given this lively debate within academia’s current climate, CPs are additionally providing an informed platform for education to address systems of oppression, and the collective politic, encompassing issues of power imbalances related to the treatment of marginalized peoples—issues at the forefront of higher education. With universities being viewed as servant leaders and catalysts of social transmutation, this pedagogy provides a plan of action for institutions to become change agents grounded in self-actualizing stimuli, which encourages constructive motivation for transformation confronting systems of oppression (Berila, 2016; Rendón, 2009). Harold Roth, director of the Contemplative Studies Initiative and professor of religious studies at Brown University, coined the term “contemplative studies” in 2006. He designed the first university concentration program in this subject, stating that CS is proposing a systematic study of the underlying philosophy, psychology and phenomenology of human contemplative experience, focusing on the many ways that
human beings, across cultures and across time, have found to concentrate, broaden, and deepen conscious awareness as the gateway to cultivating their full potential . . . resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the newly emerging field of the study of higher forms of consciousness . . . we have become the masters of third-person scientific investigation, but we are mere novices in the arts of critical first-person scientific investigation. (p. 1788)

Contemplative scholars are, consequently, re-envisioning and reframing the contemporary teaching-learning paradigm of CP, which “includes consideration of practice beyond theory and consciousness beyond rationality and intellectualism” (Komjathy, 2016, p. 3) and values a subjective experience within the body (Ferrer, 2011a, 2011b) whereby “students experiment with contemplative techniques without prior commitment to their efficacy” (Roth, 2006, p. 7). Since 2000, there has been exponential growth in the number of publications in this field, increasing from 10 publications to 1,200 over the past 20 years. (See Figure 1.) Empirical research from contemporary contemplative educators attempts to address and inform educational theory and praxis due to increasingly recognizable imbalances and vacancies in the system of higher education.

An original contributor to a philosophy of education, Paulo Freire, in 1968, provided contemporary commentary in referencing the concept of *praxis* as theory embodied in reflection and action. From a contemplative perspective, an educational pedagogy seeks to critically analyze and reimagine its paradigm of teaching and learning, suggesting the embodiment of a critique from within a transpersonal, transformative, post-colonial lens (Ferrer & Vickery, 2018; Komjathy, 2018). Integrating both the scientific method and wisdom from sacred traditions, this broader, comparative framework aims to be non-dualistic in its perspective, in separating out
these categories. While they are separate categories in this research study, they face one another, forming two parts of the whole. This pluralistic context encourages an integration of different cultures of knowledge which embody a valuing of subjective experience in order to benefit both the individual and the collective narrative as a whole (Ferrer & Vickery, 2018; Roth, 2006). Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published initially in 1968, offers further discussion on pedagogy in the context of systems of oppression. Embodiment and implementation of these theories as praxis can catalyze greater inclusive action derived from contemplative scholarship (Freire, 1968/2017; Komjathy, 2018). As postcolonial academic thought resists a hierarchical domination and includes a multi-cultural content within a multicultural context, contemplative researchers and scholars from a variety of disciplines and epistemological perspectives are beginning to more precisely and respectfully detail the source-origins and lineages informing this pluralistic, multidisciplinary field of study. In similar pursuit of domination-free orders (Wink, 1999), many scholars of higher education, some identifying as contemplative, are discussing important postcolonial historical threads alive today within academia (Dache-Gerbino, 2017; Smith, 2012). This dissertation seeks to move beyond a binary logic and beyond colonialism’s binary model of dualistic distinctions and “categories of separation” in order to facilitate a better understanding in the dialogue of this global, comprehensive, integrated, continuum of contribution regarding knowledge creation (Ochoa, 1996).
Contemplative publications are on the rise, and CPRs are becoming more widely adapted across disciplines including branches of science, medicine, social sciences, humanities, and business, promoting a fertile, cross cultural dialogic inquiry (Ferrer & Vickery, 2018; Zajonc, 2013). While interest in this field is clearly growing, it remains unclear exactly how widespread the practices are. Zajonc (2013), a physicist at Amherst College, confirms that it is difficult to provide exact numbers of faculty who identify as contemplative practitioners. Indeed, the number of faculty publishing on the topic of CP is not necessarily the same as those practicing
CP in the classroom. As discussed in my literature review, the diversity of views expressed underscores that there is no single theory or praxis of CP.

**Research Problem**

CS as an academic discipline is still a young field of study with varying academic disciplines weighing in. Not concentrated within particular disciplines and spanning the curricular buffet, over the past two decades, the field has increasingly gained popularity within higher education while incorporating philosophies and modalities from both *sacred* and *secular* philosophies. Secular orientations draw their research from the scientific method with its research emphasizing impact to the brain. Sacred impact, I argue, is more interested in issues of “mind” as understood through the wisdom traditions and consciousness studies, discussing an awareness of an open heart, as mind, and an awareness of love that centers one into the heart as a focal factor in education. While both trajectories offer a transformation of mind and body, the sacred literature invites discussions of faith, encouraging a relation with divine mystery, something perhaps defying scientific explanation as we typically understand it. Ergas (2015) is one of the few contemplative scholars in the literature review that emphasizes these dissimilar origins within the field, which he names the two orientations of (a) the wisdom traditions and the ancient esoteric sacred texts, and (b) science, or the scientific method. These divergent trajectories will be more greatly defined and discussed in Chapter 2 within this contextual understanding:

While contemplative practices have been foundational to wisdom traditions throughout recorded history, it is only recently that these practices are being examined in different contexts of learning, particularly in higher education . . . . These [contemplative practices] draw broadly from the perennial world wisdom traditions (i.e., Buddhist,
Taoist, Quaker) and recent scientific research (i.e., neuroscience, cognitive science, clinical psychology) in the interests of investigating contemplative practices as a means for enhancing learning and development across a broad array of educational contexts and disciplinary fields. (Gunnlaugson, 2009a, pp. 25–26).

The field is in the process of distinguishing these philosophical, ontological, and theological influences in order to decontextualize influencers so that we can understand both the distinctions and the overlap of the two contributing orientations without removing beliefs from original source-contexts and associated traditions (Komjathy, 2018). While the merging of sacred and secular research certainly raises concerns for some about the separation of church and state within higher education, it also muddies the waters in terms of uniform definition within the field, which has been accused of merging “a conglomerate of interpretations” (Ergas, 2018, p. 253). How much this muddying of the waters is affecting faculty implementation remains in question. Western psychology, with its emphasis on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) since its development in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn (a PhD in molecular biology), has conceptualized this subject matter and greatly shaped perception of definition within CP, with many educators referring to CP as “mindfulness stuff.” While MBSR has added great value by secularizing CP, some scholars argue that these secularized interventions have, at the same time, contributed to controversy due to accusations of appropriation and decontextualization within the field (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). Criticisms surround the reconceptualizations of CP through psychological and cognitive behavioral secular Western frameworks as they potentially misinterpret cosmic sacred totalities of worldview from Indigenous peoples and world religious traditions who do not see “techniques” and “practices” as separate from their cosmology and worldview as contextual field (Komjathy, 2018; Purser, 2019; Rendón, 2009; Smith,1999/2012).
Within a pluralistic religious comparative framework, most major world religions have embodiment branches; Sufism is the embodied practice of Islam, Vajrayana is the embodied expression of Buddhism, Kabbalah is the embodied practice of Judaism. Tantra in India sprung from Hinduism. Even in Christianity, when congregants are fully “feeling God” they are known to shake and quake (Shakers and Quakers) and speak in tongues (Pentecostalism). Christian Mysticism with 14th-century English mysticism, produced the “The Cloud of UnKnowing” (the medieval classic, ca. 1350 CE), which outlines divine mysteries typically handed down through oral tradition, the voice within the body; and Juliana of Norwich, with her book, *Revelations of Divine Love*, discusses these concepts of embodiment as well (Barnstone, 1984). Understood within these wisdom traditions, embodiment is best understood as the home for the divine known through the expression of “ecstatic union” within the body, earth, and sky unity, where the breath is perceived as the mystical unifier. A useful example of a mind-body duality is the way in which in our Western world “yoga” (viewed as a branch of contemplative practice) is predominately understood as an asana practice, the body postures known as poses. The asanas become separated from their broader embrace within vedic Sanskrit holy texts and sacred treatises of Hinduism known as the Upanishads (c800–200 BCE) (Bhajan, 2003/2007; Robinson & Attridge, 1978).

Ideally, when the term *sacred* is used, theologically speaking, it refers to the broader context of beliefs believed to be holy, related to the natural world and the habitants within that world and the supernatural, the mystery, and that reciprocity of dialogue that provides a particular relational and participatory engagement (Ferrer, 2011a, 2011b). These accusations of appropriation and decontextualization within CS, what we call in our modern world today “intellectual property rights,” affirms actions whereby the people, culture, knowledge, and resources of Indigenous communities are exploited and disregarded. Indeed, the field of CS has
been charged with a history of drawing from particular original texts, peoples, and world cosmologies without acknowledging and referencing original sources understood within their contextual field, thereby perhaps limiting complete understanding and application while also raising questions about itself as a reputable discipline (Komjathy, 2018; Purser, 2019; Smith, 1999/2012). When CP draws upon the ancient wisdom of the shamanic, polytheistic, monotheistic, and transcendent religious traditions, with a consequential cosmological hybridization resulting, it needs to also be mindful of teasing apart the lineages and philosophies of contribution (Ferrer, 2011a, 2011b). Seeking to delineate both sacred and secular orientations, transcendent and immanent contributions (and the overlap) are just beginning to be more thoroughly researched as an essential requirement for increased faculty participation within this field. Perhaps this will help in understanding if there are objections that are limiting participation, exactly what those objections are.

A secular appropriation of psychological theory can be seen in the way the three components of mindfulness, congruent with Gestalt therapy theory, both emphasize the cultivation of awareness and present moment, here-and-now presence through highlighting body sensation are central tenets; yet Gestalt therapy theory is not named and paid homage to, as should be, given that its theories appear to be a primary contributing psychological source to the field of CP (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994). Values in Gestalt therapy theory and practice are best remembered in Fritz Perls’s dramatic demonstration, “lose your head and come to your senses” (Zinker, 1978, p. 70), whose central focus played an important role in the personal growth movement and subculture of the 1960s. When mindfulness reduces Gestalt therapy theory to techniques void of their broader comprehensive psychological theory (within its psychological contextual field of the contact boundary framework), the possibility for misunderstanding and
misapplication is greatly enhanced and loss of integrated embodiment and implementation of this somatic psychological theory results. An example of this is when mindfulness is practiced as techniques applied daily on a meditation cushion once during the day in the morning, in contrast to an altogether different phenomenon with a practicing “gestaltist” who practices the self-regulatory cycle as a lifestyle, organically “in” moment to moment awareness of cognition, affect, and needs as a self-regulating organism. Yontef (1993), a Gestalt therapist and scholar, affirmed, “the Gestalt therapy literature has emphasized a central principle in providing a psychological methodology for increased consciousness,” namely awareness, central to an organism’s self-regulatory cycle (p. 204). Yontef went on to say that this increased consciousness which embodies, by means of awareness, “is a form of experiencing . . . it is the process of being in vigilant contact with the most important event in the individual/environment field with full sensorimotor, emotional, cognitive and energetic support” (p. 205). By not delineating the origins and historical lineages of global contributing beliefs and practices (both secular and sacred), which many accuse is a narrow Western colonization tactic, MBSR has appropriated many techniques shaping the contemplative landscape without acknowledgement of the historical lineage and worldview (often from world religions and faith traditions but in this case, also from Gestalt therapy theory) (Purser, 2019; Smith, 1999/2012). Such is the case with mindfulness core concepts replicating Gestalt therapy theory’s expansive scholarly literature (1950s) predating mindfulness (1979), from which mindfulness theories and practices appear to derive. While “revolutions in human thought seldom take place in a single clean sweep” (Ferrer & Tarnas, 2002), and certainly it is true that there is nothing new under the sun, most new paradigms are informed by historical circumstances of a particular origin and it would serve the field of CP well to place any advance from retained principles within its particular context.
Critics argue that this adaptation leaves us here in the West with techniques deficient in context of “weltanschauung,” a broader contextual field offering deepened understanding, potentially affecting, in this case, faculty buy-in and implementation within the classrooms of higher education. Komjathy (2018) discussed the process of decontextualization wherein the process of removing something from its original context and associated tradition with associated tendencies of colonialization and domestication causes harm to associated adherents, community, and tradition (p. 314). Both mindfulness, psychologically understood as prolonged awareness of the here-and-now moment (such as the breath or sensation), and meditative contemplation, religiously understood as the prolonged awareness of “nothingness” to enter into union with mystery, requiring faith, draw from unique historical origins. The merging of these two distinctions, sacred and secular, promotes for critics concerns of a ubiquitous threat—a nebulous hybrid spirituality—infiltrating higher education, raising church and state tensions, while merged with a new religious and/or spirituality movement within academia (Komjathy, 2018; Purser, 2019). These accusations pose great threats to the actual integration of CPs within the classrooms and boardrooms of academia by both faculty and administration within higher education. While some scholars might perceive CS as secular in nature, promoting a relaxed and receptive brain which enhances critical thinking and digestion of original knowledge, others counter that this reeks of Western culture’s emphasis on individualism and should not be the emphasis of focus—that a sacred foundation is lacking in the teachings of this pedagogy, having greater impact for the collective. Herein lies the problem: while the merging of secular and sacred ideally need not foster tension or division, it appears to highlight a lack of consistency in contemplative educators’ goals and purposes, again, potentially affecting faculty participation and implementation of these practices. The sacred trajectory informs a different focus and end
goal than the secular, many religious scholars have suggested (Eliade, 1974; Merton, 1961/2007; Roth, 2006). Those critics who challenge positions of secularity within CP argue that while the brain science and therapeutic benefits in the research are solid (better emotional regulation, less stress, increased concentration, etc.), these curricula also tout ethical components (kindness, empathy, and compassion) as part of their intended outcomes, still from a carefully crafted position of non-religiosity, “playing the secularism card” (Hale, 2018, p. 1), as it were.

Controversies are encouraged in naming that this field is not non-religious. Education scholars such as Veysey (1970) and Geiger (2016) have confirmed the fact that one of the primary early influencers of higher education was religion’s protestant theology with its emphasis on morality (to be discussed in Chapter 2) as integrated in education by ministers. If the field of CP does not find resolution in the integration of these two orientations, sacred and secular, and offer a way to merge the two as central goals of education, then the teachings and benefits might reach a smaller audience and encounter limitations of embrace, impacting a lack of faculty participation.

While mindfulness and CPs are gaining widespread cultural interest and significant scholarly attention, the religious, and especially the Christian mystic sacred sources, are less well known—much of Buddhist philosophy is given priority as framework (Ergas & Hadar, 2019; Lindahl et al., 2017). My research suggests that distinguishing these two awareness paths as separate, of mindfulness (informed by secular philosophies) and contemplation (informed by sacred and esoteric wisdom faith traditions) is essential in addressing some identified problems, not to further foster division or separation but to provide a fruitful tension honoring the differences of these two trajectories. Given their distinctiveness in foci, and their unique origins with epistemological differences, there is value in not merging this discussion as “one discourse” within the field of CS. Differing voices across cultures, and across time, and differences in aims
and goals based on cosmology and worldview need greater delineation (Ergas, 2018; Ferrer, 2015). Collective contemplative research discusses impact “across seven (7) domains: cognitive, perceptual, affective, somatic, conative, sense of self, and social” (Lindahl et al., 2017, p.1). The mindfulness literature has more of an individual secular focus with emphasis on student brain processing where sacred, religious CPs redirect contemporary focus from individual toward the larger environmental field, encompassing community, with emphasis on the whole, promoting empathy combined with selfless service for the greater good (love of neighbor) as priority; that there is greater distinction in the origins of these two trajectories than has yet been researched is an understatement and shows up as a gap in the literature which my research will help to address (Gunnlaugson, 2011). In its defense, CS is still a young, emerging field and with continued solid empirical research will find greater clarity and resolution. While it has been historically appreciated that higher education’s goal is the awakening of the pursuit of knowledge, this field is introducing a renewed assessment of education’s goals. Growing wisdom and not just knowledge in students is now perceived, due to empirical research in this field, as a worthy pursuit in building more balanced human beings and addressing issues of social justice that are in the foreground of higher education today (Gunnlaugson et al., 2017). Suggesting that organically, as a byproduct of mending spaces of interiority within the self, the student (perhaps becoming more whole and heart-centered through engagement with these practices) might naturally flow outward to make contact with the external world with a receptive heart and a willingness to participate in equalities of activism on campus. In this model, timely issues of social oppression and hierarchical dominations on college campuses move into the foreground as a natural byproduct of engagement with these practices—again, referencing integral education’s
holism concept of inner/outer integration without separation of the two, honoring the integration of both internal and external in greater balance (Berila, 2016; Sohmer et al., 2020).

Given the limited empirical research regarding non-identifying contemplative faculty’s relation to this field, what we understand from those faculty who identify as contemplative educators is that they consider CP to be a necessary and non-negotiable part of their personal and professional identity. According to Pizzuto’s (2018) research examining faculty perspectives, those faculty who practiced CPrs in the classroom suggested that they valued nurturing creativity, acceptance, self-awareness, and resilience in their students. Pizzuto continued to explain that “three types of attitudes from non-contemplative faculty were identified (from contemplative faculty narratives), namely, supportive, passive-aggressive, and openly resistant” (Pizzuto, 2018, p. 100). Through the addition of my research, I seek to measure this resistance and see if it is actually resistance, or perhaps something else. Through my research, I seek to measure if resistance to CP is a real phenomenon (without naming it as such) and to inquire about what might be informing this resistance or objection. My curiosity is fourfold in terms of potential contributing factors that might be impacting lack of implementation of CP encompassing greater numbers of faculty, which also raises the question): How much do the practices of non-identifying faculty (NIF) align already with contemplative practice but they don’t name it as such? My fourfold items of interest are:

1. sacred vs. secular: possibility that religious concerns are causing lack of faculty adoption

2. lack of awareness: it takes time to disseminate and embrace new pedagogy

3. lack of subjective experience, faculty not a personal practitioner themselves

4. takes time away from course content so low on the totem pole of faculty priorities
Fostering an understanding of higher education’s faculty perspectives will potentially aid in creating inclusive higher education policies and practices for the classroom that are responsive to student needs and concerns. With increased financial pressures facing academic institutions due to COVID-19, higher education now finds itself facing an increasing number of stakeholder voices demanding greater educator accountability. This, in turn, mandates faculty to be efficient with their instructional time while also addressing student individual and collective wellness. Given that there is a lack of research in understanding how higher education faculty are perceiving and relating to CP as a growing field of study, this research might increase its implementation as faculty understand there is a skill-set in these practices whereby their work could find aid and support, especially in these times of pandemic with increasing student demands affecting faculty load. Researching perceptions to create better understanding of how NIF might be imagining CP is needed and will fill a gap in the literature. In addition, I am hoping that my research contributes to an improved uniform definition by distinguishing the two trajectories of sacred and secular, teasing out faculty relation to the two distinct orientations. Perhaps this contribution within the empirical literature will support greater faculty implementation of contemplative pedagogical practices and may even offer tools and skills for internal support for faculty themselves related to both the faculty individually and their students.

In Komjathy’s (2018) discussion of concerns of “hybrid spirituality, meditation as a new religious movement, spirituality in education and so forth” (p. 276), he suggested that we “not only be scholars in contemplative studies but scholars of contemplative studies” (p. 276). This is an important distinction which I seek to uphold through my research. Institutional systems, academic departments, administrations, and faculty utilize historical traditions which sometimes unknowingly reinforce particular destructive outcomes rooted in hierarchical power imbalances.
(Berila, 2016; Rendón, 2009). We are living in an era where students are demanding that institutions awaken and address the outdated structures that are keeping the marginalized outsiders. Issues of high priority on college and university campuses are exhibited through student protests for increased diversity of faculty within departments supporting a full spectrum of representation, along with increased staff to support mental health concerns (Eppert, 2013; Magee, 2019). Contemplative education brings soteriological orientations to the forefront of education, inspiring deeper reflection on being-ness, identity, humanity, and consciousness raising, which addresses these issues of social oppression and marginalized peoples’ concerns now alive on college and university campuses. Contemplative educators highlight these collective existential realities as an important aspect of education, relating to what Komjathy (2018) referenced as “the possibility of being” and “psychologies of realization” (p. 276), concepts this field highlights. When these aspects of “human education” move to the foreground through a pedagogical model, emphasis is placed on existential, soteriological, and even theological dimensions of human being and personhood, with education encompassing questions of existential meaning and purpose becoming centrally important. No longer is education considered to be solely about content and knowledge acquired (Komjathy, 2018). For the contemplative practitioner, the subjective transformative effects parallel external actions, and right effort for the greater good, which is why the pull of CS is now being utilized to address and frame behaviors addressing social justice concerns on college and university campuses. The “possibilities of contemplative being” (Komjathy, 2018, p. 277) is a field of education seeking to educate faculty who will, in turn, educate students, so that dialogue with policymakers and stakeholders will potentially reshape education of the whole person, hopefully affecting constructive change for the broader academic institutional field (Komjathy, 2018). In turn, a
contemplative culture impacts all aspects of being human together as community within higher educational institutions.

While Altbach (2011) stated that “the contemporary university is the most important institution in the complex process of knowledge creation and distribution” (p. 191), I argue that a classroom rooted in non-authoritarian structures (a CP principle) both organizationally and socially holds more potentiality as the most important space for the reconstruction of knowledge and its distribution. The history of American higher education sadly confirms what progressive contemplative educators today are most concerned about. They argue, therefore, that due to the proven historical relations between academic institutions and structural and cultural inequities, traditional pedagogies need to be reanalyzed through a contemporary inclusive contemplative pedagogical lens and applied within the classroom through the teaching of contemplative educators (Freire, 1968/2017; hooks, 1994; Rendón, 2009). Criticism of the hierarchical system of education today has led progressive contemplative scholars to propose a “critical” pedagogy that would alter education’s role in reproducing what Freire called “banking” mindless relations (Freire, 1968/2017). Through contemplative pedagogical attempts, CPrs seek to establish more egalitarian relations in the classroom among participants by enabling those typically silenced by the system to become critical subjects who act on the world and remake it (Roth, 2006). When successful, this CP can produce the possibility for the reconstruction of knowledge by readdressing contemporary issues within higher education, encompassing engagement with issues of socioeconomic status, race, age, family status, and sexual orientation through higher education policies.
Purpose Statement

My research topic belongs to the broader field of academic study referred to as “contemplative studies,” with its subset, “contemplative pedagogy” creating diverse learning environments specifically applied to teaching and learning within university and college classrooms. The fact that the field is multidisciplinary creates a richness of tapestry yet also contributes to complications, as there is great controversy over specificity of definition, potentially affecting implementation. The research has consistently confirmed CP fosters deep learning for students through focused attention, reflection, improved self-regulation, and heightened awareness, aiding in the cultivation of a skill set which supports constructive engagement with others (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Ergas, 2015; MacLean et al., 2010). These practices are informed by both sacred trajectories and secular lineages and inform both contemplative philosophies and practices, providing opportunities for development in attention, focus, and increased awareness and understanding, as well as the ability to solve problems creatively, listen, and speak across difference, and to consider one’s singular impact on the global world (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). While broad in its definition, this research elicits open-ended conversation with faculty to clarify and fine-tune consistent and specific themes and patterns for a more collectively agreed upon definition. While various studies have shown that CPs improve both cognitive and academic student performance, student mental health stability and overall well-being, and development of the whole person, many CP researchers have suggested that education requires more than this. Aligned with this belief, my working definition (shared below) finds congruence with the definition provided by The Contemplative Mind in Society’s Association of Contemplative Minds within Higher Education (ACMHE), a leading group in the field that boasts thousands of members made up of administrators, faculty, and
higher education professionals (ACMHE, 2021). My definition draws from the ACMHE’s definition which reads as follows:

in service of an education that promotes the exploration of meaning, purpose, and values and seeks to service our common human future. An education that enables and enhances personal introspection and contemplation leads to the realization of our inextricable connection to each other, opening the heart and mind to true community, deeper insight, sustainable living, and a more just society. (The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, 2019)

Generation Z, which describes students born between the late 1990s and the early 2010s, has presented with, and vocalized experiencing, a sharp increase in mental health concerns in comparison to previous generations. Since those Gen-Z students comprise a large percentage of student populations (57% enrolled in two-year or four-year college, according to Pew Research) (Parker & Igielnik, 2020), CP has become a burgeoning field of study within academic institutional environments. The empirical research and literature confirm that CP supports mental health and psychological well-being, promoting student productivity and learner health. The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) surveys with their Spirituality Modules for faculty focus specifically on campus conversations. Students have reported that faculty play an important role in the dialogue: 70% indicated that most of their professors turn controversial topics into meaningful discussions; 79% report that most of their professors encourage students to contribute different perspectives to class (Cesar-Davis, 2019). These statistics suggest the influential power that professors have in impacting students’ learning through their teaching techniques and perhaps their “personhood” or “ontological way of being” within the classroom. This study focuses on examining the perceptions of NPFs (non-practicing faculty) of CP and its
methods. It is unclear why there is a lack of adoption of this classroom methodology despite the benefits it has for both student wellbeing and performance—the goal of this study is to make the cause of this resistance or lack of awareness explicit by interviewing NPF or NIF. It is unclear if this lack of adoption is due to teacher resistance. Is the lack of adoption intentional? My curiosity (measuring resistance) is threefold:

1. Does the mixing of “implicit religion” create rejection?
2. Does the fact that a faculty member may be a non-practicing or non-identifying CP faculty matter? Does faculty lack of subjective experience with the subject matter hold weight?
3. Does the opinion that CP diminishes time spent on course content matter?

While this evolving field is both integrative and inclusive in its diversity, again, it draws unknowingly from varying global and Indigenous worldviews. Critics argue that appropriation concerns and a lack of clarity with respect to specific collective definition potentially affect specificity of application and probable appropriated quick fixes in teaching compartmentalized techniques (colloquially referred to as “McMindfulness”) as opposed to a comprehensive teaching and learning paradigm inviting an integrated and embodied philosophical worldview (Purser, 2019). In the interest of contributing more uniform definition that is less religious in initial impact and having a working definition for “contemplative pedagogy” for purposes of my qualitative research study, so that I can engage deeply with faculty within my interviews, I offer the following definition: A relational approach to teaching and learning that promotes the inquiry of meaning, purpose, and values while engaging students in a manner inclusive of and beyond their academic performance, cultivating both intra- and interpersonal skills in pursuit of an embodied education which supports the communal good.
Research Question

My qualitative study focused on one overarching research question seeking to explore non-practicing contemplative faculty perception of CP: *How do faculty who do not practice contemplative pedagogy view this field and its practices?*

Despite the already researched multitude of benefits of CP in the classroom, the Cartesian nature of higher education, prioritizing rationalism, intellectualism, and scientific knowledge, has ingrained in teachers a style of teaching that focuses mainly, and sometimes solely, on subject matter and knowledge content. This leaves the classroom devoid of emotional and relational development for the student, which CP aims to provide. The literature thus far has focused exclusively on how faculty practitioners of CP experience it, heralding its benefits (Astin et al., 2005; Laukkonen et al., 2020; Pizzuto, 2018). Gaps exist in the empirical research of the experiences of NPF, or whether there is faculty resistance to this teaching style. This study focuses on how NPF, or what I refer to as NIF, perceive the teaching and learning of CP and its perceived effects in the classroom. Sub-questions and probes included but were not limited to the following given the qualitative nature of the semi-structured interview process:

- Are you aware of experiencing active resistance to contemplative pedagogy methodologies?
- If you were to name yourself as a non-contemplative educator, how do you phenomenologically perceive, relate to, and experience the teaching and learning of contemplative pedagogy and its confirmed effects in the classroom?
- To what extent do you, as faculty, view contemplative pedagogy as “sacred”?
- To what extent should the classroom and the teaching styles be secular?
- To what extent does the development of non-academic student skills matter to faculty?
To what extent do faculty believe student mental/emotional health is their responsibility?

Do you believe you have no awareness of contemplative pedagogy and perhaps believe this to be true because it is a new field of study? What do you believe to be the reasons for your lack of awareness of this field?

Other open-ended questions for semi-structured interviews will follow, derived logically from the central research question: First, do you believe that:

1. Critical reasoning understood as “central to good education” does not leave time for subjective reflection and contemplation?
2. The correct space for fostering “self-development” is outside the classroom?
3. It is not the responsibility of a professor to address emotional student concerns?

Do you (a) create classroom space for a moment of silence, (b) endeavor to find ways to empower each student’s voice, (c) have students participate in classroom teaching, and (d) break class into small groups to promote connectivity and belonging within the classroom community?

Primary themes pursued in interviews are drawn from the four objectives as outlined in the book by Barbezat and Bush (2014), *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education* which are as follows:

1. Focus and attention building, mainly through meditation and exercises that support constructive brain states, mental stability
2. Incorporating contemplation and introspection into the content of the course, in which students discover the material in themselves and thus deepen their understanding of the material
3. Compassion, connection to others, and a deepening sense of the moral and spiritual aspect of education
4. Inquiry of the nature of their minds, personal meaning, creativity, and insight. (p. 11)

**Defining the Terminology**

Holistic educators Ferrer and Tarnas (2002) discussed a pedagogy that prioritizes more than just cognition. Harold Roth (2006) suggested that a contemplative scholar ought to bring a “critical” assessment outlook to applying these techniques ourselves, again emphasizing subjective experience, without assuming they necessarily work, and then deciding their meaning and efficacy through how they impact our own experience. From this perspective we are not studying phenomena as objects, so this is a philosophical paradigm where subject and object are not divided (Roth, 2006). As a pedagogical framework, in addressing both the individual and the collective relational dynamic—self, other, and the broader environmental field—each is perceived as an interrelated and dialogical organism interacting (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994). Sohmer et al. (2020) referred to this as a participatory approach to transpersonal education and used the term “an embodied spiritual inquiry” (ESI) to discuss their radical approach to integral and transpersonal education. This pedagogy discusses the application of embodied meditations designed to “access multiple ways of knowing (e.g., somatic, vital, emotional, mental, contemplative) and mindfully inquire into best learning outcomes” (Sohmer et al., 2020, p. 2). Including a discussion about boundaries, where self meets other and engages with the environmental field, F. S. Perls et al. and Sohmer et al. suggested that boundaries are experienced as dynamic effects rather than as static qualities. This suggests a relational component as a necessity within education. Sohmer et al. used terms of dissociation (desensitization), merging (contact), and integration (satisfaction and withdrawal) in discussing an intersubjective transpersonal turn within this field. In their philosophy, multiple kinds of knowing are considered as an essential aspect of student and faculty learning. Grounded in the
paradigm of participatory philosophy (Ferrer, 2011a; Ferrer 2017; Ferrer & Tarnas, 2002), ESI holds transpersonal knowledge as relational, embodied, enactive, and inquiry-driven (Ferrer, 2000; Ferrer, 2008, Ferrer 2017). Like the undulation of movement in life, similar to the breath, the inhale and the exhale together form the necessary dynamic relation of the parts to the whole, a foundational Gestalt therapy theory concept. Intrapersonal (self with self as learner) and interpersonal (self with other as learners together) aspects of personhood suggest that a discussion of boundaries is essential, referencing human beings as living membranes with permeable, impermeable, and semi-permeable boundaries necessary for healthy self-regulation with regard to learning and integration of knowledge. CS research encompasses this participatory interrelatedness of the individual (both student and faculty), the classroom, the institution, and the larger community—the world at large—as central to necessary engagement with this material.

Given these psychological applications, Ergas (2018) discussed CP as a “contemplative turn in education charting a curricular-pedagogical countermovement” (p. 251) while Zajonc (2013) called it “a quiet revolution” (p. 83), clearly bringing new foci to the attention of higher education’s goals for the teaching-learning paradigm. When an educational model is embraced within a transformative worldview, this means that research inquiry will be intertwined with the politics of social justice on college and university campuses, as “transformative worldview research contains an action agenda for reform that may constructively influence the lives of the participants and the institutions in which individuals work or live” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 9). Higher education’s role becomes that of a potential catalyst, as higher education works as an institutional change agent confronting individual and social oppression at whatever levels it
occurs—intrapsychic and interpersonal, the individual and the collective—both, by necessity, intertwined.

Edward Sarath (2014) stated that if contemplative education is to progress, it must not avoid inquiry into the wisdom of a cosmic narrative that relates humankind and the divine, as it relates to meaning and to the fostering of human development. Joanne Gozawa (2017) suggested that educators are asking the wrong question, offering instead this question as an act of inquiry for the field: Does the act of learning invite wisdom as well as knowledge? And, how does wisdom as a pedagogical goal differ from knowledge? CS ponders all of this comprehensively, including discussions surrounding the seeking of meaning and purpose within higher education. While many contemplative scholars are asking: Are we talking about a different sort of consciousness within a wisdom perspective (something greater than mere knowledge)? Still other scholars suggest a different question be asked—something like: “what is the relationship between contemplative education, expanded potentiality of human consciousness, wisdom, and teaching and learning?” (Gunnlaugson et al., 2017). The literature is replete with these sorts of questions encouraging an intersubjective turn in emphasis, which is perceived by many to be a radical approach to a new way of educating (Sohmer et al., 2020).

Based on the diversity in questions contemplative scholars ask and the ways they approach learning and education, it is easy to see why concerns abound as to the lack of uniformity in understanding and lack in clear conceptual terminology. Diverse framings, modalities, and educational aims are rampant in the literature. Confusion of definition and applications abound as well as a lack of congruence with underlying philosophies of influence due to contributions to the field from varying disciplines of expertise (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). These realities contribute to the controversy surrounding the field, leaving it with a large number
of interpretations and a variety of unnamed influencing origins across cultures and across time not yet easily distinguishable (Ergas, 2018). Ronald Purser’s (2019) book title references this phenomenon as “The Mindfulness Conspiracy.” The book expresses concerns that with such an inward focus (as one aspect of contemplation suggests, “go inward”) fostering an individuality emphasis, this movement may be the enemy of action. This view is incongruent with that of most contemplative educators and the research, yet, nonetheless, is gaining traction due to an increase in multiple critiques such as appropriation realities and de-colonization efforts within higher education (Smith, 1999/2012). Contemplative research does, however, invite a more holistic pedagogical model, with an emphasis on a balanced inner alignment supporting an outer action. The union of these two polarities, inner/outer or internal/external, are perceived as the yin/yang of the complete circle with one influencing the other. These two emphases form a union of interrelatedness in CS philosophy with the two polarities perceived as one gestalt (Sohmer et al., 2020). Each affects the other, circling from self to other and to the larger environmental field and back to self (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994). The intrapsychic (individual focusing inward) leads necessarily to the interpersonal (the collective) in a relational, participatory dialogue. At this contact point, there is no longer a perception of separation as in a Cartesian dualism, as developed by René Descartes, but more a relational exchange in contact.

With so many divergent discussions occurring in the literature, an empirical research review returns repeatedly to the question: What exactly is it that CS is trying to accomplish? I propose its goal is a paradigm shift toward educational embodiment: an institutional incomplete gestalt seeking completion through a redefining of higher educations’ mission, what Sohmer et al. (2020) referred to as transpersonal education as embodied. In addressing the totality of human
being, the mind, body, and spirit of the student, an ontological shift in perception is required to educate and relate to education in new ways, through a new paradigm as container.

Secular contributions, in origin, are informed by the disciplinary fields of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and neuroscience (both young fields, emerging in 1960). These disciplines suggest that human beings are necessarily deconstructed in an intrapsychic manner with emphasis on the brain and brain processing, through a lens of cognition, affect and behavior, encompassing mind, body, emotion, and action (behavior) (Orr, 2014). There are ways in which destructive cycles become patterns and/or constructive cycles become patterns that can be fostered to nurture mental health. The field of CS supports the theories of transformative education and seeks to nurture constructive states of being human with cognition, affect, and behaviors fostering congruence and alignment with the self’s interiority (Jung, 1996). Once a self is in the right relationship with one’s self, it follows logically that the inner state of internal interiority will act itself out in the external exteriority, the environmental field. Ideally, if a shift in consciousness can allow an internal state of calm, peace, alertness, or clarity, then it follows that the internal state might positively affect constructive connectedness relationally in the field it is orbiting. CS as a new discipline is addressing these sorts of issues: three-fold relationality; shifts in ordinary states of consciousness; student and faculty improved states of well-being; decreased depressed and anxious mood. Yet the question remains: Why aren’t more faculty utilizing these helpful tools in the classroom? (Orr, 2012).

Three areas of concentration in the literature focus on integration of both secular and sacred qualities: (a) enhancing students’ learning, (b) addressing oppressive discourses, and (c) developing a worldview grounded in non-essentialism and interconnectedness (Osterhold et al., 2007). While there is a clear consensus forming among contemplative educators that confirms
the necessity for an integral education that incorporates all aspects of human experience—body, heart, mind, vital, and spirit—into the process of learning and teaching, much more research is still necessary. While the integration of sacred and secular forms the backbone of contemplative practice, and holds immense possibilities for expansion and growth in the field of higher education, the field’s movement into the religious traditions with the incorporation of sacred texts into higher education presents grave concerns for many.

**Significance of the Study**

Ferrer (2011a; 2011b) suggested this is a humanistic pedagogy, one which invites a participatory paradigm of inquiry and a relational engagement from both student and professor. Ferrer (2015) branded CS a “pluralistic transpersonal philosophy” (p. 124), one in which consciousness-based approaches of experiential exploration are utilized to support a new educational paradigm. This definition merges both sacred and secular categories which ultimately is what the field is doing without naming it as such. This intriguing pedagogy, informed by both sacred and secular traditions, encourages a paradigm shift in consciousness, inviting an integrated education informed through the praxis of CPmts. These time-honored techniques are believed to activate not solely an intellectual knowledge but a rich inner intelligence fostering a wisdom mind (Gunnlaugson et al., 2017). This affirms the assessment by Gunnlaugson et al. (2017) that “the conventional model for learning suppresses the world of interiority” (p. 75). The term “interiority” is used here to refer to an inner dialogue with intelligence that might be intuition, wisdom, or higher states of consciousness inhabiting the body’s inner intelligence, sometimes referenced in spiritual or religious terminology as the “soul.” This concept hearkens back to a *vita contemplativa*, a medieval term used to describe a life infused by meditation and prayer (Ergas, 2018; Steel, 2020; Zajonc, 2008). When we draw
from Christian sacred texts, this *vita contemplativa* develops characteristics of personhood described in varying religious traditions as “the fruits of the Spirit” which are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (*New American Standard Version Bible*, 1971/1995, Galatians 5:22, 23), or what The Mother (of Sri Aurobindo & The Mother’s teachings *On Education*) discussed as Divine consciousness characteristics: “Sincerity, humility, gratitude, perseverance, aspiration, receptivity progress, courage, goodness, generosity, equality, peace, harmony, strength, perfection, wisdom and unity” (Sri Aurobindo Society, 2019), or what Maslow referred to as the “B-values” (Maslow, 2020). Clearly, the field of CS is trying hard to integrate these core aspects into a coherent pedagogical model which remains challenging as it is informed by appropriated world religious practices and global Indigenous sacred texts combined with contemporary clinical secular scientific applications (Zakrzewski, 2014). Speaking of such mysteries in easily digestible terms remains the challenge of scientific contemplative research. This intersubjective turn in education, one in which both teacher and student are being invited inward, to listen from inside the heart (and perhaps the spirit), potentially alters the teaching and learning paradigm of exactly what it is that we are educating (again, defining these terms is essential). Many agree this is indeed a countermovement within higher education, redefining ways of perceiving self and other, relationally and ontologically, foundationally addressing “core nature” and “best education” for human advancement (Ergas, 2018). Gestalt therapy theory as I unfold it theoretically in the next chapter offers a psychological construct to aid in this multidisciplinary conversation with an emphasis on its contact/withdrawal cycle. The significance of my research will incorporate Gestalt therapy theory (not yet included in the contemplative literature) as a psychological theory which has been appropriated without theoretical framework in its entirety. As this is elucidated in my
dissertation, this relational psychology theory, namely Gestalt therapy theory, provides a rich construct to aid in multicultural, multi-disciplined, relational somatic dialogue, supporting voices of difference, perhaps finding greater unity of voice to better support this field.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 reviews the literature depicting CS’s historical background in higher education accompanied by conceptual and philosophical frameworks for understanding this controversial pedagogy historically through analysis of pioneering leaders’ contributions to this field. Chapter 2 also explores empirical research regarding varied scholarly pedagogical interpretations of CPs within this field and highlights of importance within higher education emphasizing primary theoretical frameworks. A discussion of the contemplative student emphasizing central ontological characteristics of contemplative education is also included. Chapter 3 details the qualitative research design and methods employed to assess faculty perception of CP, specifically regarding NPF or those faculty who do not self-identify as contemplative educators. Chapter 4 reports the study’s findings, communicated thematically and conceptually after my analysis of codes, themes, and patterns through discoveries within the qualitative research. Chapter 5 summarizes research findings, discusses the potential implementation and application necessary to further theory and praxis within this field, and presents conclusions for future research. It also includes suggestions to improve the standing of this burgeoning multidisciplinary field of study within higher education today.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Background of Contemplative Pedagogy

Within the varied research contributing to the field of CS, scholars in psychology and neuroscience (both young fields) have weighed in with a “secular,” clinical analysis. Both contribute empirical research of cognitive value with brain data including improved brain processing, increased focused intention, heightened attention with attitude, and mood improvements affecting constructive organismic self-regulation (MacLean et al., 2010; Shapiro et al., 2006). Contrarily, other contemplative scholars have weighed in from a seemingly polarized position integrating Christian mysticism and other esoteric texts, yogic philosophies, earth-based spiritualities, and Buddhist teachings. For the purposes of my research, in trying to address this great schism between religion and science, I have termed these contributing viewpoints “sacred” in original influence. From yet another perspective, anthropologists have referenced the power of CPRs with emphasis on researching consciousness, as something of the “mind” beyond the mere brain (psychology and neuroscience’s focus). More specifically, in his book Rites of Passage, French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1960) illuminated a concept called “liminality”—states of consciousness encompassing the betwixt and the between; a non-ordinary consciousness or a consciousness that defies our typical mindset, perhaps similar to yet distinct from daydreams or the dream state. Shamans and philosophers refer to these contemplative states as expanded states of consciousness (mind and consciousness understood as beyond brain) affecting transformational self-knowledge, rooted in a subjective experience and phenomenology of “the body,” understood to be infused by something greater than the body/brain consortium, encompassing something more, such as soul, spirit or higher actualized
potentiality (Maslow, 1943; The Mother, 1984; Pughe, 2015). Clearly, this academic field of CS invites a re-defining of the teaching-learning paradigm with an emphasis on an embodied pedagogy. Ferrer (2008), a transpersonal psychologist and contemplative integral educator researcher, asserted that

the emerging embodied spirituality in the West can be seen as a modern exploration of an “incarnational spiritual praxis” in the sense that it seeks the creative transformation of the embodied person and the world, the spiritualization of matter and the sensuous grounding of spirit, and, ultimately, the bringing together of heaven and earth. (p. 9)

This shift of consciousness into the body invites inclusion and balance of the potentialities of mind, heart, affect, and spirit, integrated within both the individual and the collective, scholars have suggested (hooks, 1994; Rendón, 2009; The Mother, 1984; Singh, 2012). This integrated interiority is then manifested into reality through interpersonal engagement in the world with an inner/outer, internal/external, alignment of character and being (Wilber, 1979/2001). Within the literature, words like “mindfulness” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), “contemplation” (Merton, 1961/2007), “meditation” (Auroville Foundation, 2004), “bodyfulness” (Caldwell, 2014), “spirituality” (Astin et al., 2005), and “embodied spirituality” (Ferrer, 2008) are used interchangeably to converse about this subject, perhaps minimizing understanding, application, and implementation applied as praxis within a broader field of understanding. The diverse use of concepts is problematic since the field draws from varying disciplines, without a precise definition and contextual field; as a result, both pedagogy and practices become difficult to understand and execute for faculty and contemplative researchers.

Given a thorough review of the literature, this contemplative turn in academia is a highly complex phenomenon involving several voices from varying traditions. This multiplicity of
influences promotes divergent orientations, interpretations, and implementations, raising questions about its multiple directions and prompting people to ask whether this is one discourse at all (Ergas, 2018; Ergas & Hadar, 2019). While CP is a rapidly advancing academic field of study within higher education, it appears that clinical psychology, neuroscience, and Buddhist philosophies are currently privileged as primary sources as compared to the somatic and transpersonal psychologies and other sacred wisdom traditions such as earth-based spiritual cosmologies; Christian mysticism; yogic philosophies; and Islamic, Jewish, and Catholic contemplative traditions. Within this field, research has merged the wisdom traditions, which I reference as sacred trajectories, with the empirical sciences and the evidence based scientific approaches, which I label secular, leaving less distinctions between historical contexts, including origin and lineage, over time and across cultures (Ergas & Hadar, 2019; Hale, 2018). While these two orientations inform the justification of CPRs in higher education today, it is not without accusations of religious fundamentalist indoctrination and covert proselytization within academia, on the one hand, and a dismissal and minimization of the cosmologies and worldviews encompassing the wisdom traditions, on the other. A broader and deeper critique into these charges is required to address serious concerns in need of resolution (Purser, 2019; Smith, 1999/2012). I deliberately polarize these two emphases, understanding that we must deconstruct in order to reconstruct.

Thus, it could be suggested that CPRs introduced as curricular “interventions” geared toward instrumental aims—such as improving attention, enhancing executive functions, and tending to teacher burnout and wellbeing—might be eroding a much fuller ethical educational potential inherent in the origins of CPRs within wisdom traditions (Ergas, 2015). Simultaneously, and perhaps paradoxically, the field of CS invites an opportunity for higher education’s return to
its religious roots while concurrently reevaluating its pedagogy rooted in a dualistic Western perspective that emphasizes a dominant Protestant cosmology undergirded by colonial thought (Ferrer, 2018; Smith, 1999/2012). Religion as influential in higher education is not a new phenomenon (Geiger, 2016). What is different is that today the field of CS is resisting Protestant religious domination, suggesting an integration of pluralistic cosmologies with knowledge informed by multi-cultural content within a multicultural context, i.e., Indigenous peoples’ wisdom traditions (Komjathy, 2018; Smith, 1999/2012). Historically, higher education in North America does in fact have its early roots in Protestant theology with emphasis on teachings in morality as a necessary requirement for a good education (Geiger, 2016). The history of American higher education is embedded in a hierarchy of socioeconomic inequities, exclusively privileging education for only a select few. The Puritans brought a hierarchical model to America in which education and property established status and power (Geiger, 2016). Early colleges were expected to adhere to orthodox Puritan principles, now referred to as colonial discourse, and integrate this in their teaching. Historically, ministers were educators interested in the advancement of knowledge—but what kind of knowledge exactly, and knowledge rooted in what sources? These are questions that the academic discipline of CS is very interested in helping to address through scholarly research and historical reevaluation of original source contributors.

While the research within CS necessarily articulates a separation in studying the impact of education on mind and body, the field simultaneously supports an acknowledgement of some mystical union. This conceptual understanding potentially invests a human person with something more than a union of both mind and body. Is it a soul, a spirit, a psyche, a consciousness that we ought to be educating as well as a brain? These are distinctions the
disciplines of theology, psychology, anthropology of consciousness, and philosophy have tried to articulate, perhaps referencing something mysterious, almost inarticulable. Cultural and societal constructs also offer important distinctions between sense and reason, definitions of human virtue and morality, all as important aspects undergirding education historically. These ideas have evolved over centuries as new ideas and revelations have been discovered, yet the basic categories have remained the same. St. Mary’s Hermitage (2003) described how Greek philosophy was taken over from Aristotle and Plato and the mind-body duality was heavily Christianized by Saint Thomas Aquinas. French philosopher René Descartes developed this bifurcation further, making distinctions that relate to the separate disciplines required to study the psychological mind and the physiological body. Within the contemplative literature we read these distinctions referenced as a Cartesian dualism (Ferrer, 2015; Smith, 1999/2012). The field of CS promotes a deflection of inquiry from this dialectical split, or bifurcation of being.

In reviewing the literature surrounding the history of American higher education, Geiger (2016) detailed how ministers were the first teachers in academic institutions hopeful to ensure a disciplined education that would uphold orthodox Puritanism while building communities and a society of greater morality anchored in Reformed Protestantism. Unfortunately, only the elite could afford to be educated, which created a socioeconomic divide distinguishing those who could from those who could not afford this privilege. Laurence R. Veysey (1970) referenced “the college as a disciplinary citadel” (p. 32) while detailing the promise of radical social transformation through collective efforts resulting from a good education. Harvard’s president of 1869, Charles W. Eliot, echoed Veysey’s point and argued that “the actual problem to be solved is not what to teach, but how to teach” (as cited in Veysey, 1970, p. 115). George E. Howard, an 1893 Stanford social scientist referenced by Veysey as someone who called upon the university
to “adjust itself to the changing needs of an advancing civilization” (p. 115), urged a new humanism. Higher education today is facing a historical moment in responding to Generation Z’s demands. Issues like mental health, social justice, and greater inclusivity and equality on college and university campuses are central concerns of this generation raised within a broader sociopolitical environment of 9/11, racial unrest, and a pandemic (to name a few elements). Research confirms that stress, sleep difficulties, depression, and anxiety are all significant factors in undergraduates’ academic performance (American College Health Association, 2014). CPRs and techniques offer a solution for this. Emphasizing a new humanism rooted in domination-free orders helps in prioritizing states of wellbeing for students, not just emphasizing academic performance. CS understands this need and offers both research and practices to merge these educational realities. Despite their potential, contemplative pedagogical practices have yet to be widely adopted within higher education (Schwind et al., 2017).

The history and background of CS defines its purpose in education in a multiplicity of ways. A variety of terms and concepts converge, causing confusion and muddling of distinctions regarding important concepts like mindfulness, bodyfulness, meditation, contemplation, non-ordinary consciousness, self-organismic regulation, and contemplative study. So many different terms are employed that it appears the field is not in agreement with what is actually being addressed. Despite ongoing discussions in different fields of inquiry like mysticism, neuroscience, psychology, religion, anthropology, and consciousness, this controversial new inter/multidisciplinary discipline is inciting a reflective and undeniably introspective turn for higher education. Some scholars have even referred to this movement as a “mindfulness conspiracy” (Purser, 2019), while Arthur Zajonc (2006) called it “the epistemology of love” (p. 2). Needless to say, CS remains a young field of study which understandably is seeking to define
itself more clearly. However complex a deconstruction is, binary themes and polemics within CS literature appear to be useful in deconstructing the origins of source and lineage, with, for example, “mindfulness in education” perceived differently from “mindfulness as education” (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). Mindfulness in education aims to improve cognitive functions, social, and emotional learning, and mental health (researched through empirical scientific methods) with discussion of methods and techniques. Mindfulness as education addresses the field as a pedagogy central to a transformative educational model (often gleaned from wisdom traditions and world religions). Reflected within the literature review is a divided narration between these two central trajectories: one, which I refer to as a psychological/clinical secular framing, and the other, a sacred framing, often appropriated from world religions and Indigenous cosmologies (Komjathy, 2016; Lindahl et al., 2017). Many scholars have challenged the assertion that mindfulness is non-religious in both its pedagogy and its curriculum, claiming instead that it is implicit religion within education (Hale, 2018). With my suggestion of a merging of the two, both sacred and secular, as distinct from religion, we understand that the sacred informs the secular, offering the human spirit the transcendence it seeks. The human spirit longs to rise above the mundane, the profane, the secular, often referenced as “the immanent” theologically, and infuse this with “more,” something transcendent, which is what CPrs purport to offer in discussing expanded states of consciousness, or being-ness (Eliade, 1974). This field is awakening a pedagogy, not purely mechanical, with assumptions that education ought to “service” more than the brain, endeavoring to explore states of consciousness inclusive of heart, mind, emotional, relational, and social aspects of being human (Komjathy, 2016). Some critics argue that this “angle” conjures up connotations religious in nature, actually as implicit religion or “signifiers of religiosity” (Hale, 2018, p. 358). This underscores the importance of examining
the somatic psychologies’ influence, namely Gestalt therapy theory and the transpersonal psychologies, psychological frameworks clearly not Buddhist nor dogmatically religious in nature. Intended outcomes from both sacred and secular trajectories might be quite distinctive yet meeting with overlap, again, muddying the contemplative waters.

Harold Roth (2006) attempted to address the concern of definition in suggesting that the purpose of CS is to “foster a deeper knowledge of the nature of our existence as human beings in a world that is intricately interrelated on many levels” (p. 1800). It seems this construct of interrelatedness is a central driver and focal point of much of the literature. While achieving consensus and agreement about definition and terminology should be an essential goal, additional overarching questions for the discipline of higher education in general are exacerbated. What exactly is it that a faculty member is doing when owning the identity of contemplative educator, or any other identity for that matter? How does faculty identity inform practices in the classroom, and what are the underlying pedagogical theories informing “way of being” as faculty?

Within 21st century higher education, it appears that CS, namely contemplative pedagogical education, might indeed be returning higher education to its religious roots. As a discipline, some say it aims to reconnect us to a spirituality-driven learning—perhaps reimagined with less religious dogma and more pluralistic threads. As the “spirit” of a student is considered and cultivated pedagogically, a student’s inner life can be enhanced (Astin et al., 2005). Conceptually framed within an integrative, progressive, and inclusive lens, the CS field endeavors to elucidate and include a social justice framework as an organic external by-product, developed from an inner impact derived through contemplative practice (Berila, 2016; Rendón, 2009). According to Barbezat and Bush (2014), CP offers a teaching method that utilizes forms
of both introspection and reflection, encouraging students to focus internally and find more of themselves in their courses.

The concept of education as reformative or cultivating a “broad and lofty spirit of reform” (Veysey, 1970, p. 68) (with related empirical research) can help in envisioning a new pedagogical model for teaching and learning today. Defining and understanding contemplative education is important because research has shown that it can positively impact students’ lives (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). There are three important lineages to distinguish—namely, pedagogical, epistemological, and ontological—each with particular definitions for this contemplative education and each drawing from both secular and sacred origins (Ergas, 2018; Roth, 2006). It is critical, given that diverse disciplines are weighing in, that we distinguish between the varying academic lenses through which CP is perceived and theorized. The current literature agrees that if higher education is to bring the multidisciplinary field of CS into a respectable foreground, then a broader conversation across disciplines must exist, valuing the divergent perspectives that diverse academic disciplines contribute while still maintaining some semblance of cohesiveness (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Komjathy, 2018; Roth, 2006). Encouraging respectful dialogue across disciplines is essential to further the precise nature of this field while bringing together an integrated, collective voice regarding the scholarship of teaching and learning.

If we have a discipline, namely, CS, that addresses the phenomenological, epistemological, and ontological experience of being, ought it not be clarified which discipline and worldview is weighing in to support a particular theoretical lineage? Do we address issues of intellectual knowledge and cognitive content only (as educators), or do we incorporate sage values and Socratic principles, such as wisdom and the soul, educating the whole person? Many
contemplative educators have suggested that the whole person implies body, mind, spirit, and heart, not just intellect (Ergas, 2015; Rendón, 2009). Building wisdom with a goal of fostering collective wisdom within the classroom has great potentialities for social justice actions working to overturn oppressive pedagogies and destructive power imbalances within the broader community at large (Gozawa, 2017). Engaging collective contemplative approaches inclusive of, but not exclusive to, the learner’s critical, analytic, and deliberative abilities potentially ensures there will be no “neglect of other essential ways of knowing and being” (Gunnlaugson, 2009a, p. 58). This new model of education presupposes educating the student through an embodiment perspective (hooks, 1994), perceiving the body as the container that houses both the mind (not just the brain) and the body (including affect and heart) and something greater than the sum of all that, something transpersonal which many contemplative scholars call “spirit” (Ferrer, 2008; Maslow, 1943). Some contemplative scholars have referenced “expanded state of consciousness” and/or “self-actualized potentiality” (Komjathy, 2016), but essentially the literature is referring to something mystical, something other-than-secular, something transpersonal. Perhaps we enter the world beyond the secular with the ritual awakening rite of passage into the realm of the sacred, that which is deep mystery, difficult to fathom in its entirety and certainly difficult to articulate in language (Ferrer, 2008). To say that human being embodies realms of consciousness that encompass both secular and sacred aspects of personhood is central to my premise, and that the field of CS embodies and tries to articulate a pedagogy that encompasses realms that are both secular and sacred must also be distinguished without presupposing a dualistic model of bifurcation. All that is in between the merging and the union of the secular and the sacred addresses the liminality that religious scholars, anthropologists, and shamans speak of in terms of
entering states of non-ordinary consciousness, which is what these ideologies and techniques are awakening us to experience and consider as pedagogical inquiry (Eliade, 1974).

The literature is replete with terms like “spirituality” and “spiritual life” in discussing this topic. While many scholars are comfortable with these terms in addressing student concerns of the spirit, I do not share this sentiment, as these terms often conjure up associations of religious dogma for many and could be problematic to the field’s advancement. While this debate remains paramount, I instead suggest usage of secular terms such as “existential,” “transcendent,” “sacred,” or “consciousness” be substituted when researching contemplative issues relating to the search for meaning and purpose among college students. While the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) pursues impressive research in topics such as “Spirituality in Higher Education” and “The Spiritual Life of College Students” (Astin et al., 2005), these terms comprehensively could be replaced with one single term: “sacred.” While merging both secular and sacred foci, an educational pedagogical pursuit of understanding and articulating the search for meaning, purpose, and knowledge creation within higher education through CPrs remains the goal for both students and faculty.

In the closing chapter of the Handbook of Qualitative Research, authors Denzin and Lincoln (1994) asserted that a sacred science is emerging out of a return to concerns of the spirit within the human disciplines. As the influence of psychoanalysis started to enter the culture, by 1945 the father of qualitative research, Paul Felix Lazarsfield, had shown how psychology could provide a framework for interpreting human behavior. Lazarsfield, an Austrian American sociologist, exerted influence over the techniques and the organization of social research now being applied within the field of higher education with the start of the 20th century showing an emergence of qualitative research. William James, American philosopher and psychologist,
widely considered the father of American psychology, in writing about the varieties of religious experience, proposed a science that “would depend for its original material on facts of personal experience, and would have to square itself with personal experience through all its critical reconstructions” (James, 1902/1982, pp. 441). It appears that educational forerunners, like James, celebrated the embrace of first-person knowledge over a hundred years ago. This movement’s valuing of phenomenological subjective experience (Roth, 2006) causing an “intersubjective turn” (Gunnlaugson et al., 2017), addresses a resurfacing of an essential theme in the study of human behavior—namely, the embodiment of knowledge being about the fostering of something one can call one’s own, i.e., original thought. In addition, with the advent and development of qualitative research methods (expanding upon quantitative research), whose designs incorporate subjectivity and phenomenology, we see this growing emphasis emerging within science and higher education. Indeed, CP’s quiet revolution is afloat on college and university campuses (Zajonc, 2006), becoming a curricular-pedagogical countermovement (Ergas, 2018) causing a contemplative turn, or perhaps, a return, in education to that which is foundational. With issues of marginalization of peoples being called into question, “if not now, when?” – a central Gestalt therapy theory statement beckons a full paradigm shift within higher education (Zinker, 1978, p. 70). Perhaps CP positions itself among the sacred sciences endeavoring to bring emphasis to the concerns of the spirit within academia.

These pedagogical philosophies combined are challenging hierarchies of power imbalances as well as dominations of orientations and cosmologies, requesting greater ontological pluralism and inclusion. These anti-oppressive pedagogies offer a holistic human ontology as a contextual framework for contemplative educators to recreate within (Orr, 2002). Certainly a radical, reflective turning toward more than an intellectual and cognitive educational
emphasis is mobilizing contemporary academe. This new emerging pedagogy, or sacred science, discusses concepts such as a “relational ontology” and “intersubjectivity” encompassing relatedness of self to self, and self to other, and self to nature as core tenets (Palmer et al., 2010). Necessarily, this shift in consciousness heightens awareness, perhaps expanding perception beyond self, to other, impacting issues of social engagement in the world, social justice concerns, and environmental relatedness as the broader environmental field (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Berila, 2016; Eppert, 2013).

Contemporary education remains dominated by a Cartesian dualistic approach to knowledge prioritizing the rational, involving calculation, explanation, and logical analysis often at the expense of intuitive intelligence, instinctive knowing, and the phenomenology of first-hand subjective experiential wisdom-mind which the wisdom traditions value (Hart, 2008; Komjathy, 2016; Roth, 2006). This Cartesian duality valuing the empirical scientific model over the sacred wisdom traditions hearkens back to Freire’s banking model of education with emphasis on an “ethos of the rational-bureaucratic-economic orientation” (Ergas, 2018, p. 257) at the expense of other characteristics fostering good education. Sri Aurobindo, the founder of Integral Education, argued that contemplative education ought to be about acquiring information from a multitude of sources, in the hopes of cultivating both the mind and the spirit (Singh, 2012). Aurobindo’s co-creator, referred to as The Mother (1984), stated in On Education that education to be complete must have five principal aspects corresponding to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. Usually, these phases of education follow chronologically the growth of the individual. (p. 7)
If we were to consider valuing both the secular and the sacred, the science and the wisdom traditions, we might not polarize one against the other but instead consider ways to bridge by attending to a dialogue between the two. Louis Komjathy (2016) named the three primary characteristics of a contemplative education as practice commitment, character development, and critical subjectivity. This notion of a “practice commitment” means that scholars themselves who use these practices might be informed in their research as to perspective and perception. While the advent of CS has been researched and discussed through lenses from many fields of study and opaque and conflicting sets of definitions in the literature abound, there is a richness in the depth of complexity. The field would benefit in deepening dialogue to hold all voices and still move toward greater precision of definition. Roth (2006) and Komjathy (2018) both proposed that CS offers a bringing together of the sciences, creative arts, and humanities to aid in identifying the variations of contemplative experiences and cultivate firsthand knowledge, critically assessing its nature and significance. This cannot occur with a revolution in the curricula; instead, the pedagogy which holds this exchange will need to be altered, which is what the literature is trying to address. Unfortunately, confusion remains rampant in this debate. Yet it appears that the field is moving toward clarifying origins of influence beyond the West (which is significant). What it means to educate in the advancement of human knowledge and what a pedagogical underpinning of that pursuit would be continues to need broader and deeper empirical research integrating East and West and global wisdom traditions of Indigenous peoples.

**Pioneering Leaders of Contemplative Pedagogy in Higher Education**

Komjathy (2018) referred to CP as “emerging experiential and experimental educational methodology” (p. 159) that addresses the applicability of contemplative practice to education,
and perhaps more importantly, to the sociopolitical issues students will face upon graduation. CP thus represents a paradigm shift, a new model for teaching and learning. This definition suggests that internalization of the teaching and learning is expected to affect the external engagement in and with the larger world. In Barbezat and Bush’s (2014) seminal text on CPs within higher education, they stated that the benefits of CPs can be categorized into five metrics, with regard to the scientific research done on meditation’s impact on students. Zajonc (2013) affirmed how CPs support the development of “student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior” (p. 83). Ergas (2013) affirmed how CPs are emerging within higher education as effective 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 (p. 213). The literature is replete with benefits for both students and faculty of higher education. For students, the practices and tools offered through CP foster increased focus and attention (Barbezat & Pingree, 2012), ease greater original engagement with the material through an increase in critical thinking, and promote in-depth introspection and reflection (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). In addition, contemplative practice benefits improve cognition and behavior (MacLean et al., 2010) and enhance brain function while significantly reducing stress and anxiety (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additional metrics are increased attention span, improved mental health, increased social connection, increased creativity, and improved course material comprehension. Many U.S. academic institutions have CS initiatives on campus to support the development of this research for faculty, administration, and students.

Most notable for their programs in CS are Naropa University, Emory University, University of Virginia, Brown University, California Institute of Integral Studies, University of Michigan, Rice University, and the University of Redlands (Komjathy, 2018). One of the most
developed and integrated programs is the Contemplative Studies Initiative at Brown University, which incorporates contemplative scientific research in its neuroscience lab. The Contemplative Mind in Society supports this continued research within academia specifically through an organization within higher education known as the Association of Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE). Their mission is to

envision an education that promotes the exploration of meaning, purpose, and values, and seeks to serve our common human future. An education that enables and enhances personal introspection and contemplation and leads to the realization of our inextricable connection to each other, opening the heart and mind to true community, deeper insight, sustainable living, and a more just society. (The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, 2015, para. 1)

Compare this to the comprehensive mission statement of the University of Virginia’s Contemplative Sciences Center, whose mission is to explore contemplative practices, values, ideas, and institutions historically and in contemporary times to better understand their diverse impacts, underlying mechanisms, and dynamic processes through analytical research and scholarship, as well as to help develop new applications and learning programs for their integration into varied sectors of our society. Our mandate is to pursue research, learning, and engagement related to contemplation across all schools and organizational units of the University of Virginia, and to become national and international leaders in this rapidly growing field of activity. (Contemplative Sciences Center, 2013, “Contemplative Grounds”, para. 5)
Compare yet again to Naropa University, whose commitment is to contemplative education, presenting the following description on their website:

Contemplative education at Naropa was born of a desire to transform education. Bridging traditional western academic training with over 40 years of expertise in mindfulness and contemplative learning, the Naropa curriculum is specifically designed to prepare students to engage courageously with a complex and challenging world. Students will not only achieve academic competency, but also gain clarity and self-awareness, feel connected to their community and, crucially, hone their capacity for innovation and creativity. (Naropa University, 2020, “Deep and Engaged Learning,” para. 2)

Similarities in university programs embrace a focus in pedagogy and curriculum as well as an emphasis on individual student awareness related to the larger community. Yet each university’s program is also distinctive with particular and specific emphasis. Seton Hall University (where I completed my PhD studies) has a “Statement of Values and Purpose for a Contemplative Initiative” (M. Balkun, personal communication, February 13, 2020) which supports three broad goals: Transforming and molding the mind, heart, and spirit, while transforming and molding servant leaders, and lastly, focusing on community. In order to accomplish their purposes for implementing contemplative approaches, Seton Hall University’s Contemplative Initiative does the following:

2. Promot[es] the interconnectedness of individuals, groups, and environments on campus and in the local community.
3. Advanc[es] the mental health and well-being of students and faculty.

4. Form[s] servant-leaders with the skills and dispositions needed to promote peace and justice locally and in the world.

5. Form[s] holistic, humanistic professionals. This includes forming students to bring their full humanity to their professions and form[ing] faculty to bring their humanity to their research, teaching, and service. (M. Balkun, personal communication, February 13, 2020)

**The Role of the Contemplative Educator**

The pursuit of contemplation within education is distinguished in the literature in four primary ways: (a) as an ontological state of mind or being, (b) as a practice with specific methodologies, cosmologies, and implementational engagement, (c) identification and examination of the aims of such practices, and (d) understanding and delineating the historical origins and lineages of these practices (Ergas, 2018). Author and social activist bell hooks affirmed that the act of teaching and learning is an educational revolution of values (hooks, 1994). hooks’s emphasis has remained consistent as an enduring theme within CP, emphasizing that teaching “in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (hooks, 1994, p. 13). Going further back in time to one of the great philosopher educators, Aristotle (ca. 350 B.C.E./2009), whose ethics and philosophies were also entrenched in early America’s higher education pedagogical development, stated in his Nicomachean Ethics that “the highest activity is contemplation, and its virtue is wisdom” (p. xvi). Both of these pedagogical contributors seem to concur with the path of the sacred, wisdom traditions that contemplation is a necessary component of good education.
Today, campus centers of faculty development are promoting CP, and students are responding to CP with greater acceptance and endorsement because of their positive subjective experience of it (Roth, 2006). Critical first-person reports have suggested an emergent valuable pedagogy, respected and investigated as valuable learning and teaching within the classroom (Komjathy, 2018). Furthermore, research has confirmed that CPs can also promote acts of social justice, equality, inclusion, and domination-free orders rooted in an anti-oppression pedagogy (Berila, 2016). Of course, non-Western epistemological and ontological contemplative perspectives (primarily Buddhism) contribute to this field, creating a multi-disciplinary, integrative CP, which supports inner and outer engagement in the world. Respected as a pioneering leader and researcher in this field, Laura Rendón has proposed a faculty positionality theory from Sentipensante Pedagogy (see Figure 2), suggesting that the contemplative educator merges these five interrelated roles in the classroom as “way of being” both teacher and learner as well as healer and liberator while embodying activist, social change agent, and artist, as well as humanitarian.
Figure 2

*Faculty Positionality (Contemplative Identity) in the Classroom*

![Diagram showing four overlapping circles labeled Artist, Activist/Social Change Agent, Teacher/Learner, Healer/Liberator, and Humanitarian.]

*Note.* The role of the teacher, as conceptualized by Rendón’s Sentipensante Pedagogy. To educate well-rounded students, the teacher must identify as and embody the roles of (a) the teacher/learner, who possesses knowledge and accepts there is more to learn, (b) the artist, who fosters creativity, (c) the activist, who fights for social justice, (d) the humanitarian, who views education as a service not only to the student but to society at large, and (e) the healer, who works to heals the past wounds of students who have been invalidated or discouraged in their learning journey. Reprinted from *Sentipensante pedagogy (sensing/thinking): Educating for wholeness, social justice, and liberation* (1st ed., p. 138), by L. I. Rendón, 2009, Stylus Publishing. Copyright 2009 by Laura I. Rendón.
Conceptualizing Contemplative Practices as Pedagogy

CP fits nicely under this larger umbrella of CS, contributing scholarly theory and praxis applied by some higher education faculty in the classroom, though no organization seems to have an actual number yet on the percentage of contemplative faculty actually employing CPs in the classroom (the findings of my research outlined in subsequent chapters contribute some theories about why this might be the case). CPs offer a wide array of non-traditional, embodied, somatic experience-centered techniques which contribute to a growing pedagogy. Definitions and practices for students and faculty to cultivate and integrate in the academic curriculum are vast (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). While CS deals with the ontological nature of being human, non-ordinary consciousness, and this multifaceted existence related to all endeavors, CP studies the applications of these CPs within the classroom. The interrelatedness of concepts becomes even more problematic in application due to the fact that CP draws from varying disciplines. If a particular faculty member is not well acquainted with these practices informed by a particular discipline, then skepticism or hesitation in knowledge pursuit or application could ensue; consequently, a consensus on best pedagogies and practices seems essential for faculty and researchers working in the field.

A handful of contemplative scholars have argued that a “McMindfulness” (Purser, 2019) mindset has been appropriated by our Western world with an emphasis on maintaining Western work performance and 24/7 work-life imbalances while playing to add on, or add in, quick fixes which foster a lifestyle which is actually non-contemplative. Scholars have argued that this is a dismissal of ancient cosmological perspectives who saw these CPs being incorporated into a worldview, a relational lens through which to perceive the world and one’s self in it (not as techniques) (Hale, 2018). With words like “mindfulness,” “bodyfulness,” “meditation,” and
“contemplation,” it remains unclear as to what is being referenced. Confusion abounds and perhaps turns off potential faculty seekers. With the two distinct lineages contributing to this field, secular and sacred offer different trajectories delineated by contributions in the fields of psychology, neuroscience, and physics, all disciplines that are clinically scientific (secular) and conjure what we refer to in theological terms as the profane or the mundane (Eliade, 1987). A much different trajectory is the path of the sacred, which views the secular as encompassing both the mundane and the profane yet charged with a divine interpreting presence and thereby infusing the secular, supporting it in becoming something “greater” (Eliade, 1974). Accusations of CS integrating religion, compelling separation of church and state discussions, impact the field of CP negatively and potentially diminish its influential power. The field of CP is seeking to redefine education to treat human being as a whole, embodying mind (cognition = to know), body (affect and behaviors = to do), and self-actualized student potentiality = (to value) as Abraham Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs demonstrates. Ideally, we might speak about CP’s goal as affecting transformation ontologically within higher education today.

Drawing from the sacred trajectory, Sri Aurobindo, the philosopher, yogic teacher, and founding contributor to Integral Education, believed that education should promote spiritual development and ascension of conscience (Singh, 2012). The HERI has a module to measure spirituality which is utilized by academic institutions to measure and evaluate spiritual education in the lives of students (Astin et al., 2005). The use of the term “spirituality in education” in some academic circles is problematic due to accusations of implicit religious agendas being passively integrated which, is argued, obscures the clarity of the aim of education. Other scholars loosely mix the term “spiritual” with “mystical” or “religious experience” and don’t seem concerned (Astin et al., 2011). Harold Roth, professor of Religion at Brown University,
suggested that teaching CPs in the classroom is not implicit religion as the option is being given to the student to test the efficacy of the content. Roth affirmed that faculty are taught to offer each student autonomy and agency through self-selecting particular practices from many options that include non-religious contemplative styles (Coburn et al., 2011). The mixing and merging of terms carry religious implications, raising questions about a “hybrid spirituality” and the integration of the sacred into the secular, interfacing with religion and morality within higher education (Ergas, 2015; Komjathy, 2016). While ancient sacred wisdom traditions and practices draw from Shamanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christian Mysticism, Yogic Philosophies, Paganism, and non-religious meditation, all inform the field of CP with their incorporation of CPs; however, adequate breadth and depth of knowledge about these sacred traditions as “cosmological worldview” is not represented (Lindahl et al., 2017). This appropriation of mere technique without integration of cosmological worldview is limited indeed and most likely minimizes full application of praxis while limiting full understanding that could come through integrated embodiment.

While this emerging field is both integrative and inclusive in its diversity, drawing from varying (ancient) disciplines without origin and lineage clarification fosters unattributed appropriation and potentially impacts implementation and application. Through the contribution of my research, I solidify a working comprehensive definition and add to the field by contributing research with a faculty perception focus, which is clearly lacking in other research to date present. As we better understand faculty perception of this topic, we might better comprehend issues of adoption and implementation. While acknowledging the distinctive traditions of secular and sacred trajectories, these categories are created not as binary schemata but rather to have these polarities face one another and dialogue. While the demarcation of
“secular” and “sacred” hearkens back to a duality between academic life and contemplative life; this polarization is not new. Found in Aristotle and Platonic tradition as well as the medieval period, this polarity is one that academe might not want to perpetuate when it considers the ontological goal of education. While many of the contributing fields to CS have prominent religious threads, often portraying a bifurcated model of the mind split from the body, it is important that it be understood that we are seeking an integrated model as primary construct.

Roth (2006) elaborated the ways in which higher education paradigms distance education from our own humanity, furthering a separation of binary thinking, mind over body detachment:

Current North American higher education is dominated by what we might call third-person learning. We observe, analyze, record, and discuss a whole variety of subjects at a distance, as something “out there,” as if they were solely objects and our own subjectivity in viewing them does not exist. (p. 1790).

The conceptual framework I offer (Figure 3 below) understands CPrs as a branch from the tree of CP within the larger container of CS. Contributors to this field draw from both sacred and secular source origins and traditions; namely, the sacred trajectory integrates embodied yogic philosophies, anthropology of consciousness studies, global wisdom traditions, and world religions. From the secular trajectory are neuroscience, cognitive science, transpersonal psychology, and somatic psychologies that foster an aesthetic that potentially nurtures the ecstatic, i.e., shifts in consciousness.
Figure 3

*The Ecstatic and the Aesthetic*

![Diagram showing the Ecstatic and the Aesthetic](image)

**Note.** An integrative model of sacred (the ecstatic) and secular (the aesthetic) contributors to the broader discipline of CS with emphasis on the field of contemplative pedagogy and the experiments of CPs. Copyright 2021 by Roberta Mary Pughe.

**Three Primary Psychological Theoretical Frameworks: Cognitive Behavioral**

*Therapy/Cognition, Gestalt/Somatic, and Maslow/Transpersonal*

Three psychological theories of particular contribution to CP encompass an integrated conceptual framework consistent with hooks’s transformational model of a “progressive, holistic education, an engaged pedagogy, with commitment to well-being and self-actualization” (hooks, 1994, p. 15).
Note. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and its subset dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) provide a psychological orientation rooted in cognition, affect, and behavior (thoughts, feelings, and actions) that foster either destructive or constructive outcomes in both physiology and psychology. Figure reprinted from *RP Therapies*, by R. Pollard, 2021 (https://rptherapies.co.uk/what-is-therapy/). Figure licensed under Creative Commons.

The research from this field impacts CS and mindfulness in education in that we understand how constructive thinking, cognition, positively affects both feeling states and behaviors, and therefore its secularized interventions (practices as techniques) aim at improved mental-physical health, social-emotional learning, and improved cognitive functions when applied within the classroom (Ergas & Hadar, 2019). Within the comprehensive literature on mindfulness, applied within higher educational settings, measuring for mental health and student learning outcomes, we see that mindfulness interventions have the potential to positively impact student focus; help students regulate their emotions; and increase student flexibility, creativity,
and brain elasticity, potentially improving critical thinking skills. These sorts of interventions alter student neural pathways, creating brains that encourage greater conscious management of constructive thought, affect, and behavior (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). Research findings indicate that mindfulness and CPRs may improve cognitive abilities that are key to positive learning outcomes and may constructively impact scientific evidence of increased impact on critical thinking and learning (Laukkonen et al., 2020).

Gestalt therapy theory, a second psychological framework, a somatic psychology, values the body’s intelligence, emphasizing organismic self-regulation initiated through awareness of sensation, rooted in here-and-now-presence. As shown in Figure 5, a contact-withdrawal cycle specific to self, intrapsychic, and other, interpersonal, meets at the contact boundary within the larger environmental field. This framework discusses avenues for meaningful contact and exchange with self and other. While Gestalt tenets and theories are woven throughout CP and the mindfulness movement without being named as such, Gestalt therapy theory, consequently, has not been given its proper place of acknowledgement in its contribution to this field. My research endeavors to introduce Gestalt therapy theory as an essential somatic psychology underpinning CP with its central tenet rooted in valuing embodied, dynamic, and authentic process, “to be with one’s own process is to be fully alive” (Zinker, 1978, p. 73); F. S. Perls (1967) stated “human nature is a potentiality,” which supports awareness of and contact with self and other in the broader environmental field. From this perspective, polarities face each other in a dynamic exchange, giving credence to the notion that inner affects outer, internal affects external, and that these polarities ought to be held in a dynamic engagement with one another. One polarity is not exclusive of the other but engages in contactful dialogue (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994; Maslow, 1943; McLeod, 2019).
In Gestalt psychological terminology, Laura Perls (1992) elucidated this discussion through the lens of Gestalt therapy theory and the contact/withdrawal cycle through an understanding of support functions. Gestalt therapy theory’s “figure/ground” principle allows for greater contact with the environmental field (i.e., the classroom, the learning experience), through mobilization of action when internal supports are solid and stable. CPRs research also confirms the strengthening of awareness and mobilization of action into full contact (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994) whether it be with the course content, the classroom experience, or self in relation to other, within the college experience. In understanding this relatedness, Gestalt therapy theory addresses the dialogic relatedness between self, other, and environmental field with the contact boundary being the “space of contact, between.” This supports the emerging differences between “self” and “other” which is a useful distinction to employ in this field’s pedagogy and practices. Given that CP is a multidisciplinary field and is lacking in uniform definition, a Gestalt therapy theory framework could be utilized to support multiculturalism’s divergent voices in support of a constructive contact, understanding of differences, and clarification of this field’s divergent contributions as parts to the whole.

Gestalt therapy theory, created by Fritz Perls, was officially launched in 1951 with the publication of *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994). Blending gestalt psychology, organismic theory, interpersonal and Reichian psychoanalytic theory, field theory, phenomenology, existentialism, humanism, Eastern religion, and the creative arts, F. S. Perls brought together an exciting new and different way of thinking about human behavior. Gestalt therapy theory stresses the wholeness of the individual and emphasizes organismic self-regulation, figure and ground shifts, awareness and contact, interruptions to awareness, here-and-now, authenticity and responsibility, I-thou relationship,
disowned parts of self, layers of the personality, and creative experimentation (F. S. Perls, 1969/1992; F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994; Polster & Polster, 1974; Yontef, 1993; Zinker, 1978). Innovative leaders, since F. S. Perls’s death in 1970, have continued to develop Gestalt therapy theory, shifting emphasis toward the quality of the I-thou relationship, dialogue, empathic attunement, paradoxical theory of change, field theory, and phenomenology (Resnick, 1995; Wheeler, 1998), all of which are implicit tenets within CP theories. A Gestalt concept of particular interest to the field of CP is known as the fertile void, understood as the phase of the cycle of gestalt formation and destruction where there are no “figures.” This is a phase of the cycle where the experience of “no-thing” (the nothingness) becomes particularly interesting, as it is diametrically opposed yet complementary to the constant stream of sensations we are so accustomed to, perhaps analogous to contemplation.
Figure 5

The Gestalt Therapy Theory Cycle of Contact and Withdrawal

Note. The contact withdrawal cycle, also referenced by many international Gestalt institutes as the cycle of awareness, discusses the way in which the organism self-regulates in making contact at the contact boundary with self, other, and the environmental field. The black curve represents one’s experience of a sensation, the beginning point of awareness development heightening. Actions above (below) the curve represent making contact with (or withdrawal from) sensation throughout its experience. Reprinted with permission from the Gestalt Center of New Jersey.

Organismic self-regulation is a core psychological tenet of Gestalt therapy theory. This concept states that experience is organized through a cycle of mobilization with identifiable processes: (a) a sensation is experienced, which may be a need, feeling, drive, thought, image, or perception; (b) a figure emerges, whereby the sensation is organized into an awareness of a desired want or need in relationship to the environmental field; (c) awareness of need is followed
by excitement, and the person becomes awakened to aliveness and mobilization toward the desired figure; (d) movement follows, which brings the person into contact and full engagement with whatever has emerged to meet the need; and (e) withdrawal and completeness of the “incomplete Gestalt” results until the cycle begins again (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994).

Additionally, the seminal psychological text of Gestalt therapy theory (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994) outlines central theoretical tenets rooted in “here and now presence,” “self-organismic regulation,” along with a central focus on the “contact-withdrawal cycle” or “cycle of awareness” being rooted in “sensation” as the portal of entry into one’s interiority. Combined, these support mobilization toward contact with self and the environmental field, i.e., the classroom experience, the course content. These psychological themes of embodiment categorize Gestalt therapy theory within a psychological framework of a somatic psychology rooted in awareness of the here-and-now moment believed to be the center of existence, suggested to be a Mindfulness teaching. Each moment is its own reality (according to Gestalt therapy theory predating the Mindfulness Movement). This moment can encompass the unfinished gestalts of the past or the future gestalts, perceived as unfinished, all in the here-and-now moment. The notion of human becomingness is that if we stay with what is, in the here-and-now-moment, we will get to where we need to go. Theorizing about core themes central to CS and the mindfulness movement, it is apparent that Gestalt therapy theory predates both fields of study. John Kabat-Zinn in 1979 referred to his therapeutic interventions as mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), teaching skills defined as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (2003, p. 145). Very few articles pertaining to the field of mindfulness and CS, however, have
been found to include Gestalt therapy theory, demonstrating a lack of understanding of how rich a psychological theory it is and how central it is to the field of CS; further, mindfulness scholars and practitioners fail to acknowledge it as a primary contributor, highlighting concerns of appropriation. Sensation in the Gestalt contact/withdrawal cycle is the portal of entry into awareness and moment-to-moment self-regulation, with the body perceived as the container which houses sensation. These are foundational Gestalt tenets of the mindfulness movement and CS theoretical discussions which when taught as “mindfulness practices” reduce contextual understanding, potentially negatively impacting application.

The inclusion of cognitive behavioral therapy, Gestalt therapy theory, and Maslow’s transpersonal theory of self-actualization applied within this field help to provide a psychological ground for both intrapsychic (self) and interpersonal (relatedness to other) moving toward a collective understanding and not just an individualized emphasis. This offers a conceptual frame supporting an understanding of a healthy dialogue and exchange even in the face of differences.

Given academia’s current climate of Generation Z’s demands, these three secular psychological theories provide a platform to address systems of oppression and the collective politic—issues at the forefront of higher education today on college and university campuses. As CP incorporates historical theories, placing them within their rightful context, a new paradigm shift can support breakthroughs while retaining freedom from the constraints outlived from earlier paradigmatic structures (Ferrer & Tarnas, 2002). In correcting issues of appropriation through naming source origins of contributing influence, the field of CS responsibly addresses the charges against it.

Emphasis on acknowledging and referencing original contributory sources understood within their contextual disciplinary field, with appropriation grievances corrected, allows greater potential for the field’s attempts to increase faculty implementation. As CP grows as a reputable
discipline with its practices better grasped by greater masses within higher education, students, faculty, and institutions could benefit (Purser, 2019; Smith, 1999/2012). Within an integrated conceptual framework of CBT, Gestalt therapy theory, and a transpersonal model, the student’s education would include a well-being focus on wholeness and integration of aligned thinking, feeling, and behaving. Through understanding and application of these psychological theories, both student and faculty have greater opportunities to self-regulate as both an individual organism and a functional collective organism, i.e., “community within the classroom” and community as larger institution.
Figure 6

*Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, a Third Psychological Framework*

*Note.* Also known as a humanistic theory of self-actualization, this theory suggests that needs are ordered. In order to self-actualize, there are certain physical and emotional needs that must first be met, and in that order. This perspective sheds light on how external factors such as housing and family dynamics can impact a student’s actualization both in and outside of the classroom, and research has suggested that through CPRs, internal support structures could be strengthened. Figure reprinted from *Maslow’s hierarchy of needs*, by S. A. McLeod, 2020 (https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html), Simply Psychology. Figure licensed under Creative Commons.
The third psychological theoretical framework is Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Figure 6 above. If we consider Maslow’s theory within the context of a humanistic transpersonal psychology (a secular trajectory with overlap in the sacred depth dimensions) (Komjathy, 2016), we understand that the progression and ascension of consciousness supported by a safe, stable, and psychologically balanced internal and external supportive structure allows transcendent movement toward greater external expression, expansion, and empathy condensed into statements about ultimate values and intrinsic motivations. The nature of human nature, according to Maslow, is that self-actualizing people do what they do for ultimate intrinsic value. Strategies of illumination and peak experiences of self-actualized people affirm a list of B-values which are the values of self-actualizing people. These are the motivations and meta motivations distinguishing the basic needs of the B-values, which are motivated by pure truth, goodness, beauty, virtue, justice, oneness, going beyond dichotomies and polarities, and integrating and making oneness. Maslow suggested that unjust environments create pathologies with cynicism and a mistrust of the possibility of goodness, as well as a mistrust of all good values (Maslow, 2020). It was considered a revolutionary discourse in 1966 at Esalen when Maslow, in discussing these B-values, stated that they are meta needs and part of the essential needs of human nature incorporating a “higher life” (not mutually exclusive from the bodily life), the spiritual life, or the realm of pure essences wherein the B-values realm sacralizes the whole body and all the appetites. According to Maslow, at the B-values level, humans seek their real self and they endeavor to be good to themselves as the best way to be good to others. Maslow’s strategies and tactics of self-actualization allow for an organizing of ourselves into one species to aid in becoming a self-renewing society. Which way is the good direction, Maslow asks? He points us in the direction of the list of B-values, which claims a different kind of worth and dignity,
offering a theory of social change and a theory of transformation that parallels the discussions within the contemplative pedagogical movement. Maslow’s list of the B-values is: Truth: honesty; reality; simplicity; richness; oughtness; beauty; pure, clean and unadulterated; completeness; essentiality. Goodness: rightness; desirability; oughtness; justice; benevolence; honesty. Contemplative research affirms that these B-values are also heightened through contemplative practices which can constructively impact issues of social justice concerns on college and university campuses (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Maslow, 1966).

Unfortunately, recent research has discussed the appropriation concerns of Maslow’s borrowing from the Blackfoot, First Nations perspective (Blackstock, 2011a). There is historical record that Maslow, prior to publishing his Hierarchy of Needs, lived with the Blackfoot peoples and learned their worldview, integrating their model into his own without due respect and attribution. Maslow’s perspective, with an emphasis on the individual’s human potential, differs greatly from that of the Blackfoot peoples, who viewed the pinnacle of self-actualization as communal actualization (see Figure 7). Blackstock (2011a) argued that “Maslow did not fully incorporate Blood First Nation understandings of ancestral knowledge, spirituality, and multiple dimensions of reality, nor did he fully situate the individual within the context of community” (p. 3–4). Fortunately, today, CP draws attention to an interfacing of both the individual and the collective within a relational model, which encourages dialogue between the two.
Combining these three psychological theories with empirical research within CS affirms that these practices, while building stable inner support functions, can foster movement toward the building potentially of an external community comprised of individuals with greater strength of character inspired through CPrs impacting constructive cognition, affect, and behaviors. This
benefit functions as an aid in addressing systems of oppression, a lively debate today on college and university campuses. It has been said: The whole is more than the sum of its parts. It is more correct to say the whole is something else than the sum of its parts, because summing is a meaningless procedure, whereas the whole-part relationship is meaningful (Koffka, 1999, p. 176). Again, focusing on both the individual and the collective will serve further research in this field.

One of the few Gestalt therapy theoreticians to have looked at therapy and learning in education is George Brown, a Gestalt therapy educator. His book, *Human Teaching for Human Learning* (1990), defined what he called “confluent education.” Brown defined his educational philosophy as a process of teaching and learning in which the affective domain and the cognitive domain flow together. These two aspects of personhood are then integrated for both individual and collective learning. The term *affective* refers to the feeling or emotional aspect of experience and learning which encompasses the subjective experiential “experiment” (a Gestalt therapy theory term). *Cognitive* refers to the activity of the mind in knowing an object, with respect to intellectual functioning and instructional learning. His approach describes the necessity of an embodied experiential learning in developing a solid teaching and learning paradigm within higher education. In the 1960s, due to the influence of the humanistic psychotherapy movement, leaders such as Maslow and Perls offered a positivistic view of humanity and provided impetus for personal growth and a new model for understanding human behavior, emphasizing the growth of the full potential of the individual. Paralleled by a greater social consciousness in general, a whole generation became excited about human potential and the movement spread to universities where it became associated with mental health professions as well as business management professions (Brown, 1990).
Ken Wilber’s work (1979/2001) contributed to the field of consciousness studies from a transpersonal/humanistic psychological lens, also looking at these B-value constructs applied to the field of CS through a theory of consciousness. Wilber suggested a self moves from the personal level to the egoic level to the total organism level and then finally to a unity consciousness. Again, this is a similar conceptual understanding, but with different terminology: a self-actualized human living congruent with B-values (in Maslow’s terms, 1966) operating as a self-regulating organism (in Gestalt therapy theory’s terms) engaging in contact with the environmental field as consciousness (Wilber, 1979/2001). We see interdisciplinary authors weighing in from varying conceptual frameworks with different terminology while attempting to discuss similar psychological and philosophical concepts underpinning contemplative theory and praxis. Teasing these threads apart is critical for clarity of understanding of contribution to minimize harm to Indigenous peoples and originating peoples within their ontological cosmologies. Komjathy’s (2018) working definition of cognitive imperialism as an ethnocentric approach based on unquestioned assumptions and unexamined opinions, especially ones rooted in Western European and Abrahamic views (p. 311), stands out as an issue this field needs to clean up. By extension, the act of intellectual colonialism, or domesticating the radical challenges of alternative worldviews and accounts of “reality” to fit a “Western worldview,” are unacceptable. CP and its practices would benefit from revisiting contributing cosmologies with a more accurate understanding of source-origin and source-lineage.

Central Ontological Characteristics of These Three Psychological Models

Higher education today, especially in responding to the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic, is experiencing increased reports of loneliness and isolation amongst many students, witnessing an intensification of an ongoing tension (mirrored in broader society as well) between
the propensity toward humanism and the forces of alienation and a detached dehumanization. Since the 1950s, Gestalt therapy theory has functioned as a pioneer in the self-help movement of the 1960s, functioning as a historically significant force in this struggle; therefore, Gestalt therapy theory has developed a psychological theory of self-regulation and awareness along two pathways: one, liberation from psychopathological unfinished business and the other through nurturing internal and external supports for catalyzing disowned or unrealized human potential (Polster & Polster, 1974). Gestalt therapy theory’s primary theoretical tenets emphasize core contemplative concepts such as self-organismic regulation, here-and-now presence, and awareness. These are central to “excitement and growth in the human personality” within a Gestalt therapy theoretical framework and are also foundational underpinnings of a CS philosophy which has not been given proper acknowledgment as a theory that historically precedes the mindfulness movement and foundationally underpins it (F. S. Perls et al., 1951/1994).

In my integration of theoretical psychological frameworks within contemplative pedagogical research, it becomes clear that two central characteristics tend to shape top university pedagogy within CS programs offering a humanitarian humanistic/psychological pedagogy. The first of these characteristics is developing partnerships of self-actualized individuals embodying relational values rooted in exchange, open dialogue, reciprocity, and collaboration amongst scientists, humanistic scholars, ethnographers, and contemplative educator practitioners. This includes building respectful relationships across disciplines supporting CS research, innovation, application, and engagement. The second is utilizing CS research to address issues of inclusivity and equality as a response to concerns surrounding inequity, oppression, and social injustice on college campuses. CP is one approach to a type of education rooted in “slow
learning” and self-directed study encompassing embodiment or the distillation of the curriculum material integrated into the mind/body of the student. That is, “classrooms could become opportunities for personal and interpersonal engagement, specifically through attentive, careful and concentrative forms of inquiry. For educators, this might involve more space and time for reading, thinking, and writing as contemplative exercises in themselves” (Komjathy, 2018, p. 286). Gestalt therapy theory offers a somatic psychology rooted in awareness informing a theoretical model to aid in this goal, taking constructive form for transformational change within the classroom and within institutional cultures.

Many of the contemplative empirical studies deconstruct into three domains of variables when focusing upon the individual impact (versus the collective): (a) cognitive performance, (b) mental health, and (c) whole person education (Hirschmann, 2019). As the field of CS research continues to value diversity of mind, future prospects for this developing field of study will continue to blossom and take root, suggesting help for social issues of the collective relating to concerns about equity, equality and inclusion within higher education. Recalling Veysey’s (1970) sentiments: “the university must be understood as a magnet for the emotions not alone as a project of conscious definition” (p. ix). Veysey named it “the problem of the un-reconciled” (p. 381) and continued to suggest the need for further scholarly research and scientific investigation of this expansive field, hoping to bridge the gulf between students and faculty in the promotion of an education that encompasses a deepened learning of humanistic values. The tendency to blend and reconcile the “growing merger of ideals” (Veysey, 1970, p. 342) can potentially be better understood and enhanced through the field of CS with an integration of neuroscience, psychology, religious studies, an anthropology of consciousness, scientific investigation and a
practice commitment to the subjective experience of contemplation applied within the higher educational context.

**Development of the Whole Student: Integrative Theoretical Models Within Higher Education**

Students of Generation Z are expressing heightened depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and multiple environmental stressors which are placing greater demands on college and university campus counseling centers. Robert Gallagher published a nationally representative Survey of Counseling Center Directors in 2014 that reported increases in the following over the past five years of:

- 89%, anxiety disorders
- 69%, crises requiring immediate response
- 60%, psychiatric medication issues
- 58%, clinical depression
- 47%, learning disabilities
- 43%, sexual assault on campus
- 35%, self-injury issues (e.g., cutting to relieve anxiety)
- 34%, problems related to earlier sexual abuse. (p. 5)

Students, especially those living through a pandemic, are seeking solutions and a skillset to help alleviate, minimize, or at least better manage their stressful realities and are emboldened to make demands on college and university counseling centers, suggesting that counseling services ought to be provided as a return to their tuition dollars spent. Therefore, fostering an embodied contemplative skillset amongst faculty to develop these contemplative skills within the classroom for students can offer “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). In turn, this provides additional skills for faculty as well in not only helping students but helping themselves.

Collectively, CP research gives empirical support to the benefits of decreasing student stress, anxiety, and depression and increasing social and emotional skills for academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). CP offers a conceptual framework for perceiving internal and external not as dualistic but as an integrative whole, a kind of feedback loop. This suggests that these CPrs can impact the manner in which one engages with the larger socio/cultural/political world, often referenced as contemplative engagement by contemplative researchers (Barbezat & Pingree, 2012; Komjathy, 2018). Palmer (2017) referred to the inner and outer landscape of teaching and learning as an integrated educational model.

Contemplative teaching pedagogy is interested in developing the student’s capacity for mindful and embodied learning. Zajonc (2009) discussed teaching as transformative change, and Rendón (2009) discussed the teacher as the agent of change. When viewed through this lens, teaching can produce the “nine characteristics of contemplative inquiry: respect, gentleness, intimacy, participation, vulnerability, transformation, organ formation, illumination and insight” (Zajonc, 2008, p. 187). With this focus on outcome, the learning paradigm within higher education could shift. In fact, this is why CS and CPr often are associated with the potential for building social justice through a more reflective and just society, informing one individual at a time through these CPrs.

hooks (1994) presented the concept of engaged pedagogy, where teaching and learning integrate and highlight the union of body, mind, and spirit while still emphasizing the inner life of both students and teachers, thus suggesting a connection between classroom learning and life
experiences. Zajonc (2013) named this field a quiet revolution, promoting the development of “student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior” (p. 1). Many researchers are considering internal change as a vehicle to effect external, global change. Komjathy (2018) referred to this as “the depth dimension” as educators truly contemplate the revolutionary force and powers that this field and its practices might offer academia. Veysey (1970) asserted the educational mission is “in pursuit of the well-rounded person” (p. 197).

In support of the growing merger of justice ideals within this field is Rendón’s (2009) idea of a teacher with various identities, as shown in Figure 2. In contrast to her multi-roles vision of teaching, the “old vision” of education conceptualizes a privileging of intellectualism at the expense of inner instinctive or intuitive knowing. Rendón also suggested that this “old vision” can promote a hierarchical ordering, which disconnects faculty from students; privileges competition over collaboration; and doesn’t leave space for error, imperfection, humanity, and experimentation. Hierarchically privileging Western structures of knowledge and educational models, often referred to as a Cartesian colonization of education, engages students in busyness to such an extreme that it causes burnout and discourages self-regulation and time for renewal to truly digest and engage with the course material (Smith, 1999/2012). Within the field of CS these academic practices are perceived as questionable, maybe even inhumane. Certainly, they are not conducive to constructive internalization of knowledge, promoting widespread notions of a capitalist spirituality afoot within education today (Purser, 2019).

**Limitations and Gaps in the Literature**

More qualitative research utilizing what Creswell and Creswell (2018) referred to as the *natural setting*, the area where participants experience the issue being examined (for example,
the classroom and the college campus), is needed. Also lacking in the literature is an understanding of Gestalt therapy theory and how its theoretical psychological framework is a contributor underpinning this field without direct acknowledgement and empirical research, another appropriation unveiled. Gestalt therapy theory will also offer a relational psychological model to support collaborative dialogue within this multi-disciplinary, multi-voiced field. Through this dissertation’s discussion, Gestalt therapy theory will gain greater theoretical understanding and find a home as a relational framework supporting dialogue within academe. Accusations of appropriation will be repaired through my additional research, helping this field to be less marginalized in its offering of a model for renewal within the teaching and learning of higher education. Direct origins and lineages of influence, especially related to Indigenous peoples and their cosmologies, need to be traced back historically to incorporate originality of contextual contribution. Regarding gaps and limitations, these issues need to be addressed, in the interest of achieving resolution and repair.

Highlighting appropriation issues, Smith (1999/2012) suggested some very important questions that contemplative scholars should consider for future research endeavors:

Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? (p. 10).

Origins traced back to original texts across time and cultures need to be identified and acknowledged as pioneers and primary contributors to the field of CS so that contextual environmental field is understood. Much of educational theory has been shaped by European imperialism and colonialism informing Western discourse and Western disciplines with theorizing through particular Cartesian, colonial narratives. Going forward, more
acknowledgement of the Indigenous threads that hearken back in time as foundational developers of this emerging discipline will be essential for its continued development (Rendón, 2009; Smith, 1999/2012).

One example in shamanic philosophy (and many Indigenous cultures) is the understanding of the cosmic universal world tree, “that gave birth to all things” (Eliade, 1974, p. 287). This tree is believed to connect the three mythical regions of sky (upper world), earth (middle world), and the underworld (Eliade, 1974) and is understood to “symbolize the World Axis and hence the road to the sky is proved” (Eliade, 1974, p. 285). Several religious ideas are implied in the symbolism of the cosmic universal world tree, which cross-culturally presents itself as the very reservoir of life and the master of destinies, integrating worlds both material and spiritual, earth and sky, offering a transcendent model within the immanent for humans. Figure 8 depicts this imagery of the world tree applied within CPrs, as utilized by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. As understood in this graphic, contemplative practice is clearly rooted in connection and awareness in the earth, with individual forms of relational practice encompassing a wide range of sacred and secular activities, incorporating both intrapsychic and interpersonal.

In drawing from a religiously pluralistic approach, in addition to the religious cosmologies of Indigenous cultures, there are multiple pioneers in the Christian contemplative tradition, commonly referred to as Christian mystics. Many esoteric writings from this tradition need to be more deeply analyzed and integrated in this movement, balancing out so much emphasis on Buddhism. To name a few, Hildegard von Bingen, 12th-century mystic, and Julian of Norwich, 14th-century mystic, along with Trappist monk Thomas Merton, and Trappist Fr. Thomas Keating, are all leading contemplative Christian scholars. Fr. Thomas Keating pioneered
the Christian contemplative prayer movement with a technique known as *centering prayer* that is widely utilized today (Wilhoit, 2014). The *Lectio Divina* is utilized in the Christian tradition (and on many college and university campuses employed by contemplative faculty) to incorporate prayerful meditative contemplation of holy scripture and sacred wisdom texts (Wilhoit, 2014). To include a broader global inclusion from world CPRs, specifically paying homage to the origins of the traditions while incorporating cosmologies and practices would add to filling in gaps within the literature. The CP literature’s integration from sacred texts is imbalanced, highlighting Buddhist theologies which many readers automatically think is the equivalent of CS as a discipline. As Komjathy (2018) asserted, “there is also an often unspoken or unrecognized accompanying anti-Christian bias, partly due to the assumption that Christianity is more doctrinal (theistic) than Buddhism” (p. 247). There remain many global cosmologies sacred texts and traditions from around the world that need to be better integrated and researched, filling holes in misunderstandings within the literature. For example, Figure 8 depicts the many expressions of CPRs from the website of the Contemplative Mind in Society within Higher Education. These CP practices, as indicated by the analogy of a tree, are rooted in fostering awareness and connection, both internally and with the external world at large, again, serving a model of *intra* and *inter* personal, self and other, interiority and relational interface.
Figure 8

The Tree of Contemplative Practices

Note. A graphic that depicts the many expressions of contemplative practices. All these practices, as indicated by the analogy of a tree, are rooted in fostering awareness and connection, both internally and with the external world at large. Figure reprinted from *The Tree of Contemplative Practices*, by The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, 2019 (http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree). Copyright 2019 by The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. Concept & design by M. Duerr. Illustration by C. Bergman.
Gaps in the literature are hypothesized to be related to faculty and to these four issues: (a) perceptions of CP from those faculty who do not self-identify as contemplative educators or practitioners, (b) application of varied CPrs in faculty classrooms with faculty focus from varying disciplines, (c) underlying pedagogical theories and frameworks supporting teaching and learning in the classroom, secular or sacred, in emphasis, and (d) faculty perception impacting faculty implementation (or lack of implementation) of contemplative pedagogical tools. If CP practitioners lack a singular working definition, a subjectivity of analysis and application might contort its teaching and application among higher education faculty. On the other hand, a working definition could provide a solid ground to this young field. Grbic and Sondheimer (2014) aimed to look for consistency in application to contribute greater clarity of theory and definition to this field, a field whose research attests to aiding in management of stress and improved quality of life. Table 1, based on prior research, addresses a suggestion for an educational model which encompasses more than academic knowledge.
Table 1

*Impact of Identity on Perceived Stress and Quality of Life*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>QOL</th>
<th>Fatigue</th>
<th>Social support</th>
<th>Financial concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First generation college (vs. other)</td>
<td>HIGHER</td>
<td>LOWER</td>
<td>HIGHER</td>
<td>LOWER</td>
<td>HIGHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (vs. male)</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGB (vs. heterosexual)</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (vs. white)</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URIM (vs. white)</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The ways in which external factors influence perceived stress and quality of life in students, as “external environmental stressors.” Indeed, there are many non-academic factors that influence student performance, and a pedagogy that addresses these is crucial. All results are statistically significant with p < .05. Figure reprinted from “Personal Well-Being Among Medical Students: Findings From an AAMC Pilot Survey,” by D. Grbic & H. Sondheimer, 2014, *Analysis in Brief, 14*(4).

As shown in Table 1, among medical students who may or may not be different than other students we see a holistic model informed by an integral educational pedagogy, in which stress, quality of life, fatigue, social supports, and financial concerns are all relevant in the context of a student’s education. CP’s new paradigm rooted in a transpersonal, transformative worldview addresses imbalances *within* and *without*—internal and external—via an action-oriented approach that shows potential to change and reshape institutional culture through an internal reshaping of the self, intertwining higher education with politics. Gaps in the literature need to expand upon this interrelated relationship of inner/outer, internal/external, emphasizing current issues of social justice and oppression on university campuses today which are a high priority. Contemplative research affirms that this field might offer an avenue to help address some of those inequalities. The future of empirical research is to endeavor to incorporate the field of Transpersonal Psychological Studies with transformative and holistic frameworks of
education. Gaps in the literature need to address these fields of study. Gillispie and Cornish (2010) discussed the notion of dialogical analysis which peers through the lens of a dialogic relationality with concepts of intersubjectivity. A Gestalt therapy theoretical approach offers varying meanings of this terminology, along with new terminology which continues to need to be addressed and collectively understood so that greater clarification and perhaps increased implementation can result. At least six different definitions of “intersubjectivity” are in circulation with few understanding what it really means. Research needs to continue to clarify this concept as it underpins CS.

As contemplative pedagogical educators continue to approach education from a post-Cartesian model, a more holistic embrace, educating mind, heart and spirit (Gunnlaugson, 2009b) incorporating somatic, vital, emotional, mental, and contemplative aspects of human nature (Sohmer et al., 2020). Expanded research is needed in this area, and the term being used is “transpersonal education and research” as embodied spiritual inquiry into the nature of human boundaries (Sohmer et al., 2020), which suggests ways of building beyond students’ intellectual knowledge and fostering collective wisdom within the classroom. Understandably, this field needs more empirical research, since current methods of pedagogy enforce the primacy of strictly academic learning (Gunnlaugson, 2011). These sorts of transformative, transpersonal worldviews incorporate the political, emphasize the shared equality of power interpersonally, and endorse action toward building a just society. These frameworks support collaboration rather than competition and value change theory within a dynamic transformative paradigm, rather than transactional relatedness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Incorporating voices from marginalized peoples; addressing power imbalances; and facing issues of discrimination, marginalization and disenfranchised populations are essential themes within institutions supporting these worldviews.
In the most recent years, contemplative educational pedagogies have been improving in providing theoretical and psychological perspectives integrated within these philosophical assumptions, connecting them historically to threads of initial origin. This helps to construct a lens through which to create a more uniform definition of intentionality within higher education, especially as it relates to power structures and a commitment to action-oriented policies with a goal of institutional and societal change.

Limitations in the literature are specifically related to faculty and to a lack of a knowledge base as to why some faculty embrace CP and others do not. Additional gaps in the literature are specifically related to faculty with these four issues as my foci: (a) perceptions of CP from those faculty who do not self-identify as contemplative educators or practitioners, whom I call NIF, (b) definition variations amongst CP scholars weighing in, each from varying disciplines—a multidisciplinary field’s hazards, (c) underlying pedagogical theories and frameworks supporting CP, and whether they secular or sacred in emphasis, and (d) how faculty perception impacts faculty implementation of contemplative pedagogical tools. If practitioners lack a singular working definition, a subjectivity of analysis and application might contort its teaching and application among higher education faculty. On the other hand, a uniform working definition might provide a solid grounding to this young field.

Continued research needs to ask new questions, such as: Do current educational philosophies address the entirety of the human mind, heart, and spirit? As we are witnessing in these days of education in a global health pandemic, the greater the complicated demands and challenges of the outer world, the greater the need for stable and peaceful qualities of interiority. My unique contribution to this field will be to incorporate Gestalt therapy theory, integrated as a contemplative educator myself, declaring its rightful place as a foundational theoretical
framework in this dialogue. Additionally, I will clarify earth-based, nature-based traditions and origins of contribution so accusations of appropriation don’t diminish this developing field.

Gaps in the literature and empirical research need to incorporate theoretical frameworks emphasizing both constructivist and transformative worldviews that contribute necessary research to the contemplative field within higher education. While many agree on an integral education, whether we call it embodied, engaged, or critical, pedagogical themes emphasize inclusivity, equality, and domination-free orders as a resulting byproduct (hooks, 1994; Apple, 1979; Freire, 1968/2017; Giroux, 1984). Greater emphasis on Miller’s (2000) holistic education theory will also offer great contributions to this field of inquiry with the concepts of Smith’s (1999/2012) *rewriting* and *re-righting* accounts and theories that have been misrepresented or excluded from acknowledgement. Post-colonial literature must insist on telling stories which underscore the need for narrative, subjective experience, and story-telling based on an intersubjective turn inward to be brought into the body of literature researching CS. As Smith stated, “coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization” (p. 36), and the past needs to be better incorporated and its historical influence acknowledged today. This field did not begin when Harold Roth of Brown University acknowledged it as a field in 2006. While contemplative scholars might remain grateful to Roth’s naming of a new field of study and declaring it a discipline, we must improve upon acknowledging our return to pedagogical roots and lineages that cross cultures and time, predating 2006. To that end, some might question whether this is a countermovement at all or, in fact, a return to higher education’s roots. An integral education is timely indeed, and this is the window of opportunity to promote its pedagogy. Given that higher education is rife with the effects of a global health pandemic and the ensuing post trauma for institutions, faculty, and students, now is the time to bring CP and its
practices into the foreground to serve as an aid within the classroom. In addition, what is now being called a pandemic of racism is contributing to an urgency for response embodied in compassionate and inclusive action of marginalized peoples on college and university campuses, and this situation demands urgent necessity of response at the institutional level. As Tom Coburn affirmed, “we are aspiring to change the very nature of education and this requires that it be done within the educational heart of an institution, which is the classroom, rather than banishing it to some more marginal place” (Coburn et al., 2011, p. 3).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My research design is qualitative in nature, designed to focus on faculty perception of CP and its practices, which focus heretofore has been absent in the literature. My interest specifically is those faculty who perceive themselves to be NIF and to measure how much their perception of CP, and its CPs, are causing a lack of faculty participation and implementation of contemplative pedagogical philosophies within the classroom. This study utilizes a grounded theory approach, interviewing a sub-sample of faculty in order to ascertain an emergent new theory of their perception of CP. Fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted, virtually via Zoom, due to participants being spread throughout the entire United States.

Research Design

A qualitative research design that combines methods from the grounded theory approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and modified by Rennie et al. (1988) was used for this study. Grounded theory is a systematic approach to data collection and analysis in which an emergent theoretical model is constructed from direct experience with the phenomena under study (Rennie et al., 1988). Knowledge is arrived at through a process that involves developing categories inductively, rather than selecting predetermined classifications of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The goal in grounded theory is verification of what is discovered, rather than verification of existing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In the grounded theory approach, participant selection is determined by the theory being generated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Initially, the researcher determines what is essential to the phenomenon, and participants are chosen who are expected to be representative of those essential aspects—in the case of my study, NIF (Rennie et al., 1988). Accordingly, the early participants
are relatively similar, for they are selected in this comparable-based fashion that Glaser and Strauss (1967) referred to as homogeneous sampling. This type of sampling process is done in order to maximize the chances that aspects of the phenomenon will emerge clearly and facilitate the generation of categories and consensus about their properties (Rennie et al., 1988).

Later, a qualitative researcher may seek to clarify variability, which is defined as the appearance of participants’ attributes that are potential qualifiers of the emerging theory (Rennie et al., 1988). At this phase, the researcher may want to engage in what Glaser and Strauss (1967) referred to as theoretical sampling. Participants are selected who are different from the initial group, in terms of potentially important attributes that have emerged. Taking this step is a way of increasing the generalizability of the study as well as determining the conditions and limitations of the study (Rennie et al., 1988). For example, in this study, initial participants all identified as White; in an effort to understand the perception of CP beyond just how White participants perceive it, more participants were recruited who were non White-identifying.

In this type of research study, individual, recorded interviews are conducted with each of the participants (in my case, both audio and video). These interviews are transcribed and analyzed. Ideas related to the data are written by the researcher throughout the interviewing process as memos. These memos, defined as a “small piece of analysis,” help to make sense of the data (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 135), store key elements of the developing theory and are very useful in the data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The analytic process in the grounded theory approach is based on immersion in the data with repeated sorting, categorizing, and comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The approach forces the researcher to stay close to the data by using the constant comparative method of data collection and analysis, in which inquiry and analysis proceed concurrently, in a reciprocal
fashion. The process of categorizing, comparing, and analyzing illustrates a very circular, flexible, and complex nature of gathering data and discovering theory (Rennie et al., 1988). The grounded theory approach allows for continuous change and modifiability throughout the inquiry, data analysis, and theory-building process (Glaser, 1978).

Data are initially analyzed after each interview for meaning units and descriptive category development. When data emerge that do not fit the existing categories, new categories are created as needed. As the analysis proceeds, constructed categories that subsume the descriptive categories are created (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Eventually, fewer and fewer new categories are required to account for the meaning of the experiences of new participants, and categories become saturated. If possible, a core category is conceptualized that subsumes all other descriptive and constructed categories. The grounded theory is an elaboration of this conceptual structure of categories and the relationships among them (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

**Rationale for Selection of Grounded Theory**

Several factors indicated the use of the grounded theory approach for this study. This approach is most appropriate when there is limited literature and theory in the area of study (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). In spite of fairly extensive theoretical articles describing CP and its practices, there is a paucity of research that investigates NIF perceptions of this topic. There is no existing theory on this subject matter that contributes to the understanding of the perceptions of faculty who do not identify as contemplative educators. Studies have not directly explored NIF subjective experiences as a source of information of CP and its practices for potential maximum of participation and implementation.
Another compelling rationale for grounded theory was asserted by Morse (1994): “If the question concerns an experience and the phenomenon in question is a process, the method of choice for addressing the question is grounded theory” (p. 223). This type of design is ideally suited for this inquiry because it allows for an in-depth investigation of the participants’ subjective experiences, responses to my working definition and to their pedagogical perceptions, while providing for sequences of events that are not orderly and predictable, and discovering aspects of NIF perception not yet fully understood by the field of CP.

Finally, faculty perception of CP was believed to best be captured through in-depth interviews, a traditional qualitative research method. The research explores the subjective experiences of a specified group of participants and attempts to understand the meaning they attach to their pedagogical philosophies and their teaching experiences in relation to the scholarship of teaching and learning within academe. Subjective experiences can best be analyzed and understood through the use of in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis (Stern, 1994).

Usage of the Literature

When utilizing grounded theory, existing literature is one aspect of data collection and is considered and treated as part of the study’s data. In the original grounded theory approach, as explicated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the traditional literature review is undertaken after the data from the initial interviews have been collected and analyzed. Their directive on this matter is strongly phrased: “an effective strategy is, at first, to literally ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 37).
procedure ideally prevents making assumptions and reduces the risk of tainting the emergent theory.

Better comprehension of faculty’s underlying philosophical assumptions and epistemological frameworks regarding teaching and learning within the classroom elucidate this grounded theory further. Respecting “researcher as key instrument” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181) within qualitative research allows for open dialogue which can help to establish the pedagogical interpretations within this phenomenon, i.e., NIF relatedness to CP. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the phenomenology of faculty perceptions and associations of CP with NIF within higher education. In turn, this study elucidates greater understanding of this phenomenology through faculty narratives. For example, are there subjective resistances among faculty? Are there objections expressed by those faculty who do not identify nor practice these contemplative ideologies? Is it even correct to use the terms resistance or objections as a form of relatedness? Is it something other than resistance, perhaps a lack of awareness of this field’s constructive research as an educational pedagogy (still a young and developing field)? Even more curious, is it a phenomenon not yet identified? Through uncovering the perceptions, the assumptions, the philosophical underpinnings, the associations, and the epistemological frameworks which faculty bring to their teaching, this research hopes to understand and learn more about how NIF are subjectively relating to the field of CP and its practices.

Through employing inductive analysis, this study gleans new insights from observations, coded for essential themes and patterns, particularly through the use of “jottings, memos (analytic memoing), and the formulation of assertions and propositions” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 61), resulting in new theory to contribute to this field. The utilization of grounded theory’s analytic methods incorporates subtleties of faculty positionality, perhaps informing subconscious
(even conflictual) perspectives and nuanced philosophical orientations of faculty relatedness to their teaching and learning paradigms.

From the viewpoint of the participant, consistent with ethnographic qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), this qualitative study “inductively, [builds] patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). Seeking to identify whether this is a culture-sharing group, valuing particular themes over others, allowed this study to highlight the way shared patterns of behavior, over time, developed, evolved, and have shaped current thinking in the scholarship of teaching and learning within higher education.

**Definition of Terms**

The usage of particular terms was discussed within this study, such as “sacred,” “secular,” “spiritual,” “pedagogy,” etc., within the literature review. For this dissertation, my experience and understanding of CP from the literature and my own practice were examined before the interviewing process. This knowledge was thus suspended as background during the interviewing and initial data analysis, allowing me to enter the field with suspended preconceived notions and concepts. The literature was thoroughly examined as constructed categories clearly emerged and reexamined at the final sorting and writing stages, the point at which Glaser (1992) noted is the most valuable for this practice (p. 33). At those later stages, it became apparent as to what literature supported or negated the categories parsed from the data and which were sometimes useful in the process leading to a final interpretation.

The following qualitative research question framed this study.
Research Question

My qualitative study was focused around one overarching research question seeking to explore non-identifying and non-practicing contemplative faculty perception of CP and its practices:

*How do faculty who do not practice contemplative pedagogy view this field and its practices?*

Site and Participant Selection

Participants were sourced from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) listserv. In order to maintain the privacy of its members, ASHE, and Executive Director, Jason P. Guilbeau, PhD, give scholars permission to rent the mailing list for research purposes, including a call for participants on the listserv through announcement (see Appendix A). An initial group of 11 participants were found through this mailing list, at which point I utilized theoretical sampling to ensure a more diverse group of participants. In particular, the first five participants were predominantly White-identifying, and so a second round of mail was sent to individuals—again, sourced from the same ASHE list serv—who were non-White identifying. Gender and ethnicity information was inferred through online sources such as faculty websites and google scholar profiles. Faculty that presented as non-white and non-male were then requested to participant in this study to expand sample identities. This effort resulted in three additional participants who were not White-identifying.

Data Collection

The fundamental data sets of this research were the interviews of multiple higher ed faculty. These interviews were coded for their underlying themes, wherein a theme will be considered important if it was “frequent,” that is, widely and consistently perceived in multiple
faculty interviews. Gathering themes and their frequencies uncovers their importance in the context of the field of CP. Participants are referred to strictly by anonymous numbers, each participant being assigned a number at random. While their identity is anonymous, their specific role in higher education (faculty and/or administration) is disclosed but the institution in which they teach was not disclosed in order to protect anonymity. The analysis outcomes are also shared and corroborated with the three members of my dissertation team through ongoing discussions of my written reports via email and Zoom.

Data were collected from participants as follows. I first sent out a sample screening letter (Appendix B) to recruit NIF. It is unclear how many faculty did not respond to the screening letter due to identifying as contemplative faculty. Semi-structured interviews were virtually conducted with responding NIF faculty via Zoom to pursue my research question and sub-questions. In addition, participants were asked about several key facets of their identity that could, but are not guaranteed to, have confounding impacts on their perception of teaching. This included several general questions about their position in academia, such as their job title, academic field, degrees completed, and number of years teaching, as well as questions about their academic institution, such as its Carnegie classification. For example, institutions with R1 and R2 Carnegie classifications place more importance on research, and it is entirely possible that this is a confounding influencer shaping faculty perception about the importance of teaching. Gender and race were also asked about, since I consider these to also be contributing influencers shaping perception about teaching importance. Research has suggested that women and people of color are more socialized to be care-givers (Martin, 2000), and therefore might be more open to a style of pedagogy that cares about students’ needs beyond academic. Finally, religious
affiliation and geographical location were considered, and this may have a confounding effect on if and how these faculty view “sacred” undertones of CP.

Zoom interviews were conducted with participants residing in four distinct areas of the United States: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. The in-depth, semi-structured topical interviews lasted between 40–70 minutes, with an average duration of 55 minutes. Participants’ interviews were analyzed through both audio and video saved transcripts. After much consideration of the employment of transcription services, I transcribed the interviews myself with the aid of Zoom’s transcription service. Once transcribed, each interview was labelled solely by participant number and thus anonymized. Before the interviews, participants were given a copy of a written consent form (Appendix E) and asked to review, sign, and return it to me. They were asked to keep a copy for their files as well.

Data Analysis

My fourfold items of interest (bracketed as query) were pursued in 60-minute semi-structured interviews through probes and/or sub-questions pursuing any associations or correlations with these four hypotheses:

1. sacred vs secular, religious concerns creating complications
2. lack of awareness (takes time to disseminate and embrace a new pedagogy)
3. lack of subjective experience, not a personal practitioner themselves
4. distracts from course content, so low on the totem pole of teaching priorities

Sub-questions (with probes were the following):

- Are you aware of experiencing active resistance to contemplative pedagogy methodologies?
• How do you phenomenologically perceive, relate to, and experience the teaching and learning of contemplative pedagogy and its effects in the classroom?

• To what extent do you, as faculty, view contemplative pedagogy as “sacred”?

• To what extent should the classroom be secular?

• Do you believe you have none to minimal awareness of contemplative pedagogy and what do you suggest might be the contributing factors to this?

Other probing questions for semi-structured interviews derived logically from the central research question: First, do you believe that:

1. Critical reasoning understood as “education” does not leave time for subjective reflection and contemplation?

2. The correct space for fostering “self-development of the whole person” is outside the classroom?

3. It is not the responsibility of a faculty professor to address emotional student concerns?

4. Views on creating space within the classroom for:
   a. a moment of silence
   b. use of PowerPoint presentations in lecture followed by classroom discussion where all voices are represented and power imbalances are reversed
   c. students participating in classroom teaching encouraging inclusion of participation and empowerment of each student
   d. breaking class into small groups to promote connectivity and belonging as a community

5. Could you imagine that these characteristics of classroom teaching and learning are consistent with contemplative education?
Included in the Interview Protocol was the graphic “The Tree of Contemplative Practices” (Figure 8), from the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education. Asking each participant to view and reflect upon this image prior to the interview was intended to be an impetus for the creation of free associations and heightened open conversations, including the importance of spirituality/religion/faith & wisdom traditions in faculty’s personal lives, seeking to also understand any religious affiliations informing their perceptions and associations of their relatedness to their own and students’ existential/spirituality/religious associations. In this way, the research process was emergent (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The population in this study, as mentioned previously, were members of the ASHE listserv. Specifically, they were faculty subscribing to this listserv who identify as NIF. Some faculty, in addition, practice administration and policy. This study was bound by time (Summer, 2021), place (United States academic institutions), and activity (faculty within higher education) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Faculty in higher education programs proved to be a good sample because they are the faculty most closely connected with higher education, both in the classroom and the administrative boardrooms, and they have a particular interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning within higher education. A two-stage sampling procedure was utilized. A first round of ASHE faculty were randomly sampled from the listserv, resulting in 11 participants. Then, a second round of participants were theoretically sampled to ensure ample diversity among the faculty, resulting in three more participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A systematic sample was the preferred style of random sampling for this study. Although ASHE has over 2,200 members, some are graduate students and retired faculty and retired administrators; only 864 were found to be eligible faculty who are currently teaching.
Nevertheless, focusing on ASHE faculty members provided a comprehensive range of participants, geographically and in a variety of disciplines.

The qualitative research from this study includes excerpts from field notes and an open-ended method of questioning via in-depth Zoom interviews with my embrace of reflexivity seeking to understand (a) past experiences that might be shaping faculty perception, and (b) past experiences shaping interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Zoom’s professional transcription service was used, along with my transcription by hand. Each transcription, including field notes and memos from interviews, was then re-read and coded by hand. Categories were grouped into themes to address my research question and sub-questions. The analysis of my data includes excerpts from my field notes, memos and memo jotting, coded from my open-ended method of questioning in Zoom interviews where I interpreted themes and coded for saturation in patterns of interpretation.

My methods included (but were not limited to) an open and inductive coding system as my primary source of data collection, focused on three areas: (a) Initial Coding, (b) Focused Coding, and (c) Theoretical Integrations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles et al., 2014). This qualitative approach to coding on several levels helped in identifying information about the data and interpretive constructs related to my data analysis. I developed categories for units of information in the data sets, and, through a constant comparative method of data analysis, compared and revised these categories in an iterative process allowing for continuous change and modifiability throughout the inquiry, data analysis, and theory-building process (Glaser, 1978).

**Sampling Procedure**

All responding ASHE faculty who self-reported as NIF were included in this study. Theoretical sampling was used to ensure a diverse group of faculty across racial and gender
identities. This sampling was theoretically diverse enough to encourage broader applicability when relevant. The characteristics of my sample of persons, settings, processes, and so on, was fully and sufficiently described to permit adequate comparisons with other samples (Miles et al., 2014, p. 307). As stated, there were two rounds of sampling from the ASHE listserv in this study, one random and one theoretical. After each round of sampling, saturation of the interview codes was considered. Codes are considered saturated once new participant interviews added no new codes.

**Researcher Worldview Paradigms and Role of the Researcher**

Transformative, transpersonal, and Gestalt therapy theoretical paradigms within both a constructivism and transformative research framework are the broader container which hold this research inquiry. Constructivism seeks to create understanding through multiple participant meanings while framing within a social and historical construction integrating theory generation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The transformative worldview evokes the political and appreciates shared power and acts of justice while being both collaborative, rather than competitive, and change-oriented, transformational, rather than transactional (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Consistent with Miles et al. (2014) in discussing different types of qualitative effects, this research endeavored to activate openness of dialogue while engaging both participants and the reader. While certain general positions I employed are scientific, I desire to heighten insight, illumination, and deepened understanding of themes I did not anticipate when I began conducting this study. While expanding and revising existing concepts, explanations, and theories within this field, I aspired to advance the methodological craft of qualitative research regarding CP and add to the existing information on this topic. Aesthetic concerns also inspired this research, as I hoped to entertain, amuse, and arouse emotion about this topic (consistent with
Miles et al., 2014) in order to foster enriched narrative inquiry through story sharing and pursuit of the subjective experiment in engagement with this subject matter. The incorporation of all three paradigms encourages a mobilization of activism showing connections between findings and problem solving (theory and praxis), enabling higher education policies which can foster improved decisions and guidance for action on college and university campuses.

Researcher positionality encompasses my professional work of 35 years; that I am a contemplative practitioner teaching courses through The School of Embodied Enlightenment in Princeton, NJ, as well as an integrator of CPs in my private practice, namely, The Center for Relationship, LLC, (also in Princeton, NJ). I identify professionally as an Integrative Psychotherapist, namely, a certified Gestalt therapist/theorist, a published author writing about Embodied Enlightenment, and a licensed New Jersey Marriage and Family Therapist. Also trained and certified in CBT, I very much value the integration of mind and body, including Gestalt theory/therapy practices with shamanistic transpersonal psychologies, integrating intrapsychic and interpersonal dialogue with the broader environmental field. As a pathway forward for greater inclusion and equality of mind and body, and Indigenous People’s cosmologies integrated within the fields of psychology and CP, I hope to bring these two fields of contribution (namely Gestalt therapy theory and the contributions of Indigenous peoples) into this field as respectable frameworks, worthy of their rightful place as historical contributors within the fields of psychology and CP. This qualitative study endeavors to secure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this research (managing bias) by authenticating the qualifications of this investigator through the quality of this study’s design, execution, and precision.
Given my commitment to building a just society, I aspire to add to a body of research which helps to clarify and sharpen moral and ethical issues, potentially shaping social justice concerns facing college and university campuses today. I strive to integrate my research into this body of literature in such a way that is respectful of disenfranchised marginalized perspectives and theoretical voices here in the West. Underpinning my scholarship is my embrace of the view that we are a global world who can benefit from dialogue with one another’s pluralistic cosmologies, while also emancipating, raising consciousness, and awakening to unrealized oppressive influences. Due to this reality, this research positions itself within a deep commitment to spreading awareness about CP in the hopes that marginalized voices will at last find inclusion and rightful primacy of contribution. Lastly, mobilized by an activism showing connections between empirical findings and problem solving, this research endeavors to enable higher education policies capable of fostering improved decision-making via empirically researched guidance which will support implementation of action-oriented policies on college and university campuses.

In this work, my questions were probing and not leading. This distanced any potential biases I may hold from impacting faculty responses, and it allowed codes to be derived entirely from the faculty’ worldview and subjective experience of teaching within the higher ed educational system.

**Reliability and Internal & External Validity**

Utilizing qualitative methods of exploring, describing, ordering, explaining, and predicting will help in confirming both reliability and validity according to qualitative research methodologies (Miles et al., 2014). Interpretive validity was utilized to accurately report what this subject matter meant to the participants as well as theoretical validity of concepts to explain
actions and meanings related to faculty pedagogy (Miles et al., 2014, p. 306). In summarizing the essentials of internal validity, credibility, and authenticity, I worked to have descriptions of each participant’s account be “context-rich, meaningful, and ‘thick’” (Geertz, 1973). Lastly, my data is well linked to the categories of prior emergent theories, and the measures reflect the application of concepts previously researched or suggested for future research. Findings are clear, coherent, and systematically related—that means, unified—including any areas of uncertainty being identified.

**Limitations**

ASHE has a 2,200-member listserv, of which 864 were faculty who were currently teaching and therefore eligible for my study. Due to ASHE membership, I had a number of respondents from different regions of the United States of varying academic institutions to contribute constructively to the outcome. Initially, it was conjectured that Zoom might hinder the level of intimacy attained in each interview (relative to in-person interviews). However, this appeared not to be the case, as self-reported by multiple participants; perhaps this is due to the amount of time faculty had had to acclimate to computer-mediated communication throughout the pandemic (Meier et al., 2021), both socially and through online lectures. I experienced us all being quite comfortable with this platform after a year and a half of usage. An additional concern was difficulties in recruitment, given that NIF might not be interested in the subject matter. This proved not to be the case. Participants appeared eager to further research in the field of higher education and further their own knowledge base. Understanding that this research inquiry might enter the political arena, as contemplative literature encourages (placing a goal of confronting social oppression on college and university campuses is a highlight of this pedagogy), remaining receptive and available to this conversation’s inclusion in the interviews was critical. As
contemplative research confirms, the classroom and academic campuses of higher education are situated as a primary vehicle to support a political agenda such that CP and the application of its theory as praxis is perceived as an agent of change in addressing these power structures (Altbach, 2011; Orr, 2002; Rendón, 2009). This research inquiry supports query as to whether the faculty interviewed are interested in incorporating political implications of teaching and learning scholarship and whether higher education’s politicizing of emergent themes affects faculty perception of and engagement with CP and its practices.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overview of the Study

Using a sample of 14 participants, I was able to ascertain how a subsample of NIF perceive and relate to CP in the classroom. Although it would have been ideal to canvass a much larger population of faculty, I found that this sub-sample was sufficient for producing a grounded theory for faculty perception of CP, as participant themes reached saturation by participant 7. In this chapter, I will discuss these interviews (14 NIF) and discuss their perception of their role as faculty and/or administrator along with their perception of CP and of CPr. To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to explore the role of religious and/or sacred traditions in CP and faculty perceptions thereof. A fundamental goal of this research was to understand whether NIF resist, make problematic religious associations, or object to academic/intellectual embrace, affecting participation and implementation of CP and CPr in the classroom. Given the current culture of teaching in America which still prioritizes (almost exclusively) research, empiricism, and rationalism (Smith, 1999/2012), I believed it possible that faculty could be resistant due to perceiving CP as inherently sacred (and deriving discomfort from this), a lack of experience or training in CPr themselves, perceiving CP and CPr as detracting from course content, or a simple lack of awareness of the field entirely. The last item is most likely true, as I interviewed only NIF. However, a particular interest of mine is understanding where this lack of awareness comes from.

Participants were recruited via the tASHE listserv. Participants were interviewed virtually over the application Zoom. The extent of their participation was a 1-hour (60-minute) interview. I sent a recruitment letter to each participant explaining that their participation in this research
study would include one 60-minute virtual interview in which I would ask about the following research question and consecutive follow-up probes and sub-questions:

- How do you perceive the pedagogy and practices of contemplative pedagogy?
- Are you aware of experiencing active resistance or objections to contemplative pedagogy methodologies?
- If you were to name yourself as a non-contemplative educator, how do you phenomenologically perceive, relate to, and experience the teaching and learning of pedagogy (both contemplative and other than CP) and its effects in the classroom?

Participants were asked to share their interpretations, philosophies, and perceptions of their teaching and learning paradigms along with reflecting upon CP as a philosophy for education. Participants were asked about the importance of spirituality/religion/faith and wisdom traditions in their personal/professional lives, and there was no manipulation of the participant’s environment and activities during the interview. All data collected were self-reported through the virtual interview.

The main benefit of participation (shared with the interview participants) was to add to the body of scholarship and empirical research on CP and to help fill gaps and voids regarding faculty perception of such. In addition, there existed the possibility that participants would develop as faculty through the exposure to CP and CPrs. Participants were told that they were being asked to take part in this research study because they are a faculty educator working in a U.S. college or university setting who does not identify as a contemplative educator. Participants were all members of the ASHE; each was either a scholar, researcher, faculty professor, or administrator (or all of the above) within higher education committed to the advancement of empirical research within higher education.
In employing a level of categorical analysis to my research, reason and rigor were emphasized in relation to the conceptual frameworks of this dissertation. I employed breadth and depth of contextualizing strategies to understand primary themes within the container of both the individual narratives (of those participants interviewed) and within the broader context of the teaching and learning institutional field of higher education, the collective container in which all faculty participants practiced. My intention was to carve a niche in qualitative research regarding the understanding of the phenomenological, pedagogical stance which NIF embrace in relation to CP.

The identity of each participant, as understood through the metrics outlined in Chapter 3: Data Collection, is given in Table 2. Notice that over 60% of participants work at R1 or R2 institutions, which are institutions with “very high” and “high” research activity, respectively. This might be because ASHE faculty teach in higher education programs which are primarily at the graduate level. The composition of participants with respect to gender is roughly equal. With respect to race and ethnicity, about 80% of the participants self-identify as White. The participants well-sample the United States, with 57% of participants from the Northeast, 15% from the South, 21% from the Midwest, and 7% from the West. In terms of religious identity, 57% of the participants identified as either religious or spiritual, 14% of participants identified as agnostic, 7% reported identifying as atheist, and 22% reported having no religious affiliation. The faculty have been teaching for a range of 3–39 years, on average having taught for 17 years.
**Table 2**

**Table of Participant Background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Geographical Region</th>
<th>Religious Identity</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Carnegie Classification/Institutional Type</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EdD</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Lapsed Catholic</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>BC/DF</td>
<td>MBA Program Director, Assistant Dean; Associate Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EdD</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1–10</td>
<td>R1</td>
<td>HE Policy Lobbyist; Associate Professor; Adjunct professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Evolved Protestant</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1–10</td>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Researcher; Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EdD</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11–20</td>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Tenured Professor; Administrator; Director of Governmental Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Associate Professor; Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>DNP, RN, APN-C</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11–20</td>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Clinical Assistant Professor; Associate Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11–20</td>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Tenured Professor; Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Unitarian Universalist</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31–40</td>
<td>BC/AS</td>
<td>Professor Emeritus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1–10</td>
<td>M1</td>
<td>Assistant Professor; Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11–20</td>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Associate Professor; Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Number</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Geographical Region</td>
<td>Religious Identity</td>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Years Teaching</td>
<td>Carnegie Classification/ Institutional Type</td>
<td>Job Title</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11–20</td>
<td>D/PU</td>
<td>Tenured Professor; Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1–10</td>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Associate Professor; Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Associate Professor; Researcher; Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Basic information about participant background and identity. Details about Carnegie classifications and their meanings can be found at carnegieclassifications.iu.edu.

It was explained to participants that this study was intended to further understanding of NIF faculty perception of CP and its practices while contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning’s empirical research within higher education. This statement of purpose was followed by the initial research question asked of the participant: “Beginning broadly with a phenomenological lens of perception, why don’t you start with whatever comes to mind when you think of contemplative pedagogy?” I explained that this study’s initial research question was designed to be very broad, working phenomenologically initially and then moving into greater detail of breadth and depth of understanding based on each participant’s response. My researcher positioning to this initial question includes active listening and empathic, facilitative responding. If the participants were broad or brief in their initial communication, they were asked to describe their experience in greater detail, with encouraging comments such as, “I am curious to learn more about that. Can you say more about that in greater detail?” This interview style led to a
rich series of interviews with 22 emergent themes, all of which are listed in Table 3. In this chapter and the following, any phrases spoken by me, the researcher, in direct quotes will be italicized. Phrases spoken by the participants will be left un-italicized. When quoted directly, participants are referred to by their pseudonym number prefixed by “P,” e.g., “P1.”

Table 3

Themes Observed Across Participant Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Observed in Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant was not aware of CP prior to interview</td>
<td>“I guess I’m not familiar with the term, so I don’t have a whole lot of context of what it’s about. I mean, contemplate about, I guess the cognate there is contemplate.”</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant was aware of CP prior to interview</td>
<td>“I would say I don’t identify as [a contemplative educator] but I’m aware of the movement and I have lots of colleagues, collaborators who would consider themselves as contemplative pedagogues. In terms of why I don’t identify in that way, it’s not something that I actively look to practice in my teaching and my classroom. That is not because I don’t believe it doesn’t work. It’s just something that I haven’t thought to do. I just haven’t looked into it enough for myself. And I have a pedagogy that works for myself and for my students and so I’m not really looking to change, but it would be something that if the need arises and I needed to change, it would be something that I would look into.”</td>
<td>3, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant does not perceive CP as inherently sacred</td>
<td>“So the term doesn’t associate, you don’t really associate anything with the term that is either religious or not?” “No, I don’t think so. I teach at a religious college and it’s Catholic, and I’m Catholic.”</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Observed in Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant’s perception of CP was unrelated to any perceived religious associations therein</td>
<td>“I’m a lapsed Catholic if that’s what you’re looking for. Yeah. Yeah, but I yeah, I don’t think I relate it back to this though.”</td>
<td>1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant experiences some dissonance with CP, or sacred concepts in general, being brought into education.</td>
<td>“It seems to be seen as this very ‘artsy,’ ‘very touchy feely,’ ‘emotional,’ ‘spiritual’ sometimes, not a necessarily good way of teaching.”</td>
<td>3, 7, 12, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant perceives there to be an ‘inseparability’ of secular and sacred</td>
<td>“So thinking about secular and sacred as two categories, I’m trying to think like, I’m doing a thought experiment with you, like, is there something that I might do that falls within both? Or falls within neither? I keep coming back to the idea of Indigenous practices or indigenizing the classroom. So, teaching in a way that is explicitly, purposefully honoring Indigenous communities or teaching in ways that come from Indigenous philosophies.”</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant perceives faculty development to be lacking</td>
<td>“We need a lot more outreach to faculty to help them build their tool kits, giving them a wide variety of tools. . . . It allows you to be student driven, the more you have that broader toolbox, you can really draw from different techniques, philosophies, frameworks, to do the education.”</td>
<td>3, 7, 11, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant perceives CP as beyond the scope of their role</td>
<td>&quot;So my reaction to ‘should we be treating the whole person?’, I say 100% yes. The other part of me, though, is that that's a lot to ask of teachers at any level.”</td>
<td>7, 8, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Observed in Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant experiences Academic Triad culture as obstructing teaching</td>
<td>“I just saw something about, it was Denmark and Norway, a European country who are, they’re actually changing the tenure system so it’s not so much focused on your publishing. What journal you’re going for, what’s your impact factor. That’s a big thing, what is your impact factor or are people reading or getting cited. It’s kind of a lot of ridiculous things like that. So, what's your service and how are your course evaluations and are you doing your job as an educator, is not really rewarded in our system whatsoever.”</td>
<td>5, 7, 9, 10,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant lacks the time to learn about CP</td>
<td>“The research faculty are not against implementing, better teaching pedagogy but a lot of it has to do with a balance between, you know, all that, finite amount of time . . . most faculty don’t have time to learn these skills.”</td>
<td>4, 7, 9, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant feels most educators are self-taught in their teaching toolset (since their graduate degree)</td>
<td>“But essentially, even those who teach in their graduate programs are thrown into the classroom, and the entirety of their development is ‘read your evaluations and figure out how to fix it.’ You’re going to continue to be judged on those throughout your faculty career and, if you want to start your faculty career somewhere good, you better have good evals to start, because they don't want to teach you how to teach. Not only are we not teaching people how to teach. We don’t want to bring someone into our institution we have to teach how to teach.”</td>
<td>2, 4, 8, 9, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Observed in Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant addresses systems of oppression and power imbalances in the classroom</td>
<td>“About like, what does it mean to teach in a way that is justice oriented? Or in a way that doesn’t just reapply existing structures of oppression? So, always thinking about all of the different identities and experiences that students have in your classroom. And keeping in mind that not everybody has the same goals for their education. I think that’s what gets lost a lot in equity or inclusive or justice-oriented education is that not everybody’s working toward the same goal. So, going back to my philosophy. That’s why I always think about who are my particular students in this class, and I need to invite them to share with me what they want out of the class so I can facilitate those opportunities.”</td>
<td>3, 4, 10, 12, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant holds ideals consistent with CP</td>
<td>“I bring this kind of social inequality approach to teaching. After I got my master’s degree, I worked part time in college counseling centers, and I read about counseling. What I’ve come to realize is that I think everybody should have a master’s degree in counseling. I rely on those basic techniques to facilitate class discussions and so I’m able to pick up on both the affective and the cognitive aspects of course content and students’ contributions.”</td>
<td>1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant brings contemplative practice into the classroom (often without considering it contemplative)</td>
<td>“So silence and deep listening and quieting the mind are strategies I bring into the classroom. I don’t start the class with, certainly not a prayer, that’s invasive. Not meditation. But I am silent at the beginning to let things slow down, people to settle in get their bodies adjust in the way they want and greet each other and acknowledge each other and be prepared to engage each other. And if the questions are rich enough they will form that active community, which graduate students do anyway. They come to class with a lot of connections and networks with fellow students. So that's there. So the spaces, the silences, quieting of the mind.”</td>
<td>2, 4, 7, 8, 12, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Observed in Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant perceives community as context for the classroom</td>
<td>“A lot of my research focuses on minority serving institutions and a big thing with them is that students come from big tight knit communities and so you can't just push that outside the classroom. You have to welcome parents and welcome their input, or whatever it might be. That’s all part of the picture. You can’t pretend that that’s not coming to the classroom.”</td>
<td>3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant places emphasis on critical thinking and autonomy</td>
<td>“A decision-making model is the focus . . . when we receive [new students], it is very difficult to develop their critical thinking because they come from models that are more, I don’t know, like, very like, memorize and you know that type of model where this model is so different.”</td>
<td>1, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant carries strong convictions in their pedagogy being good and right and effective</td>
<td>“I think [contemplative learning] is the right thing to do. If it’s better for the student and the student is going to learn more, then there’s going to be less suicides, there’s going to be less anxiety, and all of that. It’s the right thing to do.”</td>
<td>1, 3, 5, 8, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant prioritizes active learning in the classroom</td>
<td>“The challenge is balancing between that role as the professor, but not being dominating and not trying to always take charge, especially in conversations or discussions. I think something I try to work on is that balancing act, where sometimes discussions will go into totally other direction. And so you bring it back on track. But, if it’s interesting and it’s engaging and it's still related, then maybe we should go in that direction. I know some people that say ‘no, no, you got to pull them back,’ but sometimes it goes in a different direction that’s really engaging and interesting. So why not go that route?”</td>
<td>2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant feels that teaching should revolve around student needs</td>
<td>“I've got colleagues that believe that the students have to adapt to me, and I don’t agree with that. I believe that I have to adapt to the students.”</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant feels most comfortable labelling their teaching style as “pragmatic”</td>
<td>“I think I’m looking for practical strategies for implementing in the classroom to address student concerns.”</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 7, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Observed in Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant does not desire to define their teaching style under a single pedagogy</td>
<td>“I eschew all labels. I don’t [have a label for how I teach], and I will tell you why . . . I want it to be constantly evolving. And I feel as though, if I start tacking labels on to everything that I’m doing, I will start to categorize or identify what to do by the label.”</td>
<td>4, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant is open to learning new styles of pedagogy</td>
<td>“I really want to encourage students’ success and if [CP] is seen as a high impact strategy, then yeah, I think, that it could be [adopted].”</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Themes observed in the codebook derived from semi-structured participant interviews. Themes that are inter-related are grouped together by bolded edges. For each theme, an example is provided, as well as a list of all participants that expressed or related to this theme. The participant number from which the quote is drawn is bolded. Any dialogue from myself is italicized.

Contemplative Pedagogy and Practices in Non-Identifying Faculty

Within their conceptual frameworks, participants appear to identify with critical pedagogy. Despite, overall, not having heard of CP, many participants had read Dewey, Freire, Rendón, and hooks in their journey to expand their teaching toolbox. Despite not identifying as contemplative educators, it was found that nine participants held beliefs about pedagogy that aligned with CP. This is perhaps not as surprising as it might seem, as Dewey, Freire, Rendón, and hooks developed the educational frameworks that CP draws from. Perhaps more surprising was the finding that five participants brought CPrs into their classroom, such as through moments of silence at the beginning of class and setting aside time in class for students to talk to each other, make friends, and build community. None of the participants perceived these
practices as contemplative prior to the interview nor did any of these participants perceive these practices as attached to personal religious beliefs.

**Contemplative Pedagogy Is Perceived as Less Academic**

Throughout all the collected interviews, there was minimal explicit aversion to CP, as was originally anticipated. However, there was expressed skepticism about CP and its practices, with participants’ associations connecting this pedagogy to descriptors as “very touchy feely” (P3) and not “necessarily right for every student” (P3). There appears to be an implicit desire to keep the classroom agnostic to emotional nuance. In fact, one participant, who works in a university nursing program, reported that while “the patient is treated as a holistic person . . . our pedagogy is very, very cerebral, it’s very cognitive” (P6). Even more implicit was the occurrence of phrases like “most of our curriculum is largely academic, critical thinking-based and non-contemplative” (P6). The juxtaposition of these qualifiers suggests, perhaps, that this participant viewed CP as not being academic or based in critical thinking. This is consistent with the experience of P3, perceiving CP existing more within the emotional realm, and academia existing in the cognitive. For CP to be truly integrated into academia, this subtle and implicit perception must be corrected.

**Non-Identifying Faculty Participants’ Resistance Is to Labels**

Participants expressed resistance to the label of “contemplative pedagogue” or “contemplative educator,” and *a priori*, I interpreted this resistance as a rejection of CP and its practices. A very intriguing theme of these interviews is the desire for faculty to avoid any direct label of their teaching style, and, oftentimes, of themselves as individuals. Due to the academic triad, and faculty wearing hats of teacher, researcher and sometimes, additionally administrator, perhaps a label feels too limiting to capture the full essence of what faculty do. Overarchingly,
this stems from the desire to be “constantly evolving,” (P11) that “if [you] start tacking labels on to everything that [you] are doing, [you] will start to categorize or identify what to do by the label” (P11). This eschewal of the label “contemplative educator” should not be seen as a rejection of CP. Rather, this sets a new expectation for what it means for CP to be “adopted.” If faculty are going to adopt CP and its practices, it will most likely be in small, bite-size pieces, rather than in its totality. It is critical to understand that faculty may reject the term or the label, but they do not necessarily reject the practices.

This research affirmed that, most often, faculty do not have resistance to or objections about the educational value and appropriateness of CP and its practices. Nonetheless, these NIF felt more comfortable identifying as a “researcher” or a “teacher” than as a contemplative educator. Speculatively, I wonder if the desire to uphold a “cognitive” academic professional identity may be a contributing factor to teachers’ eschewal of the label and identity of “contemplative educator” or “contemplative practitioner.” Future studies could produce additional insight by examining the manner in which faculty shape their own identity given the perception of their peers. But, again, the eschewing of a contemplative identity was not found to detract from their willingness to learn or interest in learning more about CP and CPrs.

**Non-Identifying Faculty Relate to Contemplative Pedagogy Within a Secular Container**

At the onset of this research, it was believed possible that CP being perceived as sacred could impact how many faculty implement its pedagogy and practices. Instead, most faculty did not perceive CP as being inherently sacred, invalidating this prior belief. However, this may not prove that faculty do not respond to CP as sacred. Rather, this may be an artifact of the perspective taken by faculty. It was slowly uncovered over the collection of these interviews that faculty have the propensity to encase sacred ideas in secular language when bringing such ideas
into the classroom. One reason for this is respect, allowing for some existence of the sacred in the cerebral world of academia. Through a lens of “critical thinker,” this seemed to make sense to many participants:

I remember when we started talking about in higher ed, kind of Indigenous communities and starting our conversations in the classrooms and in academic spaces and conferences where you would acknowledge that these land acknowledgments that come from Indigenous communities. Something that I believe you know acknowledges the ancestors, right?—the ancestral spirits and the lands of those who had come before in the past and kind of honoring them, so I think there is kind of some, some spiritual components to that. I would also argue that because I’m of African descent, I was raised in a household with Indigenous traditions. And so, we, you know, there was a practice both kind of [Indigenous] traditions and also the kind of Spanish colonial traditions of Catholicism, but it is mixed. So you have African gods, and then you have this kind of, you have this part of it that’s acknowledging the ancestors as well, so I always felt like this Ancestral Spirit in the real world, we’re thinking about the only reality is something that I address, although it may not be directly tied to my spiritual belief because you know in academia, you have to be very careful between religion and/or scholarship and/or teaching, so I would argue, just having, just having a lot of my work is grounded in postcolonial studies, right, that focus on the past, the Indigenous native, the past, the Indigenous variable African and or native peoples cultures, and their traditions and having a conversation about the ratio in the classroom is tied to kind of looking at the, you know, this Ancestral Spirit World that we’re trying to make sure that we don’t completely erase that—is somehow present in the work that we’re doing—so I believe that, you know, like
you said, when we don’t identify as contemplative scholars, I believe that that comes with the kinds of scholarship that we, you know, we teach and our pedagogy, and although we don’t name it because again we have to, we have to acknowledge that, you know, we do in this country have a separation of church and state, although there’s, you know, there's some bleed into those areas. (P12)

It appears that faculty feel pressure to avoid letting sacred concepts overshadow their professional identity, but with many faculty holding some sacred beliefs themselves either through their religion, their community, their generational ancestral family, or their culture. What I found most intriguing about this finding is the capacity of NIF to hold the layers of subtle distinctions regarding an embrace of both the sacred and the secular in a fruitful relatedness with no report of cognitive dissonance. This raises the recognition that sacred concepts have found somewhat of an undiscussed niche in academia.

This nuanced relationship of sacred beliefs in academia makes responses to the question “do you perceive CP as sacred?” difficult to interpret. This was exemplified in multiple interviews (P1, P3, P4, P10) when participants reported perceiving CP as distinctly secular, and later expressing that the concepts of secular and sacred are inseparable. I interpret these responses as these participants perceiving CP as appropriate for the classroom, yet containing some sacred components. Ultimately, “it’s a tough tightrope to walk . . . it would be wrong to divorce the sacred underpinnings of practices like mindfulness from value systems or belief systems like Buddhism or Shamanism, because that’s where those ideas originated” (P3). This begs the question, how do practices like mindfulness fit into the classroom if the course content does not relate to, say, Buddhism or Shamanism? With CP and CPr likely to be consumed in small bits by faculty, the likelihood of these sacred aspects of the pedagogy being washed out in
attempts to secularize it is rather large. However, a full discussion of the history and impact of appropriation in CP is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

In conclusion, some participants found CP to have sacred aspects, and most did not. No participant felt very strongly about categorizing CP as sacred or secular, and many participants found the concepts of sacred and secular to have a very nuanced “inseparability.” Regardless, it was found that perceiving CP as sacred had no impact on their willingness to explore CP as a framework for teaching and learning its practices, as indicated by Table 3. Moreover, this neutral response to relating CP to sacred philosophies was found to hold whether or not the participant reported a prior or current religious affiliation. However, this qualitative result only discusses part of this nuanced issue. More research on how faculty bring sacred ideas into the classroom must be pursued, as multiple NIF participants affirmed a perception that the entire teaching enterprise is, at least in part, sacred (P1, P3, P4, P8, P10, P12) and reported objectivity in their capacity to perceive and communicate distinctions between sacred and secular activities within their classrooms.

Intersubjectivity, Wisdom, and Intuitive Intelligence as Core Tenets of Good Education Which Addresses Systemic Oppression

Multiple participants discussed their pedagogical beliefs that included the notion of knowledge creation as something beyond cognition, perhaps encompassing a turn inward to awaken the interiority of gnosis, wisdom, and intuitive intelligence. Participants P3, P10, and P12 suggested that knowledge could come from generational familial spiritual beliefs rooted in an ancestral cosmology, or it could be inspired by a gut, stomach, embodied feeling experience. Either way, there was a communal belief among these participants that knowledge creation can be inspired by something beyond cognition and critical thinking. One participant (P8) shared a
perception from over 30 years of teaching gleaned from repeated observations of many classroom experiences of a “spirit interpreter” within the classroom. This was explained as something larger than the sum of the students in the classroom appearing to embolden a collective consciousness, a group intelligence, that engaged the group in an elevated consciousness of the subject matter’s classroom query.

Many participants (P3, P4, P10, P12, P13) addressed important questions related to knowledge creation when viewed from a hierarchical perspective, with faculty holding power over the student, versus a shared equality of voice. Participant 10 noted that the teacher holds more knowledge than the student only in one singular way—in course content—and that the student’s contribution to co-created knowledge creation should be respected as well:

Oh gosh. In the 90s, there was . . . I think he was a theorist, can’t remember, but he wrote “Scholarship Reconsidered” (Boyer, 1990) and so it was looking at how research and teaching has too often prioritized the needs of the professor. Yeah. And so he. And there are plenty of scholars of color that also argue this, Laura Rendón, being one of them. But that we need to shift our focus from thinking about the professor as the first of all, as the center of knowledge and information, and instead share that responsibility to create knowledge and share knowledge with students so it's more of an equalizing approach to teaching. And so within my own approach to teaching, and I think you have questions, I’ll get to this later, I looked at the interview protocol but in my own approach to teaching, I don’t believe that I can erase the power differential, it’s impossible because I still assign grades. I still have power to write letters of recommendation. There are structural power differentials in place that I can’t change. I can mediate some of that through sharing power in the classroom. And I’m really candid with students about that;
that I’m not going to pretend like we’re on the same level because the university is not structured in that way, we’re not in a space where that’s true. What I, what I can do is I can, I can invite you to share your expertise in your, your knowledge, and I believe students carry knowledge with them, that is experiential as well as academic, and so, and I convey to them that both types of knowledge are equally important in the classroom because knowledge is socially constructed. And we can read and, and understand knowledge, that other people have produced but we use, we understand that knowledge through the lens of our own experience has value. We evolve, knowledge and thinking,

*What would you say like a carrier? What would your word be, is it that they carry knowledge?* Yeah, and that’s students have and I also think that they have intuitive knowledge to which I talked about and so they’re certainly and I don’t know that this came from somewhere—right?—it’s more just my own kind of belief that we as humans have intuitive knowledge that is really important and often we try and tamp it down in Western society. But the attribute of knowledge can be very important, not just for understanding academics like I will say, you know sometimes, will read something from someone else, and it will cause you discomfort and I want you to pay attention to that discomfort because there’s wisdom there—so maybe discomfort is caused because you fundamentally disagree with it?, or it’s challenging your thinking in ways that you’re uncomfortable with and that’s an important form of intuition. But then I also will talk about the role of intuition and things like deciding what your career trajectory will be, and making decisions about like, should I accept this position or not, and I try in my mentoring of students which is sometimes in the classroom but mostly out of the classroom, will get them to think about, okay, so what is your gut telling you here? And
what does your stomach say? Yeah, for sure, this is the contemplative. Now, you just used the word “wisdom” and earlier you used “knowledge” so, some of this, do you distinguish between the two terms? I think so because I think of knowledge as more cerebral, and like academic, and maybe in information in the world and in making sense of it and I think of wisdom as being more inherited almost as passed on from your family or your culture, but then also it’s that intuitive kind of gut level wisdom that you have.

(P10)

This approach to knowledge creation is much more respectful to all knowledge sources, and could certainly benefit the field of CP, which draws from many different contributing source origins. More importantly, this approach to knowledge creation promotes a less hierarchical model in the classroom and could foster a better environment for addressing systems of oppression within it.

Edward Sarath (2014) discussed contemplative education’s need to progress, suggesting it must not avoid inquiry into the wisdom of a cosmic narrative that relates humankind and the divine—something larger than the sum of the individuals. To speak in more secular terms, as it relates the education of phenomenological meaning-making and the fostering of human development, contemplative research affirms an interrelatedness between the intersubjective turn inward and a greater human capacity for wisdom valued as knowledge creation that could impact the restructuring of systems of oppression which value cognition above other aspects of being human.
Create Scholarly Spaces for Interdisciplinary Sharing of Research/Create Spaces for Shared Scholarship Across Disciplines and Subject Matter

Research is designed to be shared and interacted with across disciplines and specialties. As an important finding in this research attests, too many closed systems exist within particular niches of higher education where researchers simply don’t have the time to cross pollinate with other scholars researching different specialties (outside their research’s domain). Shared scholarship across disciplines and subject matter could benefit the collective if only it were more accessible. Due to time and money, many faculty are not able to afford the luxury of traveling to conferences outside of the purview of their particular research. This limitation has many consequences both to the individual and to the collective academic body. One participant, P13, expressed the necessity for pushing yourself outside of your own academic bubble,

The other thing also honestly that happens when you go to conferences is, you look for the program, and you go to the things that you do because you want to know who else is doing new work on your topic so if I’m not studying that topic. That's not the track that I’m in. What are the things I always tell my students and I tried to take my own advice you know once in a while but one of the things I always tell my students is when you go to a conference, go to a session you know nothing about because otherwise if your like scholarship is on LGBTQ students and those are the only sessions you’re going to, you’re not learning the new scholarship about teaching and learning, or about first gen students, right, I don’t know, like just different topics so the time factor gets into, there’s so little time and you’ve got research on your mind and you’ve got teaching and you’ve got to get done here. Yep, yep, so, so I think that’s why like we all sit in our spaces. And, and it’s a challenge so as someone who, you know, [doesn’t identify with CP and its practices] as I
don’t study teaching and learning. I don’t like think about it. Yeah, I don’t think about it a lot. (P13)

Much of what NIF participants shared (P1, P7, P9, P13) was that pedagogical information is segmented off from other bodies of research often because the pedagogy of teaching is often not prioritized. Throughout the participants’ professional academic journey, their own pedagogy was self-taught luckily from invested mentors or through books or gleaned from cross-pollination at conferences, self-motivated. This speaks to a need faculty have for more pathways to learning about other areas of research and new pedagogies supported through department chairs and institutional administrative decision making to value this.

**Not Enough Time Due to the Demands of the Academic Triad—Balancing Publishing With Teaching and Service**

As indicated by Table 3, the researcher experienced participants as open and receptive to learning new skills to improve their teaching and learning capacities; however, participants suggested that they would need basic questions answered about how to implement CPrs without losing excessive time to training or deterring them from course content preparation. Multiple participants felt that the academic triad demands did not reward teaching, which could in part be due to how many participants are from R1 and R2 institutions. As discussed, most participants were partially aligned with my summary of CP through its commonalities with lens of critical pedagogy. Given the time constraints placed on these faculty, they indicated minor interest in learning about CP itself; however, they expressed interest in learning about and being taught how to implement CPrs, particularly if these practices are seen as “high impact [strategies]” (P2) for students. This interest can be explained by the overwhelming “pragmatist” identity of the interviewed faculty; any added tool in their toolbox that may help students is of interest to them.
After all, “if you only have a limited tool set, there are only limited things that you can do as a teacher” (P3). Spreading awareness of CP and its practices is clearly an essential and timely avenue.

**Critical Thinking Perceived as Potentially Contemplative Act**

In the framework of CP, critical thinking is an inherently cognitive practice that can be contemplative as it drives autonomy and prioritizes the knowledge derived from the self over knowledge memorized. This relationship can be overlooked, e.g., “our curriculum is . . . very academic, critical thinking-based and non-contemplative” (P6) when teaching is viewed as purely cerebral. Many participants found fostering critical thinking a top priority in the classroom, as evidenced by Table 3. However, there were quite a few participants that seemed to gravitate towards a contemplative definition of critical thinking. One participant argued that “critical thinking is what enables you to better fulfill your quest for meaning . . . It keeps you from going down dangerous dead ends where the branches of the forest could eat you with a paranoid delusion” (P8). Another participant noticed that engagement and critical thinking in the classroom have the ability to “empower the students” (P2). Both of these participants, both NIF, presented with opinions that aligned very strongly with CP; promoting critical thinking often leads to a more positive emotional state in students, as it strengthens internal support systems through both self-confidence and internal meaning-making. Results such as these indicate that there may not be a resistance to CP, as previously stated, but rather a simple lack of exposure to this pedagogy in faculty training programs. In addition, this research suggests that within the field of CP and its practices, critical thinking is used as a contemplative practice when the emphasis is on the way in which students approach and relate to the act itself.
Faculty Asking for Faculty Development, Teaching and Learning Centers to Offer More

It is well known that academia is a competitive career path. New faculty graduate every year, yet tenure track job openings seldom open (Larson et al., 2014, Saffie-Robertson & Fiset, 2021); this imbalance in supply and demand often places the onus on faculty to bend to the culture of the institution. Unfortunately, faculty experience that “not only are we not teaching people how to teach. We don’t want to bring someone into our institution we have to teach how to teach” (P11). This institutional culture forces faculty “to go out of [their] way to get teaching experience” (P9) and it appears to be a widely upheld culture across institutions. Participant 11 reported:

I’m doing an evaluation project with a large institution on the East Coast right now. And I’ve been asking, as I’m interviewing people who participate in faculty development, how does your institution value [faculty development]? And largely the responses that I get in that and in the other evals I do, which are all about faculty development, is “I don’t know.” If you don’t know how your institution values faculty development, then that’s institutional work that has to happen right now. To say that “we value this institutional buy-in now.” (P11)

As a result, many of the participants in this study expressed interest in building out more faculty development resources at their institution, some even offering concrete ideas for how this could be accomplished. Participant 13 suggested that

The college [should say], for those of you who complete this faculty development workshop, and do all the assignments and get to the end, we will give you $500 in your research account, for your professional development. And those of you who
finish this other one . . . you also got another $500 . . . [I want] to be in a community that values this and takes it seriously. (P13)

Ultimately, it appears that faculty want to be educated about a wide range of teaching styles, including but not limited to CP. This research suggests there isn’t so much a lack of adoption of CP and CPrs due to resistance, but simply a systemic lack of awareness.

Academic Triad Revisited: The Need for Institutional Support

Faculty participants reported emphasis upon the expectation to know how to teach upon being hired even though most had no formal training or coursework in teaching whatsoever. Clearly, the expectation to be prolific researchers created stress, pressure, and imbalances in living a balanced life (Mazumdar et al., 2015). Faculty experience minimal incentives to teach well other than somewhat of a “pass or fail” mentality being applied to their course evaluations, such that “as long as you get halfway decent course evaluations, you are fine” (P9). Instead, as reported by participants in this study, what is dictated to faculty, both verbally and through non-verbal cuing, from department heads and administration is

Focus on your publishing, focus on publishing, I hear it again and again and again. And I’ve just found that I really enjoy teaching. More than I expected and more, in a lot of cases, than on the research side of things. I definitely put a lot more of my time into teaching and preparing and changing [my lesson plan]. Everyone who’s a professor says “don’t do that, you already taught the class, you don’t need to change anything” but I think, no, I can change this, I can change that . . . I did not expect that at all, how much I would love teaching. I thought I was going to be just another person that would focus on research. I’ve heard colleagues say “Look, you know we gotta teach, we got to do this teaching thing,
but we’re really into the research,” where I’m like, no. I actually teach, that’s important to me. I want the students to learn something, and it’s not fair for me to just kind of brush it off, or offer you a PowerPoint for an hour and a half, and say, that’s the end of it. That doesn’t work for me. (P9)

This culture, once again, places little importance on building out the identity of faculty as educators. Instead, faculty are left to do this themselves. But, with so much time being taken up by research, they have little time and energy to explore new pedagogies themselves. As a result, I find that although faculty appear open minded to CP and CPr, they also lack the institutional support to properly participate.
Summary of Research Findings and Theoretical Model

Figure 9

Faculty Perception of Contemplative Pedagogy and Contemplative Practices: A Leaky Model of Implementation

*Note.* The resultant grounded theory of this dissertation. CP and its practices are projected onto either a faculty perception that enhances implementation or one that detracts from it. There are multiple factors that “leak,” i.e., detract from faculty participation, all of which mostly impact the pedagogy and, less so, its practices.

The present investigation led to many findings about how faculty perceive themselves, as educators and as academics. It was found that most faculty resist labelling themselves under a singular teaching style. Rather, most faculty identified as having an ad-hoc (and self-taught) toolbox of teaching methods that work best, in the pragmatic sense, for students. Unanimously, faculty placed the students’ needs first, and this prioritization appeared to be the principal motivation for the pragmatist identity. Simply put, any teaching methodology that benefits the students is something they will implement.
In turn, these NIF were very open to learning about, and even implementing, CP. In fact, it was found that many participants already utilized CPrs in their classroom, without labelling them as such. This suggests that faculty are open to CPrs, even if they do not vocally identify as contemplative educators.

Overarchingly, the biggest disconnect for faculty and active utilization of CP and CPrs was a lack of exposure. That is, there are not many avenues for faculty to learn about the concepts and practices of CP. First, faculty do not have enough time to pursue self-education about CP, as they are occupied in full by research and their responsibilities to their students. In turn, institutions are not devoting enough resources towards faculty development to overcome this barrier. In conclusion, this research has suggested that any perceived resistance to CP at the faculty level is most likely a simple lack of exposure.

Finally, and intriguingly, it was found that sacred traditions hold a very private place in academia. That is, although some faculty hold sacred beliefs—grown from their culture, community, or religious leanings—they seem to distance these beliefs from their professional identity; it appears to be the case that sacred concepts are not seen as rational enough to hold merit in academia. There were instances of participants feeling slight discomfort with CP and its practices, due to perceived sacred undertones, and this likely stems from a similar source. More research should be devoted to the perception, and manners of integration, of sacred identities in academia. Specifically, research should investigate how faculty use the objective lens of research to bring sacred concepts into the academic community, still maintaining a level of professional distance while privately respecting the sacred beliefs themselves.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study has found that faculty are quite open to learning about, and in most cases implementing, CP and its practices. Some participants did experience a slight discomfort with CP on account of perceiving it as not rationally-minded enough, but even these participants expressed a desire to adopt its practices if doing so benefitted the students. Instead, systemic failings in how faculty are being taught how to teach appear to be the more prevalent cause for the lack of adoption of CP in academia. The field will benefit as administrations and department heads welcome scholarship inclusive of diverse contemplative communities including Indigenous peoples’ worldviews, along with the psychological contributions recommended in this study. Inclusion of underrepresented traditions, both sacred and secular, is a necessary corrective (void of dominating orders). Emphasis must be given to implementing CP and CPs without appropriation, unethical consumption, and exploitation. This is the ethical approach, and this study found there is overwhelming support among faculty for bringing in a variety of pedagogies and respecting sacred and cultural traditions. Combining this conclusion with Roth (2006) and Komjathy (2018), the field will benefit from increased cross-cultural and pluralistic discussions incorporating contemplative approaches. Assimilating “non-ethnocentric” and “non-imperialistic” frameworks to understand others’ views and practices that are presently unacknowledged as contributors to this field will increase incorporation of variant cosmological worldviews (Komjathy, 2018, p. 264).

This research also suggests that within the broader experience of “shared scholarship,” scholars seek to share their research outside of the traditional venues that might have previously been comfortable. This research supports the consideration of a hybrid education that integrates
CP and its practices and includes critical thinking as a contemplative act. This study did find participants to want more interdisciplinary studies. Participant 13 argued:

Let’s say there’s a group of people who are the contemplative pedagogues who are experts in this area, right? Okay, then they go to conferences where they all talk to each other, right? This is just an example of, we can fill in the blank with the thing, right? So, [faculty] go to conferences where their proposals are accepted, because people know what they’re talking about and you know they’re in on what this is. And they get it, and they go there, and they all talk to each other, then they have to publish the work, right? Well, where does it get published? It gets published in like, in the Journal of CP, or in other kinds of journals that. Guess what? I’m not reading that journal, right? Not where I read my things. So, it is a problem with scholarship broadly, I would argue, because, because of the narrow way we create our expertise, because of the narrow way we organize ourselves in associations, because of the narrow way we organize our journals, right? And, and this is how we publish. Right? Yeah, so, so I think that’s the thing, we sit around talking to ourselves, all the time, like, this is, this is the thing, right. So then the question is, like, how to break out of that? Like, are there other people you want to know about this?, or are you happy just talking to yourselves, right? Like, that is the question of any discipline. Right? So, you know, at what point do you need to let the world know this is a thing, right? And how do you let the world know this is a thing because it's not going to be known as we keep in our own circles. Right? Where would one do that? So that becomes the issue. (P13)
However, this is at odds with this study’s finding that faculty are overworked and already have a time deficit when it comes to exploring other educational pursuits. As a result, this study finds that progress is most easily accessed through institutional changes.

**Institutional/Cultural Shifts Are Needed**

The literature discussed in Chapter 2 strongly suggested that the field of CP needs to steer away from a reductionistic framework in simplifying contemplative practice to techniques, abbreviating contemplative experience to the cognition of neurophysiology, and diminishing contemplative scholarship to a few privileged approaches (Komjathy, 2018, p. 255). This study also found there to be a dangerous propensity for the appropriation of sacred ideas in academia.

The current domination of the field’s five primary contributors, namely, Buddhists, clinicians, hybrid spiritualists (with an emphasis on personal practice), neuroscientists, and secularists is interfering with values of inclusivity which this field claims to endorse. Using only CPrs and neglecting CP contributes to a lack of credibility for this young, interdisciplinary field. Narrow discussions become problematic with lineages and origins, i.e., source-culture and source-traditions being lost. While this research confirmed an NIF report of time limitation with the adjoining emphasis on interest in spending time to learn CP practices, on the one hand, this is an exciting result of the research; however, if and when we teach these practices in bite-size form, we are risking appropriation. We need to better understand how to teach pedagogy in pieces without losing the global context.

Understanding how to teach CP is important, because faculty clearly want to be exposed to it. Komjathy (2018) discussed the concept of a contemplative culture, which prioritizes community and attempts to garner institutional buy-in at every tier (student, teacher, administration, department heads, etc.) of the educational culture. While they were unaware of
this concept, participants were found to strongly prioritize community as well (see Table 3) and strive for a better institutional culture. Participant 11 argued that a faculty member who does work in the scholarship of teaching and learning [outside of their discipline], that has to count toward tenure or promotion, even though it’s not biology research because what it’s doing is creating stronger theories of teaching research. And so that’s the kind of little things that have to happen. Yeah, department chairs need to start saying “We’re going to count this towards your tenure and promotion.” So that professors feel like it’s okay to participate in the teaching and learning scholarship efforts. So from my perspective, it has to be a cultural shift in-house, at the institutional level, to start with people on the ground floor placing value on those things and demonstrating that it can bring in funding for the institution. (P11)

As suggested by several participants in this study, one way to achieve this is for institutions to support faculty with promotions and incentives for work in the scholarship of teaching and learning (not just for research in their field of expertise). In applying these research findings to educate institutional environments in adopting innovative approaches for college and university faculty development departments, it is imperative that spreading greater awareness be a primary goal. This research confirms that this action can serve as a long-term student and faculty success aid, a “well-being tool” (P1), as one participant called it. Multiple participants suggested that faculty learning communities within institutions need to offer the convenience of workshops, on campus, wherein faculty participants can learn about the effectiveness of CP and CPRs within faculty learning communities. As faculty do not have an abundance of time to ingest and distill various pedagogies themselves, it rests in the administration’s hands to offer distilled workshops
for them; however, this opens various avenues to appropriate pedagogy, much of which draws from sacred and cultural concepts and marginalized communities. This is especially true in the framework of CP.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This research uncovered a nuanced pipeline for how sacred concepts are embedded into academic communities. Specifically, this study found that participants resisted adding sacred undertones to their professional identities yet still held sacred beliefs, either through their religion, community, or cultural background. This led to a very quiet positioning of sacred concepts in academia, and a large potentiality for sacred concepts to be undervalued or appropriated. This study did not find that faculty undervalued or appropriated sacred concepts. I want to make it clear as well that every faculty member interviewed held a deep respect for sacred concepts that were attached to their personal values and worked very hard to give them respect in the classroom. Nonetheless, this prompts the question: how do or should sacred concepts be integrated into academic circles? While this question is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I find it to be a truly important question that deserves further study.

Appropriation is also a concern with respect to secular concepts. Mindfulness (which many associate with CP) draws from “psychologies of realization” (Komjathy, 2018, p. 281), specifically, Gestalt therapy theory, CBT/DBT, and the transpersonal psychologies, yet little credit is given to these fields (particularly with respect to the first two). While not necessarily requiring further research, I find that some reform needs to be made within the way this research is discussed. Namely, each aspect of mindfulness research needs to be traced back through its lineages and properly cited as a contributor to CP.
And, lastly, for some religious institutions, a limitation within this field is that their particular religious tradition does not dominate as central in “the” theological understanding of contemplation. Some religious institutions act as possessor of the word “contemplation,” believing the primacy of their particular religious tradition’s interpretation and usage of the term. Future research could benefit from distinguishing how different religious traditions distinguish the term and then work to integrate a pluralistic definition that can be applicable and integrative of a wide variety of world religions.

Policy Implications

Faculty reported they are stressed between the competing demands of research (which usually secures tenure), teaching, and service obligations—the academic triad. Multiple participants reported that all three are typically required, but not all three are equally valued at all institutions. If more time were allotted in graduate, higher education programs to actually teach pedagogical theories and train in teaching skill sets and practices, CP and CPr might be accepted as a knowledge base and inserted into classroom curriculum more readily. At the policy level, the requirement that academic institutions and their faculty development departments and teaching and learning centers be given pedagogy and practice funding to support faculty and administrative development could offer a greater knowledge base of both pedagogy and practices, potentially increasing CP and CPr participation.

Research from within the fields of CP and CPr would benefit from inserting themselves within higher education’s institutional policies rooted in high-level organizational governance from the top down. If governance administration endorsed these perspectives and insisted that CP and CRs were incorporated into the governance of the institution, including both faculty and administrative development, this could broaden an awareness base and invite greater acceptance
among both administration and faculty while increasing contemplative practice applications within the classroom to the student’s benefit. While enforcement of these policies at both state and federal levels is a lofty ideal, movement toward that end could foster progress not just with improved empirically researched science of constructive impact of CPrs but with the shared results from such research. According to my research findings, an increase in the knowledge base among faculty and administration of both CP and its practices could increase participation, implementation, and integration into other pedagogical philosophies. In proposing future policy and research suggestions for contemplative discourse, a focus on collecting empirical data, ensuring existing and future policy initiatives, would be effective in ensuring educational value consistent and compliant with contemplative empirical research findings.

Federal and state policies informed by empirical research could regulate endorsement of the education of these practices within the classroom, with accountability enforced at the institutional level. Within this institutional perspective, the potential to overturn the dominant Cartesian paradigm becomes possible, promoting an embodied educational laboratory in which real change is accessed, relationally through dialogue of integrated and pluralistic theories and peoples (Freire, 1968/2017). As feminist theorists agree, “the personal is political,” and the power of advocacy for individual action cannot be understated. An ethical diversity imperative for institutions today is a mission of action allowing for corrective experience in healing the wounds caused by our institutional past. John Dewey’s (1897) call to transform traditional pedagogical models invites a revisitation today of fundamental approaches to teaching and learning. Hence, modern-day contemplative perspectives invite a reconstruction of knowledge addressing power imbalances collectively and individually within the broader system of higher education. CPs offer an embodied engagement through the analysis and implementation of
pedagogical and epistemological beliefs within classrooms and academic institutions. An imperative calling for institutions of higher education today is to address the unfinished gestalt of its early beginnings immersed in inequalities of the Cartesian bias, contextually and systematically informed within a hierarchical framework in which Whiteness and maleness are privileged. Additionally, separating from Freire’s banking model, where students are customers and education is understood through an economic mental model, allows administration to understand that training faculty in CP and CPrs will actually save monies being spent to fund counseling centers’ outreach in meeting Generation Z’s mental health demands. A financially researched framework of contemplative integral education fosters a financial analysis and cost deconstruction of the earlier banking model (still in existence today). As CPrs continue to be attainable for all and valued as intelligence and knowledge essential in the education of humans, research has suggested that a more just society can potentially evolve and actualize in its collective humanity, potentially (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Zajonc, 2013). This future research can certainly be applied to an economic model which educates administrators through ROI: —real numbers and dollars invested can offer a substantial return and savings to an institution.

Incorporating more research through an institutional lens while reimagining academia as a contemplative culture could actually transform the entire associated institutional system (Komjathy, 2018). This emerging field of study, both collaborative and collective, inspires future prospects and research, potentially offering a wide array of hope and promise for higher education’s mission in the larger world. Directions for future research include qualitative study designs supporting questions and topics, such as the above mentioned, that allow for the exploration of varying (educational and economic) perspectives to inform contemplative pedagogical approaches within higher education.
Concluding Remarks

The research findings from this study add to the current body of knowledge of faculty perception engaging with CP and its practices. A robust overview of faculty perspectives contributes more broadly to scholarly dialogue about faculty demands and priorities, perceptions of pedagogical philosophy, and professional challenges of the academic triad limiting time for faculty to increase awareness about CP and CPrs. The purpose of this study was to explore, understand, and share the narratives of NIF as they relate to faculty perception of CP and its practices. With our educational systems fractured along the lines of race, class, and politics, progress toward a CP as liberation is a practical, inspirational catalyst for both the individual and the collective. The accomplishment of this vision becomes visible within the conceptual framework of a new pedagogical paradigm focused on a new humanism. This, in turn, values a pedagogy with a contemplative interiority gaze, teaching skills of an intersubjective turn inward as a pathway toward knowledge creation. Contemplative educational philosophies provide tools as a powerful medium for an emancipatory pedagogy within a social constructivist relational model with humans helping humans at a grassroots level. As previously discussed, faculty professors, due to positioning within the classroom, carry immense power as change agent, with the professor being the humanitarian transformational instrument which challenges relations of domination in the classroom via inclusive conversation in which every student’s voice is empowered to speak enriched through collective classroom CPrs (Rendón, 2009). In consideration of the student as a whole person, and the institution made up of “whole persons,” where relational connection matters and affective as well as cognitive capacities are brought to the foreground in practical ways,
We point to ways by which meditation may complement the traditional goals of the academy by helping to develop traditionally valued academic skills as well as helping to build important affective and interpersonal capacities that foster psychological wellbeing and the development of the “whole person.” (Shapiro et al., 2011, p. 494).

As institutions encourage faculty to embrace the classroom as sacred space, full actualized potentiality of both the individual and the collective becomes possible. As an environment in which both faculty and students expand consciousness and learn, integrate, and embody contemplative skills as a “way of being,” reduction of stress, anxiety, and depression (as bare minimum), the classroom can perhaps ease the demands and pressures of college counseling centers during this time of continued pandemic stressors and find a renewed equilibrium.

Valuing education of administrators, faculty, and students within a framework of possibility that supports individual and collective “psychologies of realization” organically encourages a contemplative culture on college and university campuses. This goal is not without challenges, but potentially promotes a renewed balance and hope in responding to the modern-day complexity of demands within higher education. As higher education reclaims its purpose institutionally, as more than educating students in cerebral content alone, this research confirms that through spreading awareness of CP and its practices, a pathway forward for this evolutionary, educational goal could be realized on college and university campuses today. This research also affirms that perhaps “contemplative” being brought into the classroom as a concept to ponder is about more than pedagogy and practice and that it encompasses way of being (contemplative) that is not just an act but something one (faculty) is, ontologically.

As is backed by research, and now by the perception of multiple faculty, there is more to learning than reason. There is a contemplative component that must also be respected. The
research presented here suggests that the lack of utilization of CP is generated by poor institutional support of teachers’ continued education. In closing, I end where I began, with a quote from Merton: “contemplation is a kind of spiritual vision to which both reason and faith aspire, by their very nature, because without it they must always remain incomplete” (Merton, 1961/2007, p. 1). Let this dissertation be a call to action. It is time for higher education to invest more, systemically and as a community, in education’s contemplative integration.
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Appendix A

Authorization Letter From the Association for the Study of Higher Education
January 27, 2021
Roberta Pughe, EdS, MA (she/her/hers)

The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) is writing to confirm that Roberta Pughe will be able to access the ASHE membership mailing list in accordance with our Association’s policies.

ASHE is committed to supporting and advancing scholarship in the field of higher education. To that end, the following guidelines and procedures have been put in place for members interested in accessing ASHE’s membership for research and assessment purposes.

Elements of the application include:

1. One page description of the purpose of the study (saved as a PDF and uploaded to the application)
   1. The purpose of the study must have a connection to ASHE’s mission and purposes. Research requests must fit with the mission and purpose of ASHE (http://www.ashe.ws/bylaws.htm) and comply with ASHE’s statement on diversity and ethical principles (http://www.ashe.ws/ethics.htm).
2. Identification of who is being accessed (all ASHE members or subgroups)
3. Copy of IRB proposal and approval along with statement of anticipated risks if not included in IRB application (saved as a PDF and uploaded to the application). Each request must include IRB approval document. Review of research requests will not include making judgments on the quality and rigor of the study as this is evidenced by the researcher’s home institutional review procedures and IRB approval.
4. Name of faculty advisor and contact information (if student requester)
5. Timeline and duration of project. Research must be conducted within a year’s time.
6. Agreement to compliance with research ethics and non-discrimination statements.
7. The application request must provide assurance that ASHE members will not be unreasonably burdened by research participation requests.

All requests from ASHE members will be treated equally without regard to leadership or membership status.

Additionally, those approved for use of the ASHE Mailing List will be able to provide a one-time call for participants in the weekly newsletter sent to all ASHE members.

Rental of the ASHE membership mailing list is to be used for the one-time and sole purpose of the research study which must be included with the mailing list rental application.
Applications will be reviewed by the ASHE Office and if needed, by ASHE’s legal counsel. All requesters will receive a confirmation of receipt. If the proposal meets all criteria, and the number of requests has not exceeded the maximum three (3) per semester, the office will approve requests. The ASHE Office has instituted the three requests per semester in order to provide assurance to ASHE members that they will not be unreasonably burdened by research participation requests.

Under typical circumstances, applicants should receive a decision within one week. In more complicated requests, or when the ASHE legal counsel is consulted, the time may be extended and in such cases, the submitter will be notified.

Requests to communicate with ASHE members via ASHE listservs will not be approved as listservs are primarily an informational vehicle for the association.

Once approved, those receiving the mailing list should use it only within these stated policies.

For Research Purposes: In addition, all letters of invitation to study participants must include language that the study has been approved by an appropriate IRB board and that the research has been internally approved by ASHE.

For Promotional Purposes: An approval letter will be signed by the ASHE Office outlining all expectations and requirements, including the one-time use of the list, the purpose for the mailing, timeline, and accuracy of the list.

ASHE will honor any member who wants to opt-out on any mailing list through their membership application or renewal form.

The fee for the mailing list rental is $100 for ASHE members.

The name, affiliation, mailing address, and membership type of ASHE members who have not opted out of receiving communication from third-party vendors will be provided upon payment. ASHE cannot guarantee the accuracy or outcome of any mailing.

If there are any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jason P. Guilbeau (he/him), PhD, CAE
Executive Director
Appendix B

Sample Screening Letter for Potential Participants
SAMPLE Screening Letter
(to Non-Identifying Faculty [NIF] of ASHE Listserv)
Roberta Pughe, PhD/ELMP/Graduate Student

Dear Faculty Member, Hello,

My name is Roberta Pughe and I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University. For my PhD dissertation, I am conducting a qualitative research study about faculty perception; how faculty members who do not identify as contemplative educators perceive contemplative pedagogy.

My working definition of ‘contemplative pedagogy’ for purposes of my research study is: A relational approach to teaching and learning that promotes the inquiry of meaning, purpose, and values while engaging students in a manner inclusive of and beyond their academic performance, cultivating both intra- and interpersonal skills in pursuit of an embodied education which supports the communal good.

Are you a faculty educator working in a U.S. college or university setting who does not identify as a contemplative educator? Would you be willing to reflect with me on your teaching style and share your perceptions about contemplative pedagogy, thereby contributing to a greater understanding of contemplative pedagogy within higher education? I am looking for higher education faculty employed in 4-year, degree granting institutions in the U.S., who would be willing to participate in a one-on-one interview via Zoom.

The interview will take roughly one hour (1) and will be done via the application Zoom, at a mutually convenient time. Interviews will be confidential and you will be given a pseudonym. Your participation is completely voluntary. My hope is that taking part in the study will give you an opportunity to deepen your reflection on Contemplative Pedagogy (as a countermovement within higher education today) and add value to the gaps and vacancies in the literature regarding this aspect of faculty focused empirical research.

If you would like to participate in an interview, please respond to me via email at: [roberta.pughe@student.shu.edu](mailto:roberta.pughe@student.shu.edu) or reply to this post with your contact information and I will email you the form. The deadline for registering your interest is June 1, 2021. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [609-688-9024](tel:609-688-9024) or email me at [roberta.pughe@student.shu.edu](mailto:roberta.pughe@student.shu.edu).

Regards and much gratitude, Roberta Pughe
Appendix C

Institutional Review Board Approval
May 18, 2021

Ms. Roberta Pughe
Seton Hall University

Re: 2021-205

Dear Ms. Pughe,

The Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled, “An Inquiry into Higher Education’s Controversial Countermovement: Contemplative Pedagogy” as resubmitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study’s approval as exempt. If your study has a consent form or letter of solicitation, they are included in this mailing for your use.

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, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Sincerely,

Mara Podvey, PhD, OTN
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Phyllis Hansell, EdD, RN, DNAP, FAAN
Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Office of the Institutional Review Board
Presidents Hall · 400 South Orange Avenue · South Orange, New Jersey 07079 · Tel 973.275.4656 · Fax 973.275.2978 · www.shu.edu
WHAT GREAT MINDS CAN DO

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Appendix D

Letter of Recruitment to Association for the Study of Higher Education Listserv
Dear Faculty Member, Hello,

My name is Roberta Pughe and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy at Seton Hall University. My Faculty Advisor is Robert Kelchen, his email is robert.kelchen@shu.edu and his phone number is (973) 761-9106. For my PhD dissertation, I am conducting a qualitative research study about faculty perception; how faculty members who do not identify as contemplative educators perceive contemplative pedagogy.

My working definition of ‘contemplative pedagogy’ for purposes of my research study is: A relational approach to teaching and learning that promotes the inquiry of meaning, purpose, and values while engaging students in a manner inclusive of and beyond their academic performance, cultivating both intra- and interpersonal skills in pursuit of an embodied education which supports the communal good.

Are you a faculty educator working in a U.S. college or university setting who does not identify as a contemplative educator? Would you be willing to reflect with me on your teaching style and share your perceptions about contemplative pedagogy, thereby contributing to a greater understanding of contemplative pedagogy within higher education? I am looking for higher education faculty employed in 4-year, degree granting institutions in the U.S., who would be willing to participate in a one-on-one interview via Zoom.

The interview will take roughly one hour (1) and will be done via the application Zoom, at a mutually convenient time. Interviews will be confidential and you will be given a pseudonym. Your participation is completely voluntary. My hope is that taking part in the study will give you an opportunity to deepen your reflection on Contemplative Pedagogy (as a countermovement within higher education today) and add value to the gaps and vacancies in the literature regarding this aspect of faculty focused empirical research.

If you would like to participate in an interview, please respond to me via email at: roberta.pughe@student.shu.edu or reply to this post with your contact information and I will email you the form. The deadline for registering your interest is September 15, 2021. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 609-688-9024 or email me at roberta.pughe@student.shu.edu.

Regards and much gratitude, Roberta Pughe
Informed Consent Form

Title of Research Study:
An Inquiry Into Higher Education’s Controversial Countermovement: Contemplative Pedagogy

Principal Investigator:
Roberta Pughe, Doctoral Student, Seton Hall University

Department Affiliation:
Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy, Seton Hall University

Sponsor:
This research is supported by the Department of Education Leadership and Management Policy, Seton Hall University.

Brief summary about this research study:
The following summary of this research study is to help you decide whether or not you want to participate in the study. You have the right to ask questions at any time.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of religious and/or sacred traditions in contemplative pedagogy and faculty perceptions thereof. A fundamental goal of this research is to understand if contemplative pedagogy is necessarily perceived phenomenologically as sacred by faculty (nonidentifying contemplative faculty, NIF), and whether or not there are resistances and objections by NIF of implementation of contemplative practices into the classroom.

You will be asked to participate in an interview conducted virtually over the application Zoom.
The extent of your participation will be a one hour (60 min) interview conducted virtually over Zoom.

The primary risk of participation is the possibility that private information you share can be accessed illegally and shared without your consent, due to the information being provided via a zoom online platform due to the pandemic.
Informed Consent Form

The main benefit of participation is an opportunity to deepen your reflection on Contemplative Pedagogy in your work (as a countermovement within higher education today) and add value to the gaps and vacancies in the literature regarding this aspect of faculty focused empirical research.

Purpose of the research study:
You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a faculty educator working in a U.S. college or university setting who does not identify as a contemplative educator. Given that you are a member of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), I imagine you to be a scholar and higher education faculty member committed to the advancement of empirical research within higher education.

Your participation in this research study is expected to be for two months.

You will be one of twenty people who are expected to participate in this research study.

What you will be asked to do:
Your participation in this research study will include one 60 minute virtual interview in which I will ask about the following research question and one to two possible sub-questions:

- How do faculty who do not practice contemplative pedagogy view this field and its practices?
  - Are you aware of experiencing active resistance or objections to contemplative pedagogy methodologies?
  - If you were to name yourself as a non-contemplative educator, how do you phenomenologically perceive, relate to, and experience the teaching and learning of contemplative pedagogy and its confirmed effects in the classroom?

Participants will be asked to share their interpretations, philosophies, and perceptions of their teaching and learning paradigm along with reflecting upon contemplative pedagogy as a philosophy for education. Participants will also be asked about the importance of spirituality/religion/faith and wisdom traditions in their personal/professional lives. There will be no manipulation of the participant’s environment and activities during the interview.

All data collected will be self-reported through the virtual interview.

Adult Consent.v2.2020-2021
Informed Consent Form

1. Religion
2. Race/Ethnicity
3. Gender
4. Age
5. Type of University Affiliation (4-year, 2-year, Private, Public, etc)
6. Department/Field
7. Perceptions of Contemplative Pedagogy

Your rights to participate, say no or withdraw:
Participation in research is voluntary. You can decide to participate or not to participate. You can choose to participate in the research study now and then decide to leave the research at any time. Your choice will not be held against you. The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval.

Potential benefits:
There may be no direct benefit to you from this study. However, possible benefits may include an opportunity to deepen your reflection on Contemplative Pedagogy in your work (as a countermovement within higher education today) and add value to the gaps and vacancies in the literature regarding this aspect of faculty focused empirical research.

Potential risks:
The risks associated with this study are minimal in nature. Your participation in this research will include an audio/video interview collected over the internet via the application Zoom. You can view Zoom’s privacy policy at this link: https://zoom.us/privacy. There is always a possibility that private information you share over the internet can be hacked into or accessed illegally and shared without your consent. While the risk of this happening is minimal, it is still possible.

Confidentiality and privacy:
Efforts will be made to limit the use or disclosure of your personal information. Video interviews will be conducted and recorded via the online application Zoom. Interviews will be recorded directly to an encrypted hard drive and will not be recorded to the cloud. After these interviews are recorded, the video files will be reviewed by the Principal Investigator only. They will be transcribed by the Principal Investigator only.
Informed Consent Form

Investigator and then said video files will be destroyed by the Principal Investigator. Interview participants will be given a pseudonym and an ID number that will be used to match said subject to their interview transcription and audio file. Interview transcriptions will be stored on encrypted external hard drives. These interview transcriptions and encrypted hard drives will not be shared with anyone and will be stored in a locked filing when not in use.

This information may include the research study documents or other source documents used for the purpose of conducting the study. These documents may include institutional records. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that oversee research safety may inspect and copy your information. This includes the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board who oversees the safe and ethical conduct of research at this institution.

As Zoom is an application that utilizes the internet to function, there are certain privacy concerns related to being interviewed over an online application. Zoom provides a very detailed privacy policy here: https://zoom.us/privacy. Given that interviews will be recorded directly to an encrypted hard drive, this study will not need to address the privacy concerns that come with recording directly to the cloud.

Data sharing:
De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance knowledge. We will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information we share. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data. Data analysis and findings will be used for purposes of this dissertation and all participants identities will be protected.

Cost and compensation:
You will not be responsible for any of the costs or expenses associated with your participation in this study.

There is no payment for your time to participate in this study.

Conflict of interest disclosure:
Informed Consent Form

The principal investigator and members of the study team have no financial conflicts of interest to report.

Contact information:
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research project, you can contact the principal investigator Roberta Pughe at roberta.pughe@student.shu.edu, the Researcher’s Faculty Advisor Dr. Robert Kelchen at (973)761-9106 or robert.kelchen@shu.edu, or the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) at (973) 761-9334 or irb@shu.edu.
Informed Consent Form

Optional Elements:
Audio and/or video recordings will be performed as part of the research study. Please indicate your permission to participate in these activities by placing your initials next to each activity.
I agree    I disagree

The researcher may record my [audio or video] interview. I understand this is done to help with data collection and analysis. The researcher will not share these recordings with anyone outside of the study team.

I hereby consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of participant                        Date

__________________________________________    ________________

Printed name of participant

__________________________________________

Signature of person obtaining consent                        Date

__________________________________________    ________________

Printed name of person obtaining consent

__________________________________________

Adult Consent v2.2020-2021
Appendix F

Interview Protocol
Interview Protocol

Faculty Interview #_____

Introducing the Interview

I will explain to each participant that in order to ensure the quality of the research, I would like their permission to record our interview and any following conversation. I will explain that only I will have access to the interview recording and my notes taken during said interview and that I will destroy the recording after it has been transcribed. I will explain that their participation is entirely voluntary and I’ll remind them that they have the right to stop the interview at any time if there is any discomfort or need or desire to end the interview.

Interview style: semi-structured

Sample Interview Questions:

1. As you know, I’m interested in a better understanding of faculty perception of contemplative pedagogy. Why don't you begin with whatever comes to mind when you hear me state this. Please also introduce yourself and indicate your title/position, your academic field, and how long you have been teaching in higher education?

2. Please describe your teaching philosophy and/or pedagogy?

3. Do you have any general observations, thoughts, feelings, and/or perceptions about the use of contemplative pedagogy in the classroom?
4. Are you aware of experiencing active resistance to contemplative pedagogy methodologies or do you have what you might call objections to this field’s application within higher education?

5. If you were to name yourself as a non-contemplative educator, how do you phenomenologically perceive, relate to, and experience the teaching and learning of contemplative pedagogy and its confirmed effects in the classroom?

6. To what extent do you, as faculty, view contemplative pedagogy as “sacred”?

7. To what extent should the classroom be secular, and, what do you mean by that term?

8. Do you believe you have none to minimal awareness of contemplative pedagogy and perhaps believe this to be true because it is a new field of study?

9. To add to this body of research, what else do you believe is important for me to understand about your relatedness to this topic?

Probes:

Do you believe that:

1. Critical reasoning understood as ‘education’ does not leave time for subjective reflection and contemplation?

2. The correct space for fostering ‘self-development’ is outside the classroom?

3. It is not the responsibility of a professor to address emotional student concerns.

4. What do you think about creating space for: (a) a moment of silence in the classroom? (b) Use of powerpoint presentations in lecture followed by classroom discussion where all voices are represented? (c) Do you have students participate in classroom teaching to
encourage inclusion of participation? (d) Is breaking class into small groups to promote connectivity and belonging to a community an important aspect of your teaching?

5. Could you imagine that these qualities of teaching and learning are consistent with contemplative education?

In addition, my faculty interviews will include asking participants to review and reflect upon the graphic below, “The Tree of Contemplative Practices” (from the Association of Contemplative Mind within Higher Education), creating an opportunity for an open-ended conversation based on this image. I will ask professors about the importance of spirituality/religion/faith & wisdom traditions in their personal/professional lives, seeking to also understand their perceptions and associations of their relatedness to their own and students’ existential/spirituality/religious associations.