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# Reflecting on Reflecting: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as a Tool to Evaluate Contemplative Pedagogies

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# Reflecting on Reflecting: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as a Tool to Evaluate Contemplative Pedagogies

## **Abstract**

Although interest in contemplative pedagogies has grown considerably in higher education, faculty have relatively few resources available to help them make evidence-based choices about the use of different contemplative pedagogies in particular disciplinary or course contexts. We propose adapting a framework from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to serve as a heuristic for assessment of the design and implementation of these practices. After outlining this framework, we provide concrete examples from undergraduate courses to explore how a SoTL-informed design, implementation, and assessment process could be applied to the utilization of contemplative pedagogies. The examples suggest that there are many ways in which practices can be incorporated in support of deepening student learning and creating transformative learning opportunities for our students. We conclude with reflections on the potential and the limitations of this approach.

## **Keywords**

contemplative pedagogy, SoTL, higher education, mindfulness, transformative education

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# Reflecting on reflecting: Scholarship of teaching and learning as a tool to evaluate contemplative pedagogies

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Although interest in contemplative pedagogies has grown considerably in higher education, faculty have relatively few resources available to help them make evidence-based choices about the use of different contemplative pedagogies in particular disciplinary or course contexts. We propose adapting a framework from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to serve as a heuristic for assessment of the design and implementation of these practices. After outlining this framework, we provide concrete examples from undergraduate courses to explore how a SoTL-informed design, implementation, and assessment process could be applied to the utilization of contemplative pedagogies. The examples suggest that there are many ways in which practices can be incorporated in support of deepening student learning and creating transformative learning opportunities for our students. We conclude with reflections on the potential and the limitations of this approach.

## INTRODUCTION

“Integration and wholeness in student life is too important to be left to chance. It should be one of the guiding motives of higher education” (Zajonc, in Palmer, Zajonc, & Scribner, 2010, p.56).

The growing interest in contemplative pedagogies around the world demonstrates that many higher education faculty are heeding Zajonc’s call (e.g., Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Gunnlaugson, Sarath, Scott, & Bai, 2014; Miller, 2015; Oberski, Murray, Goldblatt, & DePlacido, 2014). These pedagogies build on three foundations: (1) contemplative practices that often have long, deep histories; (2) emerging research on the positive outcomes of contemplative practice for well-being and flourishing; and (3) scholarly studies of student learning in higher education (Morgan, 2015). While those foundations provide a firm grounding for contemplative pedagogies in general, they do not offer specific evidence that would help faculty (or others) make judgments about the use of contemplative pedagogies in particular disciplinary or institutional contexts – nor do they point the way toward effective practices for determining student learning and development linked to contemplative pedagogies.

Questions about how to gauge the outcomes of these pedagogies, however, have received little attention in the literature to date (Coburn et al., 2011; Glisczinski, 2007). Indeed, faculty, staff, and students who use contemplative pedagogies might wonder whether the complexities and richness of non-cognitive learning can rigorously be captured, measured, and evaluated. In a recent review essay on “Assessing Personal Qualities Other Than Cognitive Ability for Educational Purposes,” Angela Duckworth and David Yeager concede that “perfectly unbiased, unfakeable, and error-free measures are an ideal, not a reality” (2015, p. 243). Recognizing this limitation, Duckworth and Yeager contend that the purpose of most educational inquiries is not scientific validity but rather the improvement of practice. This argument aligns with what other scholars refer to as consequential validity. According to Pat Hutchings, Jillian Kinzie, and George Kuh, “Consequential validity posits that assessment must be valid for the purposes which it is

used, consistent with relevant professional standards, and – this is the key point here – that the *impacts or consequences of its use* should be factors in determining its validity” (2015, 41). In short, efforts to understand educational outcomes need not meet the highest standards of experimental research in order to have merit and value. Instead, a fundamental criterion for any inquiry practice related to contemplative pedagogies is how useful it is to the faculty, staff, and students who design and enact contemplative pedagogies in their own classrooms.

Even if these methodological concerns can be addressed, some might still ask about the possibility, or even the wisdom, of applying the academic tools to the study of contemplative pedagogies (Baugher, 2014). Critical inquiry often involves breaking down complex phenomena into discrete and depersonalized parts that can be measured and judged, while contemplative pedagogies focus on wholeness, synthesis, and self-knowledge (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). Is there an inherent, perhaps unbridgeable, chasm between the scholarly analysis and contemplation? We do not think so. For instance, the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) movement in medicine and health offers one successful model for the systematic study of how best to design, implement, and evaluate contemplative practices in specific learning environments (see Wilson, 2014 for historical review). The MBSR movement, which can be traced to the transformational writings of Jon Kabat-Zinn (and gained momentum with the publication of his 1990 book *Full Catastrophe Living*), began when a small number of providers decided to return to ancient wisdom about the mind-body connection. As in academia, teacher intention alone was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the successful implementation of these practices. As the MBSR movement began to grow and prosper, medical researchers used existing disciplinary methods to study the practices and outcomes of diverse MBSR approaches (Praisman, 2008). The now extensive literature on MBSR demonstrates that contemplative practices can be appraised with discipline- and use-specific methods without compromising the purposes of mindfulness. Meta-analyses conducted of the expansive MBSR literature consistently demonstrate its many benefits for health and well-being (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt &

Walach, 2004). Indeed, systematic inquiry into outcomes did not compromise the aims of MBSR, but actually opened the door to wider and deeper use of these practices in health care.

Academia now finds itself in a position similar to that of the medical community before the MBSR studies. Many in higher education are returning to the ancient wisdom that contemplation and mindfulness are powerful, even essential, for deep and transformative learning. However, we have yet determined how to systematically, meaningfully, and sustainably design, implement, and evaluate mindful and contemplative pedagogies in higher education classrooms. The purpose of this article is to provide a practical approach for designing, implementing, and even studying the results of, contemplative practice guided by the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) framework. By demonstrating that SoTL is one useful way to examine the implementation and outcomes of contemplative pedagogies, we hope to spark additional research on contemplative pedagogies – research that can help all of us to make more evidence-informed and mindful pedagogical choices that will contribute to student transformation.

## CONTEMPLATIVE PEDAGOGIES AND THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Incorporating contemplative pedagogies into one's teaching, like any meaningful task, should begin with careful attention to purpose. The design and implementation process should be guided by a variety of goals including the nature of the disciplinary work, the faculty member's personal preferences and strengths in contemplative practices, and the extent to which the ability to capture and measure outcomes is important. For practitioners who aim to understand the processes and results of contemplative pedagogies, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is a particularly helpful tool. SoTL is most simply defined as "a kind of 'going meta,' in which faculty frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning—the conditions under which it occurs, what it looks like, how to deepen it, and so forth—and do so with an eye not only to improving their own classroom but to advancing practice beyond it" (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). SoTL in action can be quite diverse, taking as assets the disciplinary training and research methodologies of the faculty members who are conducting the inquiry. Across this diversity, however, Felten (2013) has identified five common principles that guide SoTL practice. We have adapted these as a framework for the design, implementation, and evaluation of contemplative pedagogies:

1. *Inquiry focused on student learning:* What, how, and why students learn varies widely across disciplines and courses. When inquiring into learning in a contemplative classroom, faculty might be more interested in exploring students' habits of mind and heart than they are in considering students' grasp of course content. Regardless of the particular focus, learning should be at the center of any inquiry into contemplative pedagogies.

2. *Grounded in context:* SoTL inquiry should be rooted in a specific context; we are not asking abstract questions about generic students, but rather we are seeking insight into the learning of these students, in this course, and on this campus. At the same time, SoTL inquiry should build on the scholarly context of our work. Researchers and practitioners have provided a strong foundation for both

contemplative pedagogies (e.g., Barbezat & Bush, 2014) and student learning in higher education (e.g., Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010), and any scholarly study should build on what is known.

3. *Methodologically sound:* Like contemplative pedagogies, SoTL is methodologically diverse, allowing faculty from a range of disciplines to bring their own scholarly training and personal wisdom to bear on questions of student learning (Huber & Morreale, 2002). Some disciplinary tools might be particularly apt for certain inquiries, such as positive psychology techniques for evaluating curiosity or mindfulness, but intentional application of many different research methods, including deeply introspective ones (e.g., Baugher, 2014), are sound when connected to the heart of a particular inquiry (McKinney, 2013).

4. *Conducted in partnership with students:* SoTL should be done with students, not to them. In practice this involves inviting students to join us in seeking to understand how individuals and the class community experience and learn from contemplative pedagogies. Such radical openness can be uncomfortable to students and faculty who are accustomed to hierarchical classrooms, but with patience and care classrooms can become sites for collective inquiry and growth (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014).

5. *Appropriately public:* As contemplative pedagogies spread in higher education, practitioners and scholars – and students – will benefit if we treat our teaching as "community property" (Shulman, 2004). Going public with SoTL inquiries does not necessarily require publication in peer-reviewed journals; instead, many opportunities exist to share with and learn from colleagues on and beyond our campuses. By being public about the practices we use and the insights we gain, we are generously allowing others to adapt and build on our own learning from contemplative pedagogies.

These principles can act as a heuristic, a simple but useful guide, for faculty seeking to incorporate new pedagogical approaches into their teaching and to conduct classroom-level practical inquiry into learning and development linked to contemplative pedagogies. Individuals or groups can use this framework as a reflective guide to plan, conduct, and act on the results of SoTL research on contemplative pedagogies and experiences of authenticity in the classroom (c.f., Dencev & Collister, 2010 and Vannini & Franzese, 2008 and Franzese, 2009 for discussion of authenticity).

To illustrate how this might be done, we will consider the ways one of the authors (Franzese, assistant professor of sociology at Elon University) has designed, implemented, and inquired into the outcomes of contemplative pedagogies in her own classes – using the five principles outlined above. This case does not seek to reveal how reflection affects students' performance in terms of course grades or students' ability to retain and apply disciplinary knowledge; instead, this example focuses on the primary concern of Franzese, frameworks, how contemplative pedagogies affect the in-the-moment classroom experiences of students. Franzese has brought contemplative pedagogies into the full range of courses she teaches, adapting her teaching practices to meet the needs of the students in each course. For instance, in her senior seminar

Franzese invited students to do introspective self check-ins at the beginning of each class meeting, and in her introductory course she asked students to participate in contemplative freewriting practice, and in her upper-level course she engaged the students in an explicit mindfulness practice, on occasion inviting students with interest or expertise to lead the practice (See Table 1). Examples from each of these three types of courses are offered here to demonstrate the multitude of ways in which contemplative practices can be designed, implemented and studied according to the SoTL framework.

**TABLE 1. Course Type and Contemplative Pedagogy Incorporated and Assessed**

Course Type	Contemplative Pedagogy
Senior Seminar in Sociology	Introspective self-assessments
Upper-level Course in Sociology	Mindfulness practice
Introductory Course in Sociology	Contemplative freewriting

We do not offer Franzese's work as the only or the best way to enact and evaluate contemplative pedagogies. Instead, we describe her work to illustrate the flexibility and utility of using the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to design and analyze contemplative pedagogies. We also hope that others can learn from Franzese making her own teaching and inquiries "appropriately public."

### Inquiry Focused on Student Learning

In each course, she had three common goals for contemplative pedagogies:

- (1) To invite students to be fully present, including allowing students to gauge their emotional reaction and response to course assignments (fear, excitement, anxiety, anticipation),
- (2) To facilitate a sense of connectedness and invoke a sense of membership in a learning community, and
- (3) To develop a reflective process orientation toward disciplinary learning, rather than focusing primarily on products and outcomes.

Her choices of specific contemplative practices aligned with her goals for students' learning in each course. For her senior seminar course in Sociology she selected introspective self-assessments as the contemplative practice. With the pedagogical practice of introspective self-check-ins, she hoped students would gain (a) self-awareness/sense of authentic experience, (b) compassion for self and others, and (c) some freedom from negative emotions that may hinder their ability to complete demanding disciplinary projects. These check-ins provided time for reflection and normalized the process of thinking about one's experience in a given setting. The contemplative practice for her upper-level sociology course was a mindfulness practice at the beginning of class that she intended for students to (a) gain skills for focusing their attention, (b) be in a state of openness about different ways of seeing the world, (c) focus more acutely on disciplinary content. Finally, in her Introduction to Sociology course she used the contemplative practice of freewriting to help students (a) gain insight and compassion, (b) explore themes that they might otherwise shy away from, and (c) think critically and deeply about disciplinary content.

Linking to the SoTL framework, each of the pedagogies generated some evidence of student learning that gave both the students and Professor some insight into the experiences of student learning. Indeed, the Franzese's SoTL-inspired inquiries into student learning led her to choose the contemplative practices in the first place.

### Grounded in Context

As Franzese planned for the ways contemplative pedagogies would be woven into her teaching, she thought carefully about her educational institution, students, her discipline, the purposes of each course, and the range of contemplative pedagogies that might help her students toward her goals.

Franzese teaches at Elon University, a private and selective liberal arts institution in Elon that enrolls roughly 5,500 undergraduates. Elon students tend to come from the eastern half of the United States, and many grow up in middle class or upper class families. Prior to her courses, few have actively engaged in contemplative practices on their own, although many have at least a passing familiarity with mindfulness, yoga, and meditation, and a few students (1-2 per class in the upper level courses) had extensive knowledge related to at least one contemplative practice. In both the introductory course and the upper-level seminar, most of the 25 students in the class typically are *not* Sociology majors, so they have little or no familiarity with the theories and methods of the discipline. In the senior seminar, all students (typically 8-10) are majors and have developed some disciplinary knowledge and expertise in prior courses, although they probably have not experienced contemplative pedagogies before.

The introspective self-assessments she designed for her senior seminar course were selected in consideration of the demands of the course. As the capstone course for majors, senior seminar students are required to complete a full research project - from development of a research question to gaining approval to conduct human subjects research, collecting and analyzing data, and finally presenting the project to an audience. In addition to these demands, students are also required to engage in professional development tasks such as resume writing and preparation of job application or graduate school materials. Because of the extensive demands of the course - and the short window of time allotted (a mere semester!) - anxiety and negative anticipation have historically been high among students. With this expectation, Franzese opened classes with a 2-5 minute introspective check-in. At the beginning of class after she reviewed the agenda for the session, students put their heads down and raised their hands responsively as Franzese listed varying levels of concern and negative anticipation. Students were encouraged to put their heads down so as to not be influenced by the responses of their peers. After the class engaged in this activity, Franzese verbally provided feedback about the levels reported by the students. This feedback aimed to normalize the worry and negative anticipation when those feelings surfaced and to highlight the elation and relief when those were prominent sentiments. This brief exercise afforded students the opportunity to realize that they were not alone in their experiences. Additionally, on days where levels of distress were high, once students knew that others were distressed as well they typically were willing to speak freely about their concerns, which allowed us to problem-solve and take appropriate actions – which tended to increase their

own confidence in their abilities. An advantage of doing this over the course of the semester was that it also demonstrated to the students that levels of concern (or lack of concern) are oscillating—that even when we are most concerned or overwhelmed, these times are followed by times when we feel efficacious and in control. Acknowledging this cyclical nature allowed many students to deal productively with emotions and focus on their disciplinary work. A by-product of this practice was that students felt bonded to one another - multiple students remarked in their feedback forms about the great extent to which our class was a supportive learning community. At the final research presentations students requested a group photo of the class, illustrating just how supportive students were over the course of the semester and how invested they seemed in the projects of others. In addition, multiple students referred positively to the check-ins when feedback was invited at the end of the semester.

The mindfulness practices Franzese designed for her upper-level sociology course (which included disciplinary content focusing on the self), again were selected in response to contextual factors. Since the course was taught in the spring semester at lunchtime and was comprised primarily of juniors and seniors, Franzese had concerns about the ability of students to stay focused and engaged during the course. Students often are distracted and as educators we must protect the time and space for our students to think (see Forni, 2011 for discussion). With this in mind, Franzese shared information about mindfulness practices with the students and asked them if they might be willing to begin each class with a mindfulness practice. She explained that while mindfulness has connections to Eastern religious traditions that the practices we would be doing were not affiliated with any religious tradition and gave a brief history about mindfulness and MBSR. Students consented verbally to engage in the first practice. She continued to request consent prior to conducting any mindfulness practices. However, after approximately 3-5 classes, students would request a mindfulness practice as soon as she entered the classroom. The mindfulness practices we engaged in ranged from meditation on counting one's breath to body scans, to sending good wishes, to mindfully listening to a piece of music. The purpose of the practices was to teach students skills to increase awareness so that they could have an increased level of attentiveness while learning in the class session. Again, an enhanced sense of connectedness was a byproduct of the practice and students shared feedback about this benefit of the practice verbally throughout the course. Most striking was the way in which students would begin statements with the phrase "I can say this here because this class is safe/close/comfortable different..." followed by a statement that that a student may feel too vulnerable or inhibited from exploring or sharing in an alternate setting.

Finally, in her Introduction to Sociology course, comprised primarily of first and second year students, Franzese selected a contemplative practice that matched the contextual demands (class year of students) but also was explicitly and specifically related to the sociology disciplinary process. The professor tells students that what distinguishes a sociologist from someone who is curious about social life is the way sociologists systematically study social phenomena. Because she wanted students to develop a familiarity and ease with disciplinary process - a certain way of approaching the social world - she used a contemplative approach that focuses

on process, freewriting (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). The course regularly deals with controversial themes about race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, crime and deviance, reproductive rights, and gender. Perhaps because of the weight of these themes, students in Franzese's courses typically were initially reserved in classroom discussions. For this reason, she developed a contemplative freewriting practice in which students had the opportunity to express themselves in an unfiltered way about their reactions to a reading or discussion topic, or to respond to questions the professor posed about the reading or theme. The instructions for the freewriting stated that the purpose of the writing was not communication but thinking- that the freewriting was assigned to provide them a time and space in which they could discover their own reactions. They were directed not to edit for grammar or spelling but to write continuously from the time they were instructed to begin until the time they were told to stop. At the end of the semester students had the opportunity to submit their freewriting for review or to submit a summary document in which they reflect on their freewriting process. Franzese offered this alternative because she did not want students to limit themselves in their freewriting thinking about my reading their writing. She found that students spoke more openly about the book than they had in previous semesters, and also that students were more willing to go to those dark and vulnerable spots of misconception where learning can occur.

Linking to the SoTL framework, the practices that Franzese selected were an appropriate and reasonable fit for Franzese's discipline and interest in authenticity, specific courses, and academic institution. Across classes, Franzese, often also invites students to include a "Personal Reflections" section at the end of research papers, which again legitimizes the activity of reflection and allows students to think reflectively about the work they have completed. The type of contemplative practices utilized and the analysis of those practices from course to course and to fit the context of the specific course goals and objectives.

### METHODOLOGICALLY SOUND

Franzese's design and implementation of the contemplative practices was methodologically sound in that the process was informed by extensive reading on these topics and in consultation with peers both within and beyond her university. Her analysis of its outcomes was also methodologically sound and appropriate because it was related to her inquiry, it provided relevant and appropriate evidence, and it was consequentially valid.

Franzese's fundamental question was, do contemplative practices deepen student engagement and student learning? To explore this, she first looked to students' behavior - did students appear engaged? Did they arrive on time? Were absences few? Second, she looked to students' report of their own engagement and learning. Finally, she looked to student comprehension of disciplinary content, both acquisition and retention of course content.

Franzese routinely gathers student feedback at various points in the semester. While students are informally invited to share feedback at any time, she officially collects feedback halfway through the course by providing students with a mid-semester evaluation form. The form has only a few questions including versions of: "what's working?" and "what do you want to see

changed?" At the end of the semester, to capture student perceptions of these contemplative practices, Franzese added a question to her University's standard Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPoT) forms that asked precisely that; for example, in her upper level course she asked whether students felt that contemplative practices enhanced their learning. Students responded to the question on a six-point scale from Strongly Disagree (or a "1") to Strongly Agree (a "6"). In her upper-level seminar, the mean response on this item was 5.44, meaning that nearly all students "agree" or "strongly agree" that the contemplative pedagogy met its goals. She also asked a question in that course (and in others which utilized contemplative practices) about the extent to which students felt safe (an important question since Franzese often articulates to students that it is acceptable to her that they feel uncomfortable but essential that they feel safe). The score on that item was 5.88 (while for the Introductory course it was 5.26 and for the senior seminar course a 6, meaning that every single student reported feeling very safe in the course). The SPoT form also includes space for students to write comments related to each prompt, which included qualitative responses like "The start-of-class exercises helped me focus and clear my mind."

Franzese's analysis of the students' freewrites and summaries provided evidence of the raw and reflective products of her contemplative pedagogy. She focused her evaluation to this writing on (a) the depth of content in terms of superficiality versus critical engagement with key themes from course readings, (b) the extent to which students linked course themes with themes in the readings, and (c) the degree to which students' writing displayed introspective consideration related to key topics. Analysis of these freewrites revealed that students were making linkages across course readings and were relating the course material to their own life experiences, often resulting in more informed perspective. The analysis of the freewrites was a reflective process for Franzese as well, resulting in a list of topics to be explored and utilized with students in future semesters. This example of direct evidence of student learning allowed her to address how effective the contemplative pedagogical practice was meeting her general goals of present-moment awareness, connectedness, and process orientation as well as my course specific goals of insight/compassion, courage in addressing challenging themes, and critical thinking about disciplinary content.

Linking to the SoTL framework, Franzese selected practices that allowed her to apply her own disciplinary expertise to the study of contemplative practices.

### Conducted in Partnership with Students

As illustrated above, Franzese approaches contemplative pedagogies as invitational – something she invites students to do, not a requirement. In this way, Franzese comes to this classroom with a partnership framework; she is doing these practices with her students, not to them.

For instance, in her senior seminar, Franzese opened most classes with a heads down, hands up assessment of how students were feeling at the start of each class. This practice welcomed students to engage in three distinct contemplative acts. First, students had the task of checking-in with themselves--how were they feeling? Second, students had the opportunity to decide whether or not they wanted to share this information, a practice of vulnerability and trust and self-compassion involved in disclosure. Third, students engaged in the act of responding to the feedback provided to the class about how others

were feeling which appeared to increase both self-acceptance and compassion for others. All of these acts were offered by invitation and students could decline to participate in these practices as they were comfortable. She would also do a more holistic check-in at the beginning of class-- touching base not only about the status of projects but also of individual struggles. This facilitated a sense of connectedness and of mattering. Thus, by pursuing her first goal of inviting students to be present, she actually served to facilitate her second goal of creating a learning community. In addition to these check-ins at the beginning of class, she would also from time to time do these quick check-ins when the class discussed due dates for project components.

This sense of a learning community was pursued in a different way in the context of her upper level seminar course as well as in her Introduction to Sociology course. In a smaller course like senior seminar, knowing the names of peers may be easy and common, however students often do not know the names of others in larger courses. To remedy this situation, Franzese often uses learning circles in her courses. This exercise, which Franzese adapted from an activity she participated in at an Anti-Defamation League workshop and referred to there as "concentric circles," is an activity in which two circles are formed in which participants face one another, a question is posed, and then one circle rotates so that individuals are face to face with someone new on every rotation. Expanding beyond this initial exercise, learning circles are often a core part in Franzese's courses. Within her courses, learning circles require that students know the name of every student in the class. By using these practices students can individually meet others in the course and respond to one another about a course related question. While these learning circles can be considered a contemplative approach, they also serve to facilitate the incorporation of other contemplative pedagogies.

Another example of a partnership that is forged by using learning circles comes from an upper-level interdisciplinary course (not previously mentioned, but relevant here). That course regularly utilized learning circles and students developed great familiarity with one another. As the course unfolded, many of the students who were seniors had absences from the class due to job interviews. The course content focused on the science of happiness and connectedness and Franzese offered the mindful practice of sending good wishes for students who were absent for interviews. Franzese gained a sense that this 'took' when students anticipating absences began to ask if our class mindfulness practice could center on them, wishing them well. This was undoubtedly a pedagogical approach that was with students as they *used it on their own and* requested it (and in fact shared afterwards that they were thinking of the class members thinking of them during their interview). Similarly, in the upper level sociology course, students were invited to lead the mindfulness practices from time to time, and the class benefited from a mindfulness practice led by a student well-versed in yoga, and a mindful listening practice with music selected by a student passionate about music. The learning circle approach facilitated a sense of connectedness and partnership that paved the way for additional contemplative practices and approaches. While the implementation of the contemplative practices was conducted in partnership with students, so was the inquiry into the outcomes of these practices. As noted above, students began requesting contemplative practices and also took a meta-approach to their own learning providing unsolicited information about their level of attentiveness or focus on a given day, or how they implemented a

contemplative practice.

Linking to the SoTL framework, the contemplative practices incorporated into Franzese's courses were consistently offered as invitations and included a communication that they were voluntary practices. The Professor often also participated in these practices, modeling the reflectiveness she was encouraging in her students. They were interactive with students, and in fact, the SoTL framework applied to contemplative pedagogy would support the idea of inviting students to perhaps design and implement practices with the faculty member.

### Appropriately Public

Having designed, implemented, and analyzed contemplative practices in her courses, Franzese has sought to share her experiences and insights with colleagues who might give her feedback or who might learn from her mistakes (and successes). First, Franzese gave a presentation on campus about contemplative writing. The purpose of this presentation was to share the state of the science about contemplative writing practices, invite faculty to reflect on contemplative practices they may already be incorporating, and allow faculty to identify new practices and consider how they might enact and study those practices. By discussing these ideas with others she has been able to broaden her perspectives about the form and shape practices may take.

Second, as a means to share findings about contemplative writing, Franzese presented about contemplative writing at a mindful campus conference at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. She engaged in this because she has attended the conference on a few occasions and wanted both to contribute her knowledge about contemplative writing, and also have the experience of leading a contemplative writing practice with a audience of peers (some 30 other faculty/attendees). She observed that some faculty engaged in the practice excitedly while others had some reluctance - similar to a student group. This experience of public sharing also led her to modify some of the phrases she used in class related to the directions offered for the practice.

Finally, this article is written in that hopes that disclosing of Franzese's own successes and challenges will encourage others to share practices that they have used and create a contemplative practice exchange. She also is curious to learn about how others have assessed their practices. The specific contexts described here - local, regional, and more broadly - are appropriate because each uniquely serves a goal related to contemplative pedagogy, and they mirror the levels of SoTL outlined by Ashwin and Trigwell (2004). Local presentation allows for connection with university-level colleagues with shared interests. Regional presentation allows one to connect with others - at similar or different types of universities - engaging in this work. Finally, a journal article allows for more expansive consideration of a topic and facilitates exchange with distant colleagues.

Linking to the SoTL framework, the practice of utilizing contemplative practices was not done in isolation, but was approached in partnership with Franzese's university and with the wider academic community. In addition, there was a commitment to share the findings of the effort with colleagues both internal and external to the university, echoing Hutchings and Shulman's argument (1999) that SoTL serves both to improve an individual's teaching and to enhance the teaching commons.

## CONCLUSIONS: SOTL AS A CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE

The practice of SoTL itself can be something of a contemplative practice. Doing SoTL is one way of mindfully focusing attention of a faculty member on the learning of her students. SoTL approaches that carefully inquire into learning, like some contemplative practices, help the faculty member to take a curious and open view of what is happening in the classroom. Student freewriting, for instance, allows the faculty member to witness what students are experiencing without the need for guidance or graded evaluation. Other SoTL approaches, on the other hand, focus a faculty member's vision on an issue of particular interest. Learning circles, for example, can effectively bring attention to the diversity that is present or missing from the classroom. In either case, SoTL is a practice that can help faculty (and students) to be mindful about learning and teaching, and to discern deeper patterns and meaning than those that might be apparent on the surface.

SoTL, of course, has its limitations. This framework guides the creation of inquiries that are firmly situated in particular contexts, making it difficult to generalize or replicate findings. SoTL also is methodologically fluid, drawing on the expertise, epistemologies, and practices of a range of disciplinary ways of knowing; while this allows many and diverse faculty to engage in SoTL, it also opens this work up to critiques from social scientists who may have specialized methodologies that can be used to conduct similar research (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). Finally, SoTL and other analytical approaches often focus on snapshots or slices of learning, rather than on whole experiences. Since contemplative pedagogies often aim for integration and connection, this is a potential limitation that merits further exploration.

Like any heuristic, SoTL is imperfect, but we believe that on the whole it offers a framework that is well-suited for the aims of faculty (and others) inquiring into contemplative pedagogies and with a commitment to the theory and practice of transformative learning and education. SoTL can engage faculty from any discipline and focuses on questions within their locus of control - they ask their questions about their students, use methods tied to their own expertise to explore those questions, and involve students and others in the process of making sense of the results. In these ways, SoTL effectively achieves the fundamental goal of any educational inquiry by meeting the needs of faculty practitioners who are seeking to enhance their use of contemplative pedagogies.

SoTL will never produce a single study that will scientifically prove the power and validity of contemplative pedagogies in higher education. However, if those of us who teach with contemplative pedagogies embrace the potential of SoTL, together we will build a wealth of practice-based knowledge that will help us, our students, and our institutions, to move closer to the heart of higher education.

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